



The Tutorial Is Too Hard

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- Part 1 -

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[Light Novel Bastion]

– STORY –

On a normal boring day, a message appears, inviting him to a Tutorial.

A tale about Lee Ho Jae and his escape from the Tutorial.

But he just happened to choose the hardest possible difficulty:
Hell.

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Chapter 1

Prologue

Life is a series of choices.

A phrase I once read in 3rd year of highschool.

Life truly is a series of choices.

But what the fuck am I supposed to do about it?

That phrase hasn't helped in any way for me to make better decisions on improving my life.

When I told that to my friend, my friend replied.

Your decisions can change the direction of your life. You will have always have the opportunity to make choices as long as you walk the path of the living. What this means is that you should stop suffering over your past mistakes, and live while looking forward.

Bullshit. The bastard dares to say such stupid things even when he knows my situation.

Because of one foolish choice, my life was ruined.

There were plenty of excuses.

I was drunk.

Which is why I could not think straight.

When a strange hologram message invited me to somewhere, I just snickered.

I always loved novels and cartoons. I've dreamt of those fantasy-like events happening to me.

So, I became audacious.

[Will you enter the Tutorial world?]

Without hesitation, I answered Yes.

I was an ex-pro gamer. Damn it. This was the biggest problem. Because of that stupid sense of pride and need to boast. Full of confidence, I couldn't tell between game and reality.

[Choose the Tutorial difficulty. Depending on the difficulty, the dangers of the Tutorial stages increase along with the growth rate and reward.]

The Tutorial's difficulty ranged between Easy, Normal, Hard and Hell.

Boldly, I chose the Hell difficulty.

Because of that stupid mistake, I'm still stuck here.

Chapter 2

Tutorial Floor 60 (1)

"I-can't stand it anymore~ Ooh ooh ooh~"

Before being summoned to the Tutorial world, I was walking through the residential district on the 60th floor singing a song that I heard from a movie.

It seemed like a sweet and romantic song in the movie, but when I sang it it sounded more like an elegy.

Anyone listening would have told me to stop singing at once. Truth is i'm tone deaf and beat deaf as well.

But I didn't stop.

I'm the only one here anyway.

The empty streets and the empty buildings reminded of the movie starring Will Smith, 'I am Legend'.

Other than my footsteps and my song, no other sound could be heard.

A dreadful silence.

At least Will Smith had a bitch of a dog with him. So jealous.

It was a bad choice by me. In the end, it is my responsibility to bear.

From the beginning, no almost the beginning, I was alone.

It wasn't surprising that I was alone in the residential district on Floor 30 as well,

but back then I wasn't tormented by the feelings of gloom and loneliness.

Back then I was moving forward although it was hard to the point of almost dying.

But now that I've reached Floor 60, I can't go forward anymore.

It's complicated, but to quickly summarise

It is impossible to clear the floor from 61 onwards alone. No matter what path you take.

Similar to the game 'Portal'. Just like their coop mission, it's a stage impossible to progress alone.

I needed a partner.

I went to my favorite pub.

Of course there's no bartender or other customers.

I sat on my usual seat and ordered a drink.

[300 points are deducted.]

I grab onto the glass which appeared on the table and flicked a coin off my thumb.

"Here's a tip, mister."

The coin spun through the air, hit the ground and rolled off somewhere.

[81st round will begin shortly.]

[Remaining time : 10 minutes]

Finally!

Every time a new round starts Players are forced into the Tutorial stage.

Only those who are in residential districts are excluded, which I'm currently at.

There is only one reason for me, who was safely tucked away in the residential district, to anticipate for the new round.

When the new round begins, new Players enter. Please, let there be someone who will become my companion...

"Community open."

I may as well look at the community to waste the remaining time.

The first thing I see is...

[Difficulty Hell, Forum (1/1)]

What this means is, in the 'Hell difficulty' there is one survivor, and one person who is browsing the forums.

I move my eyes and look at the other forums.

Although it's called Hell forum, it doesn't mean that only Players in Hell difficulty could use it. The forum is to talk about Hell difficulty and additionally show the population in the Hell difficulty.

[Difficulty Normal, Forum (42/86)]

So many. I'm jealous.

At that moment, a new post was made on the Hell forum.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : Ho Jae-hyoung, sup. Are you waiting for a newbie?]

It's Lee Joon Suk, who is at Floor 90 in Hard difficulty. I usually stay in friendly terms with Hard Players. I became close with them as we shared our tips and how we raised our skill levels. The highest rankers of Hard difficulty could have information which can help me as well.

Lee Joon Suk is someone who is currently grinding in the Tutorial world even though he has the opportunity to return to the real world once he advances through 10 more floors.

The Tutorial is made from Floor 1 to Floor 100 and Players who were able to reach Floor 100 are sent back to the real world.

And those Players who are strengthened through the Tutorial become 'The Awakened' and protect the earth from monsters.

How the Awakened grow is not through experience or training but through level ups like in a game and they can no longer become stronger the moment they leave the Tutorial.

They may become more experienced and efficient, but that's the limit.

The evolution of their skills and growth of their stats simply become impossible.

It is the reason why Lee Joon Suk was grinding in the Tutorial. To become stronger before leaving the Tutorial. To return to reality as the strongest.

Well he's a nice guy for having a chat with me and I'm thankful and jealous as well.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Yeah. Although I'm not sure if there will be one.]

I was a 1st round player. I came here without knowing anything. I didn't know where this was. Blindly choosing the Hell difficulty.

But the situation changed by the 15th round when a few people cleared Floor 100 and left the Tutorial.

Those who left the Tutorial told the world of its existence.

It was a good thing. Those that were still in the Tutorial were able to forward messages through the Players who cleared the 100th floor. Allowing them to tell their parents, their family and friends not to worry. Not to mention it gave them the hope of returning to real world if they could finish the tutorial.

Those in the real world gained information about the Tutorial which randomly kidnapped Players. Information like how to survive and what was dangerous.

That was the problem.

The dangers of the Hell difficulty was exposed.

Clear rate 0%, survival rate 0.01%.

Who would enter, unless they were incredibly insane.

Afterwards, the number of newbies entering Hell plummeted.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : Hyung, if there is a newbie, what would you want from them?]

An interesting question.

All this time I was hoping for someone to just come, rather than what kind of person would come.

Hmm...

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Well gender and age doesn't matter.]

They grow stronger when their level grows whether they are women or children.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : But the most important factor is their mental strength.]

Those who enter Hell difficulty are nine times out of ten insane.

About half of them were people who should be in asylums. 'Patients' who couldn't think normally.

Of course their survival rate was 0%.

The other half are delinquents and school kids with *chuunibyou* full of empty boasts.

Their survival rate was 0.01%.

On a side note among the 3 categories, I was the *chuunibyou*. Although I wasn't in school anymore. Shit.

Lastly are the misfortunate. For example, those who were summoned while riding a rollercoaster. Those who pressed Hell difficulty while they were waving their arms in the air.

Of course their survival rate was 0%.

Well if I were to rank them, it's Misfortunate > Chuunibyou > Delinquents > Insane.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : I think the rank for delinquents is too low. Hmm... I don't get it. Hyoung, tell me why.]

I am kind therefore I gave an answer.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Hell mode is fair to all. There is only 1 way for newbies to survive. Listening to what I say. That's it. So the rankings reflect the rank of those who will listen to me.]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : But that's not the most important factor. The most important factor is the Class.]

Class. The Class for RPGS.

Such as the warrior, mage, archer and priests.

Truth is Classes are only mentioned by the Players.

To be accurate it meant the weapon they chose when they entered the Tutorial. From this starting weapon, their play style changes.

They can change their weapon half way, but most follow the style of their original weapon.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Definitely a warrior. It has to be a shield warrior. You can't survive without a shield.]

[Jung Gi Joon, Floor 51 : But Ho Jae-hyoung doesn't use a shield.]

Jung Gi Joon. He is a Hard mode player just like Lee Joon Suk.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : I did use it. Back then...]

Suddenly, the topic of the conversation became the tales of my adventures.

As I talked about my past, we came to my early days in the Tutorial.

The beginnings in the Hell difficulty.

Whether there were many who were curious or there were simply a lot of people browsing the Community due to the start of 81st round, a lot of people gathered at this forum.

Then, a new name posted on the forum.

[Jung Won Sik, Floor 33 : Even so, aren't you just a loser? There's no way you can clear Hell mode anyway. Why do you guys like him so much?]

I froze as soon as I read those words.

[Goo Dae Ho, Floor 53 : That retard lololol. He sure got balls for an Easy player lol.]

Easy mode. If it's Easy difficulty, it's likely he hasn't been in the Tutorial for long despite being on Floor 33. The clear speed for Easy difficulty is very fast.

I massage the tension on the back of my neck, and continued to write.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : I remembered your name. I don't know how many years it will take, but when I'm out I'll find you first.]

These weren't empty threats. When I leave, I'll find him.

But he won't be first, unlike how I've written it.

There are 7 more I must visit before him.

The bastard Jung Won Sik didn't post anymore.

[Jung Gi Joon, Floor 51 : By the way hyoung, what's your level now?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : 251]

A series of comments explode after those words.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : 251? Hyoung went over 200? Why's it so high?]

[Goo Dae Ho, Floor 53 : Level 251 kek lolololololol Are you human? lololololol.]

[Lee Won Ill, Floor 17 : Lolololol that guy before must be shitting his pants lolololol pissed off a level 251 lolol.]

Anyway this world is a tutorial. It's not a death game aimed at killing people.

Its aim is for Players to grow. It's just the person who chooses Hell is at fault. Fuck.

The system clearly said that danger increased along with difficulty.

And that the growth rate and reward increased accordingly as well.

The system is true. That's it.

After reading the comments, my anger subsided a little.

I am petty and childish, I know.

And I always remember my grudges. I'll never forget.

I open the memo on System and write down the name Jung Won Sik.

[81st Round will begin.]

The system message that I had been waiting for finally popped. I quietly closed my eyes.

Please let there be a newbie...

I began to pray. Similar to praying for an item enchant to succeed in an RPG.

I can feel the heart pounding, probably from my desperation. Please... Please...

And with those desperate feelings, I slowly open my eyes.

[Difficulty Hell, forum (1/2)]

IT'S HERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Chapter 3

Tutorial Floor 60 (2)

In 2014, a strange event swept across the globe.

Monsters appeared from all over the world, and began to attack towns and cities.

Most of the monsters were neutralized by the military, but there were a select few that were able to survive as they were immune to bullets.

Many cities across the world were destroyed, and the number of casualties were innumerable.

It was then when the psychics known as the Awakened appeared.

Once every month, people were randomly kidnapped into the Tutorial world. If they were able to clear the Tutorial, they would receive powers and were returned to the real world.

[Round 81 will begin.]

It had been 30 days since Round 80 had started and now was time for Round 81 to begin.

As usual, 100 new players were kidnapped.

[Difficulty Normal, Forum (71/106)]

[Welcome newcomers.]

[Must-know tips before you beginning the Tutorial.]

[Basic introductions for Tutorial classes.]

[Basic rules for the community waiting room. Newbies please read.]

[System interface configuration.]

[Punishment for breaking the rules.]

Such topics could be found and more are posted on the forums.

Most of the posts were uploaded by the NPCs in the residential districts.

Residential NPCs were Players who had given up on progressing through the Tutorial. They had chosen to settle themselves in the residential districts located on Floors 30, 60 and 90.

They give advice to first time Newbies and maintain public order in the residential areas.

I might become one of these NPCs too.

Afterall, I can't get past Floor 60.

And...

[Difficulty Hell, Forum (1/2)]

It's here! A Newbie!

How long have I waited for the number '2' to appear.

I'm about to cry.

Please, come on the Community. Please...

Please... Someone normal... Please...

[Difficulty Hell, Forum (2/2)]

They're here!

I had to make a post quickly, so the Newbie could see it.

At that moment, a new post was made on the Hell forum.

[Uhh...]

[Lee Yeon Hee, Floor 1 : Uh... am I in Hell difficulty sdalkhfiuoqrg. I think I pressed the wrong button. Please help me. HELP MEDSKLFJGLKG]

I can feel her sanity crumble with each passing word.

It may have been the greatest misfortune in her life, but for me it was my only ray of hope! Hoorray!

Meanwhile, the Newbie's post received enormous attention.

[Lee Joon Suk, Floor 90 : Uh... Hm, I. Uh... Cheer up.]

[Lee Gi Suk, Floor 22 : Ah... mistakes were made. You misclicked and now you're in hell. FeelsBadMan.]

[Goo Dae Ho, Floor 53 : Uwaa lolololol. Press the wrong button and into Hell you go lololol.]

[Lee Won Ill, Floor 17 : Cheer up. The survival rate isn't 0%, it's just 0.01% kek.]

[Jung Gi Joon, Floor 51 : Don't make fun of her you assholes. How sad would she be right now.]

I quickly added a comment before the Newbie Lee Yeon Hee's sanity could shatter into a million pieces.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : Don't be so scared. If you listen to me, you can survive. Calm down.]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : I'm sorry, but can you introduce yourself quick?]

I have to know her age at least.

There is no age limit for those who are sent here.

Which means that even a 100 year old grandma or a 5 year old kid could be sent here.

[Lee Yeon Hee, Floor 1 : Hello, my name is Lee Yeon Hee. I'm 20 years old. My school...]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60 : You can forgo details like your school. What weapon did you start with?]

[Lee Yeon Hee, Floor 1 : Bow.]

She's screwed.

[Lee Gi Suk, Floor 22 : Archer, LOL. Pretty sure even Robin Hood couldn't beat Hell difficulty.]

[Lee Won Ill, Floor 17 : What gave you the idea to pick the bow in Hell... T_T]

I thought the Newbie would of had a major breakdown completely if she read the comments so I sent her a 1:1 chat invitation.

[Lee Yeon Hee has entered.]

[Lee Yeon Hee : Is the bow really that bad? I heard it's good in the early stages?]

A question as soon as she enters.

Well, her life depends on it. I should understand.

The bow is a very difficult weapon for beginners.

Unless you practice archery...

[Lee Yeon Hee : I am an archer. A national represent.]

Ah, is that so...

Those who start with the bow are often called Archers.

In the Tutorial, the Archer is a class which does not simply fire arrows from afar like other RPG games.

In terms of combat, rather than being a sniper who shoots from afar, they are more like a ranger who sweeps through the battle like Legolas.

It was dangerous, but everyone's forced to play Solo during the beginning, so as they progress through the Tutorial with a bow, they naturally developed such skills from difficult close quarters combat that occurred frequently.

As they go past the start, they begin to form parties,

These Archers become core members of the party due to their agility, survival and offer great utility such as excellent eyesight.

To make it brief, they are like the amalgamation of a rogue, adventurer and archer from a normal RPG game.

Everyone is recommended to have to have at least 1 archer in their party due to them being multi-skilled and the ability to survive.

So, Lee Yeon Hee is correct about how good it is in the early phase. It's dangerous on the first 5 floors where the Start of the Tutorial lies, but it's not a bad weapon for Floors 20 and below which is considered the early phase.

But, that's not the same for Hell difficulty.

Because it's so hard to go past the first 5 floors.

[Lee Ho Jae : Archer is not a bad choice. Don't worry. In truth, Archers are one of the best surviving classes.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Really?]

[Lee Ho Jae : Yes. So don't worry, follow my instructions and you'll survive. Don't believe anyone else and just follow my advice.]

After calming down Lee Yeon Hee, I explained about the basics of Tutorial. How to use the Shop and Community. How to gain and raise Skills.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Uh, is it really alright? Will I survive?

[Lee Ho Jae : You will survive if you follow my instructions. Not anyone else, but mine. Ah, did you ever hear about me?]

I asked as I repeated what I said before.

It's embarrassing to say it myself, but I am quite famous. Both inside and outside the Tutorial.

I am the lone survivor in Hell difficulty in Korea.

And also the highest ranking Hell Player in the world.

Apparently I'm a famous urban legend in the real world.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Yes. Uh, the lone survivor of Hell... Right?]

[Lee Ho Jae : Yes. That's right but I'm not exactly alone. There are plenty of survivors in Hell on other different servers too.]

Apparently there are 11 survivors in the American server. Crazy bastards.

Most of them are stuck in the residential area of Floor 30, but it's still impressive to have more than 10 Players.

What's even more surprising is that there are still people challenging the Hell difficulty.

I wasn't aware that America was so Macho-tastic.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Uh, this may sound rude but, what's the highest record for Hell difficulty?]

[Lee Ho Jae : Floor 60 which is where I'm at.]

It felt embarrassing yet proud when I complimented myself.

[Lee Yeon Hee : Can you tell me what the records are for Players other than yourself?]

I thought briefly before I could answer. Should I tell her the truth, or hide it.

On the side note, the highest in Korea is Floor 17, while the World record is Floor 32.

[Lee Ho Jae : There are a quite a number of people who got past Floor 30. It's a lot if you consider the fact that there aren't many who enter Hell difficulty to begin with.]

[Lee Ho Jae : Most importantly, there's a residential area on Floor 30. If you get there, you won't have to worry about dying.]

Of course Lee Yeon Hee cannot remain on Floor 30. She had to come up to Floor 60 and help me clear Floor 61.

Anyway, I carefully chose words that would help her regain her calm.

However, I'm not sure how effective that was.

[Lee Ho Jae : Well then, I'll give you a detailed explanation about the start of Tutorial, Floor 1.]

Now I needed to drill her about the pattern and tips on how to get

through the start.

The Hell Tutorial had sent countless lives to their doom, but it wasn't impossible to beat.

The most effect path was to memorize the order and pattern of the Tutorial.

The Tutorial is fair.

It brings equal challenges to all.

In the same order and pattern.

Before I started my explanation, I began to remember the days.

The days when I first fell into this hell.

Chapter 4

Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (1)

[One to your shoulder, heart and between your eyes. Half a beat later right ankle. Simple right?]

[What happens if you can't dodge it? Um... It's alright. Everyone's like that the first time.]

* * *

I switched through the TV channels with empty eyes.

Comedy shows were boring, and the dramas were ever so predictable.

Music shows were absolutely trash.

I was in desperate need of some sort of stimuli.

A normal day, boring and stupid.

This has been going on for 2 years.

I've quit my career as a professional gamer 2 years ago and have since set up a convenience store with my savings.

It was challenging at first with so many things to manage, but I got used to it fast. And once I got used to it, I left it all to my part time employees and holed myself at home.

Who cares if the part timers rip some money off me.

Life was boring.

I should't have quit my pro gaming career.

I was the best when it came to video games.

There may be arguments, but at my greatest height I was called the best.

However, with the passing of time I was eventually deposed of that title. Unable to deal with my loss, I decided to retire a short time after.

Rather than live on as a loser, I had decided to quit gaming completely.

I've always been extremely competitive.

From hide and seek to a local soccer match, once I started to play, I had to win.

Then one day, I played a fighting video game for the first time in front of a local stationary store.

How angry was I, after being completely destroyed by a 6th grader.

That's when I was absorbed into gaming.

Until my retirement 2 years ago, gaming was my life.

What would it be like if I stayed as an ex-best gamer?

That life wouldn't have been as bad as this.

My life right now is unbearably empty and boring.

Well, what could I do. What's done is done.

I sigh as I raise a glass of soju. The glass was empty.

I try to look for another bottle in the black plastic bag as I keep muttering shit.

Ah, have I drink them all already...

At that moment, an emergency broadcast was being played on the TV.

[...Just 30 minutes ago, multiple sinkholes such as these have suddenly appeared throughout the world. The government is currently investigating the cause to the sinkholes..... It has been advised not to approach near these sinkholes. This is NBS news update...]

It was a strange news update. But I was facing an even peculiar situation at that moment.

Floated words appeared in front of my eyes.

[Congratulations, you have been invited to the Tutorial World. Lee Ho Jae.]

Tutorial? Is it the tutorial, where they show you the basics of the game?

Am I wasted to the point of seeing hallucination, or have I gone insane.

[Will you enter the Tutorial World?]

I quickly began to contemplate whether this is an opportunity for me or not.

I had no regrets about my life. If anyone could give me a new life, I'd welcome it with both arms open.

It's something that would happen in an anime or a novel, but I am seeing that possibility right in front of me.

Can I lead the life I want in the new world? Where I'm the protagonist again?

"...Yes."

An answered crept out of my dry throat. Is this ok as an answer?

The message changed after my reply.

[Please select the difficulty. The dangers of the stage increase with difficulty, along with its rewards and your growth.]

There were 4 options.

Easy, Normal, Hard, Hell.

There was no need for me to think.

I, Lee Ho Jae.

Have never missed out on a game, and have never been called bad in any of them.

I am confident that I can be at least above average in terms of sports, and I was filled with talent for games. A so called genius.

And so I chose Hell difficulty.

And then proceeded to lose my consciousness.

* * *

A rough shake woke me up.

'Hey, are you awake? You've slept for long enough, get up.'

An intimidating looking man was shaking me to get up.

‘Are you coming to your senses? Are you ok?’

I forced my tired eyes open to look at my surroundings. I saw 3 people including the man who woke me up. All of them, people that I’ve never seen before.

‘Fuck... who, who are you!’

I shouted as I stumbled backwards.

This wasn’t my room.

The floor and walls were lined with clean-cut stone that seemed like marble.

It was a desolate indoor space with no furniture.

‘Where... where am I?’

As I opened my eyes, I was in a strange place with unfamiliar people.

‘This is the 1st floor waiting room.’

‘1st floor waiting room? What do... ’

‘Hey, calm down. Let’s have a chat. Did you not see those messages?’

The man who shook me spoke with a calm tone. His face was like a rugged bear, but his voice was like a ballad singer.

‘A message?’

‘You know, the messages regarding something about a tutorial.’

At that moment I remembered what happened before I lost my consciousness.

Is this it? Is this like teleportation? Did I enter the game world?

My head was full of questions.

‘I saw it. I was drunk, everything was so hectic. Did all of you see the message and did it all lead you to come here?’

My voice was surprisingly calm and clear. Before I lost consciousness, I swear I was drunk to the absolute limit.

‘Yes.’

The man passively replied, and the man and woman behind him nodded in agreement.

‘I wanted to know if you knew anything about this whole situation, hence why I woke you up. You probably got dragged here without knowing anything like us. Anyway, it's only us here so shouldn't we help each other?’

Mm...

Not a bad idea. Having allies is definitely better than being alone.

But only if I could trust these people.

‘Would you happen to have any leads about this entire situation?’

‘Well, come to think of it, before the messages started popping up, there was an emergency news report.’

The whole group of people paid their full attention to me as I said this.

Not only just the man I spoke to, the man and woman behind him approached me.

‘It said a large sink-hole had appeared across the whole world out of nowhere.’

‘Are you saying we ended up in here because of the sink-hole that

appeared?!'

The ugly man at the back raised his voice.

He looked like a gangster.

'Fucking, do you think that even makes any sense, you retard?'

Mm. The gangster could be right. Maybe he was also a little too anxious about this whole situation, it was quite a touchy response.

'I just told you what I remembered.'

Luckily, it seemed the ganster didn't want to dig into me anymore. At least he isn't completely braindead.

I shook my head a little. Something's a little...

'What is it?'

'No... just. Before I lost consciousness I was completely drunk, I feel as though I'm just a little too normal.'

'Ahh. It must be because of that thing. Apparently, if you enter this area your whole body gets healed. It must be it.'

'What?? The body heals by itself?'

'Yes. A message saying that appeared just before you woke up.'

Another Message.

I feel as though I missed out on something important.

'I'm sorry but can you tell me the details of that message?'

'ok'

‘Firstly, I will tell you about the very first message that appeared.’

‘Thank you’

The man who looked like a bear was surprisingly nice. I wonder, how old was he?

The man first told me about beginner weapons. As soon as I heard that from the man, in my field of vision a little message appeared which instructed me to choose a starting weapon.

As I focused on the message, everything went black.

The next moment, I was in an area with countless amounts of weapons which spanned around my surroundings.

It wasn't the stone chamber I was in before. The people had also disappeared.

What kind of balance was this...

Lets calm down. If I thought of this as a game, there was nothing weird happening at all.

I calmed myself and looked around.

There were various different kinds of weapons around me.

A spear, sword, bow, iron mace, that... mmm... thing. There were also weapons that I couldn't figure out how to use as well.

Is that even a weapon? It just looked like a plain hammer.

The bow came with a quiver and a bunch of arrows. It must of been given as a set item.

As you play a game, there are times where you had to make a decision.

The decision could affect me greatly in the future that is to come, so I had to chose with discretion.

Mmm... A moment of deep thought had come.

Now, what should I choose?

TL Notes:

The start of this chapter (before the first horizontal line) is Ho Jae talking to Yeon Hee in the present/currently. Then, the rest of the text is the flashback.

Chapter 5

Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (2)

Countless weapons spanned across my surroundings.

They looked like the typical beginner class weapons.

Most of them didn't even have accessories and just looked unadorned.

It was no doubt that they were made just for practicality.

Which one should I pick?

First, let's think about my stats.

Height: 177cm. Weight: 71kg.

I used to have quite a skinny physique, but I gained quite a bit of weight while staying home doing absolutely nothing.

Due to the lack of my muscle strength, swinging heavy weapons would be hard.

I was pretty confident when it came to fitness.

I was skilled at sports in general, this was probably attributed to the fact that I had good hand-to-eye coordination.

However still, I was most confident when it came to playing video games.

I never really practiced martial arts for long.

When I was young, I only went to a Wushu dojo, though it only lasted for a short period of time.

And during my time in secondary school I tried a bit of Kendo.

It would be best if I didn't rely on either Wushu, Kendo or martial arts in general.

Out of all the available weapons, the staff caught my eye.

It wasn't a paddle-like staff that was used like a club, it was more of a magical staff that even Gandalf would probably carry around himself.

Well, I didn't know if it was a real magical staff but it sure looked like one.

If I chose that, would I become a mage or a priest?

I might have to learn skills completely independent of the staff too.

Just as I imagined, melee weapons would be better.

Having a ranged weapon definitely had the advantage of safety in terms of staying at a safe distance in battle. However, that would only apply if I had someone protecting me.

Moreover, if I think about the people I had met in this area, the decision to choose a melee weapon is even more appealing.

Sticking a blade into someone's face definitely has a different type of pressure compared to sticking a staff in someone's face.

It would also probably be wise if I stayed on good terms with the people back in the stone chamber, but I also had to take into account when things could go bad between us.

With the exception of the bow and staff, every other ranged weapon should be disregarded.

With the same reason, I should stay clear from blunt weapons like clubs.

They weren't sharp and intimidating like a sword was.

Overall, they were too heavy.

After I took everything into consideration, the only weapons that would be viable for me were the likes of spear, sword and axe, and so on.

There were many variants of the same weapons, except for the axe.

Although there were a few axes that weren't too heavy, I just didn't like them.

The only ones left were the sword and spear.

Normally, people would think that the spear had the advantage of reach and would be easier to use effectively, but in reality this was not the case.

The spear was an advanced weapon that a beginner wouldn't likely be able to wield it efficiently.

Basically, the spear would be stronger than the sword if the person wielding the spear kept their distance.

In other words, the spear would be hard to use effectively if this distance was to be closed by the enemy.

Perhaps if I had other spear wielding allies by my side, to form a nice scrum it might make it effective.

I don't know what type of enemies I might encounter... no, actually I don't even know if I'll encounter any enemies, but if they were stronger, faster and more precise, using a spear would be problematic.

I'm only a beginner and an ordinary person too.

Although using a sword is honestly challenging for a beginner, if I continue to doubt my own thoughts I'll end up hypothesising forever.

I trusted my own decision and began looking for a sword that would fit me.

I lifted a longsword and it was much heavier than I expected.

I swung it with all my might and it felt like my body was actually being pushed away by its weight.

From this experience, I decided to disregard all two-handed swords.

Once I found a decent sized one-handed sword, I found multiple with a shield, like a set.

Ah, the sword and shield combo.

There were more than twenty sets, however they all had one thing in common.

They came with a catch, a penalty.

The swords and shields were in poor condition compared to the swords and shields that were available by themselves. The shields in the sets were much thinner and some were even rusted. The swords were also either shorter or thinner.

Moreover, some were rusted and even chipped.

Should I give up the sword and choose a shield instead?

Just becoming a tank from the start could be an option too.

I pondered for a moment but soon disregarded that thought.

No matter what, even in doubt, it was essential for me to have a weapon.

I wasn't sure if I would be able stay with the people back at the stone chamber.

Even if could, I couldn't trust them just yet.

After scavenging for hours, I finally decided on my weapons.

A round shield that could be strapped around my arm and a sturdy one-handed sword roughly 40cm in length.

The sword looked pretty similar to a gladius used in ancient roman times.

The shield was made of wood and the surface was lined with leather. I liked that there was a handle and also a leather belt that allowed it to be strapped around my arm.

Like other swords found in sets, the sword I chose had multiple chips on the blade. Out of anxiety, I chose a sword that was short and sturdy so it wouldn't break easily.

[Dirty Shield]

Defence: 4

Description: Separate from the handle, a leather belt is attached. The belt is more valuable than the shield. Second-hand.

[Thrown away training sword]

Attack: 3

Description: A training sword once used by a kid. Second-hand.

These descriptions were absolutely worthless. Why did they have to explain to me that the items are second-hand anyway? Although all the basic weapons here had these types of descriptions, maybe it was the penalty for choosing a set. The condition of these items were really poor.

[Will you choose this?]

A message popped up.

“Yes.”

The next moment I was back in the stone chamber.

“Welcome back. Did you choose your weapon?”

A man that resembled a bear questioned instantly upon my return.

“Yes.”

“I see you’ve chosen a sword and shield set. Nice choice”

“What?!”

The gangster shouted from afar

“How come you brought two things? What are you?!”

“This sword and shield came in a set. Even though they come together, they lack in quality compared to the swords and shields that were available by themselves.”

The gangster couldn’t accept my explanation and complained for hours.

The bear man confronted him and told the gangster that he himself saw the set weapons, which allowed us to barely calm him down.

The bear man taught me about the inventory and status bars and also how to use the Community feature.

“Inventory.”

As I quietly muttered this, my inventory appeared right in front of my

eyes.

Inside my inventory were dried foods and water. I should check how much I have of those later.

At the thought about disarming my sword and shield and storing them in the inventory, the weapons I held in my hands slowly disappeared and appeared in my inventory.

Now I thought of re-arming myself, the weapons appeared in my hands again.

Now this really felt like a game.

“Status.”

Lee Ho Jae (Human)

Strength: 8

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 10

Intelligence: 21

The status bar was so neat and tidy that it was so insignificant.

Surely there would be something more.

Like the main character in a story, I expected some special powers or something of the sort but it seemed like I was the very definition of the word human.

My intelligence could be quite high compared to others though. No wonder the staff was so tempting.

“The inventory and status bars are pretty simple to understand, but what’s this Community feature?”

“Mmm, it’s like a social media network. You can use this to chat to different people in different chat rooms. Other than that I don’t think it has any other feature.”

“Other chat rooms?”

I was so curious about this community feature that I had to open it.

[Difficulty: Easy, Forum (33/61)]

[Difficulty: Normal, Forum (7/24)]

[Difficulty: Hard, Forum (11/16)]

[Difficulty: Hell, Forum (1/4)]

“It’s separated by difficulty.”

“Yeah, and it’s only the four of us that chose the Hell difficulty. Since it’s like this, shouldn’t we combine forces and work together?”

“Right.”

“Lastly, the clock. If you think about wanting to see the time, it will automatically appear in your vision.”

Just like he said, I thought about wanting to see the time.

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 1:13pm]

[Time left until Tutorial: 70 Hours 43 minutes]

“Come here, we should introduce ourselves to each other and have a talk.”

Chapter 6

Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (3)

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 1:28pm]

[Time left until Tutorial: 70 hours 32 minutes]

We sat in the centre of the stone chamber, the 1st floor waiting room and proceeded to introduce ourselves.

The bear-man who explained everything to me before was the first person to introduce himself.

The bear-man's name was Choi Min Sik.

He was 47 years old.

Your average working man.

He was pondering on whether he should resign from his job when the message suddenly appeared before his eyes.

A special quality of his was that he was in the athletics team in high school.

Next was the short tempered rebel. His name was Cho Kyung Min.

He was 31 years old.

It was befitting to call him a gangster.

A special quality of his was that he really liked Korean RPG games like

Lineage.

The only woman on the first floor, Park Su Ah, was next.

She was 21 years old.

A tertiary student.

She really liked Japanese anime.

“I’m Lee Ho Jae. I’m 26 years old and I was a pro-gamer.”

“Pro-gamer? Lineage?”

Kyung Min asked with delight.

Were there even pro-gamers in Lineage?

“No. I was a pro-gamer in the RTS category. When I was young I learned to play many sports including kendo hence I’m also quite confident in my athletic abilities.”

“Well, now that we know more about each other, how about discussing what is about to come?”

Min Sik began to speak.

However, we managed to only mutter to ourselves and as we tried to read our current predicament.

This was bound to happen since no one knew anything about each other. I guess it was up to me to man up and start the conversation.

“Well firstly, I believe that we all share the same understanding that this place is similar to a game, right?”

The other three agreed.

“They give you weapons, even a character status bar. It definitely resembles an RPG game. It’s kind of like Lineage, the game you like, Kyung Min.”

“Yeah, it’s really similar.”

Kyung Min loudly agreed with his voice.

“One of the most important things about RPG games is team play. In a party, we all get assigned a role and play as a team. So, let’s all show each other what type of weapons we have chosen so we can assign these roles to each other.’

All four of us opened our inventories simultaneously and laid out our weapons.

Min Sik had a large trident.

The pole was wide and the blade was large also.

It was incredibly heavy.

It seemed to be roughly 2metres in length, a weapon that looked like it should be wielded by Guan Yu or Zhang Fei from the Romance of the 3 Kingdoms.

Kyung Min chose an axe. The blade was a little larger than a fire axe.

However, the long metal handle made it seem easy to use.

I thought I had seen this kind of weapon somewhere, then I realised, it oddly shared the looks of an axe that a dwarf would have used in The Lord of the Rings.

Including me, 3 of us had chosen a melee weapon.

Deep inside, I had hoped that Su Ah had chosen a ranged weapon. A bow, throwing weapon or maybe even a mage staff.

However, Su Ah had taken out a long katana instead.

It looked much larger than a normal katana.

Simply said, it looked like it was from an *anime*.

My god, how is she going to use that...

What are you, some sort of shinigami?¹

All four of us had chosen a melee weapon. The combination was a little off-point.

While Min Sik and Kyung Min argued over whose weapon was better, I cleared my thoughts.

“I have an idea. Please listen.”

The formation I thought of was this.

Kyung Min and I at the front.

Since I have the shield, I would stay slightly ahead of Kyung Min to block front on attacks so he could attack with his axe.

Min Sik at the back

With Min Sik at the back, he should be able to pierce enemies in sight between Kyung Min and I.

Lastly Su Ah has a free-role.

The katana was significantly long. Compared to Su Ah's physique, it was too heavy so, she would have to use it as a two-handed sword. This is way too dangerous for a beginner to use.

Su Ah would cover Min Sik's sides and read the battle. Moreover if Kyung Min or I get hurt/ if people are out of position, Su Ah would come to support and attack only if there is a sure-fire chance.

“So, what do you think?”

Min Sik and Kyung Min agreed to my proposed positions.

Min Sik seemed relieved that he was a bit safer one step back and Kyung Min was happy that he was the main damage dealer in the group.

However, Su Ah didn't like the idea.

In all honesty, I thought that Su Ah would like this position the most since it was the safest position out of them all. It really surprised me when she displayed her dissatisfaction.

“Su Ah. I understand how you feel, but I think you should consider Ho Jae's suggestion.

I understand that this may feel like a game to you, however we don't know if we can get hurt or even die like a game. Moreover, we chose the hardest difficulty. We don't know the dangers ahead of us and if we don't have any other solid suggestions I believe we should follow Ho Jae's safe and stable positions.”

Min Sik calmly tried to convincing Su Ah.

Although Su Ah's expression hadn't changed, she nodded her head in agreement.

Then, we began our group training.

No matter how far we went, we were in an area where we weren't able to get hurt, tired or even hungry. This was the perfect place to train.

Firstly, we began by getting into the positions I suggested.

Kyung Min and I at the front, with me slightly ahead of Kyung Min and Min Sik right behind us.

It was crucial to not get in Min Sik's way.

We couldn't stay too close, nor too far away from each other.

After multiple adjustments, we finally found the right distance we had to keep.

At this stage we just swung our weapons like madmen as a trial.

"This should be enough."

Kyung Min's words were reasonable and we were a little jaded to continue.

And so we stopped swinging our weapons.

Shortly after, we began to spar.

I was worried our weapons would get damaged as we trained, but fortunately, this wasn't the case.

There were moments where our weapons would get damaged, however the weapons would repair themselves to their original state soon after.

Not only did the waiting room heal us, it also repaired our equipment automatically.

Although we were in the waiting room where injuries could not occur, when we sparred, we didn't train with the aim of inflicting major injuries upon one another.

We all lived a peaceful life until yesterday.

We weren't prepared to fight to draw blood, even though we were in the waiting room.

Despite that, we did make improvements.

Kyung Min would swing his axe and I would block it with my shield.

We trained vigorously, full of concentration.

If I there was an opening, I also swung my sword.

To deny the opportunity of a counter-attack, Kyung Min naturally learned to swing his axe with efficient movements. Allowing it to be swung with more precision.

Min Sik was trying to get a hang of using the large trident.

The trident was too heavy; it couldn't be used in a fancy way like you see in those Chinese martial art films. You could only use the weight as an advantage for a forceful stab.

Fortunately, the formation protected our backside well, an attack from there was unlikely...

Su Ah was quite a problem.

Due to how large it was, she was barely able to swing her katana properly.

It was more like uncontrolled waving in the air.

She still had yet to win a match when we sparred with her.

I could beat her easily even without my sword.

I didn't expect anything better from her, so I wasn't too disappointed.

However, you could tell that she was pretty upset about it.

"How about we try swapping our weapons?"

Maybe it was from the frustration and anger of her continued losses, but Su Ah suggested we try swapping our weapons.

“Why though?”

Kyung Min replied in a rude tone against Su Ah’s suggestion.

You could clearly tell Su Ah was really upset by then.

“Let’s try it. Maybe if we tried using each other’s weapons, we might be able to learn more about them.”

Kyung Min agreed to try each other’s weapons after I said so. He always tended to ignore Su Ah and made fun of Min Sik’s suggestions every time.

As odd as it was, he was fine with everything I suggested.

Maybe it was because I treated him like a superior ever since I met him.

Kyung Min always complained and had a short temper, but at least his personality isn’t completely trash. Knowing the fact that he was a gangster, he was quite well behaved.

Actually, when Kyung Min introduced himself as a gangster, the atmosphere in the waiting room got quite chilly. Luckily for us, it seemed like Kyung Min was able to get along with other people.

After having swapped our weapons, we began to spar again. Surprisingly, Su Ah won multiple times.

“Holy shit, this is hard to use. The people in the movies used this thing so easily.”

Said Kyung Min after he had an attempt with the katana.

There was quite a bit of improvement once we started sparring with different weapons.

As we got to know more about each other’s weapons, we knew how to cover for their weaknesses.

Above all, something must've clicked in Su Ah as she swung Kyung Min's axe.

She started practicing to swing the axe like cutting wood using all her strength.

Although hard to use in a real fight, it seemed ok for her role in the team.

Su Ah trained non-stop with the weapons as she started to gain confidence.

However there was one problem,

“Pierce the enemies' soul! Judgement! Moonbeam Strike!”

Every time she swung her weapon she would shout something similar to this.

At first I tried to go over it like it was nothing because I believed it was to help her concentration, however I would be lying if I say I didn't get embarrassed every time she shouted these things.

“Oi, why do I have to feel ashamed because of you?”

“You have to say the name of the skills if you want to activate them.”

But I mean, why did you scream “Pierce”¹ when you are striking downwards.

Makes no sense.

Chapter 7

Tutorial 1st Floor, Waiting Room (4)

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 26 Hours 10 Minutes]

[Time left until tutorial: 45 hours 50 minutes]

"Like, fuck. So, are you saying I should just shut up and stay here doing nothing?"

"No, I didn't mean that. I only said it because you get agitated so easily."

A fierce tension formed between Min Sik and Kyung Min.

They've already been going at each other for 30 minutes.

The subjects of their arguments for the past 30 minutes had varied greatly.

It was important to note that it all began because of their ego during a match where they sparred against one another.

Furthermore, it looked like both of them wanted to become the leader of the party.

Simply said, Kyung Min was ignorant and was also rather manly.

He hated doing things that were tedious and required thought, instead he prefers actions that would bring him the limelight.

If I had to criticize Min Sik, it would be that his thoughts were too much like an old person.

He was serious and calm, nevertheless he wasn't flexible as a person and he was just so persistent in his views.

And moreover, to put it into words, he displayed a lust for power.

I'm not sure how becoming the leader of merely four people will quench that lust, but nonetheless he just wanted to be the leader.

In all honesty, he led most of the conversations we had as a group.

He encouraged us to share our thoughts on different ways to train.

He had done a decent job at leading the party.

And as for me...

Mm, I had no interest. I basically preferred to play solo. I've tried and played every genre of games in the past and overall, my favourite type of games are the ones where the required teamwork was minimal and it only relied on myself being good

So, here I was watching these two guys argue away.

Su Ah sat next to me. It also seemed like she didn't want to be involved in their argument, she was watching them on the side-lines just like me'

"HanSeo Univeristy? You must've been really smart."

"My parents said if I didn't do well in the college entrance exams I would never be able to become a pro-gamer so I studied heaps."

The two of us leisurely conversed as watched their scene unfold.

I was a little disappointed we didn't have any popcorn.

Finally, it seemed like their argument was reaching the last stretch.

The subject of their high ego argument was now "Who will become

the leader of the party?”

“Well then, the person with better performance in the tutorial stage will become the leader of the party.”

“Yep. Don’t go back on your words later.”

And the whole thing was concluded just like that between them.

“Will you guys agree to this too?”

Said Kyung Min as he turned to Su Ah and I.

They came to a conclusion by themselves, ppft what kind of agreement were they talking about.

"Yeah, sure. But, I will deny orders that are illogical no matter who becomes the leader."

And after that, we went back into training.

The training continued.

Min Sik and Kyung Min, who had completed military service, were great help to our training.

We did exercises under their tutelage when we had short breaks.

Although these exercises didn’t require weights, they were ridiculously tiring.

Normally, this type of training would go beyond muscle pain and would tear our muscles to failure. But as expected, the automated healing effect of the waiting room kept us from the feeling of any muscle pain or fatigue.

With this intense cycle of training and quick recovery, our muscle mass and flexibility improved very quickly.

Although Su Ah was sick of all the stories Min Sik and Kyung Min told of their experiences during military service as if they were boasting, they were definitely a great help.

[Attempt 1, Day 0. 71 Hours 57 Minutes]

[Time left until Tutorial: 3 Minutes]

Finally, the Tutorial begins.

The nervousness of the four lingered in the air of the waiting room. However, you could tell everyone including me, felt more excited in anticipation rather than nervousness and horror.

Well, why else would they have chosen the Hell difficulty?

For the last 72 hours, for 3 days we trained very hard.

It was all possible due to the fact that we couldn't receive lasting injuries and feel hunger or tiredness in this environment.

If we didn't have this type of advantage, not only would we be out of time, but we would've had multiple injuries like muscle tearing and broken bones from all the sparring we had done.

Instead, we used this waiting room to the best of our advantage and even made use of our break times to frantically train ourselves.

As a result, we all grew to a point where you wouldn't believe that this all happened within a span of 3 days.

[Tutorial, 1st attempt will begin shortly.]

[A portal to the Tutorial stage will now appear.]

4 magical portal barriers appeared in the waiting room.

Above one portal a message appeared.

[Lee Ho Jae]

Mm...

“Guys it seems like only one person can go through a portal.”

It was just as Su Ah said.

All that group training... was it all going to waste now?

“Fuck, does that mean we just our wasted time?”

“Hmm. Well, we didn’t waste all of our time. We trained and grew together. Above all, we may have to cross paths in the future. Don’t be too distressed.”

Min Sik calmed the distressed members.

[The portals will be activated soon.]

We all moved up to our respective portals.

“Be careful everyone. I hope we will all meet each other after the Tutorial.”

I felt the same as Min Sik.

I also want to see these people safe and sound again.

Maybe it was the time of us living together, as we vigorously trained together for the last 3 days, we all grew really close to one another.

Sure, we fought due to our different personalities and got a bit salty between each other, but I felt it was safe to say to call these people my friends.

I preferred playing in a one-man team.

It's uncomfortable trying to cover for others since I was confident that I could do well on my own.

However, maybe it was due to this new environment, these three individuals seemed like people I could depend on.

They weren't too difficult to get along with, they were reasonable during the 3 days I had lived in the enclosed space.

Instead of feeling like I was imprisoned, it felt more like the time when I went on a soccer training camp during the holidays of secondary school.

"Hey, before I go..."

Kyung Min raised his fist.

Everyone smirked and raised fists for one another.

"Don't get hurt and let's meet again."

"You be careful too, Su Ah."

"Yep, stay safe guys."

We all comforted each other and stood on our portals.

[The portal will be activated.]

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 24 Hours]

[Will you enter the stage?]

"Yes"

The blue light of the portal grew brighter and it felt like I was falling. As I descended, my whole field of vision changed.

It wasn't the place that I got used to for three days, instead I was in a dark corridor by myself.

[Tutorial stage, Welcome to the Hell difficulty 1st floor.]

It finally began.

I took slow deep breaths.

Now be calm.

Think about this as if it were like a game.

A straight dark corridor.

Lights hung from above, equal distances apart of each other on the ceiling.

The light was faint, maybe even fainter than a candle.

It was just enough to make out that the corridor was straight.

Damn, it was too dark.

The walls, ceiling and floor were all made of stone.

The ceiling was a little higher than 3 metres.

The stone floor was flat but rough.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, I couldn't even slip from this.

Behind me.

A wall and a portal.

A portal?

I approached the portal.

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

“...Yes.”

The next moment, I was back in the waiting room.

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 23 hours 59 minutes]

So, you can come back without any restriction.

Due to the slightly pointless return, I felt my determination slightly thinned out.

What would happen if the 24-hour restriction passed?

After some thought to myself, I tried to figure out what I could.

Using the sword, I made a small cut on the back of my hand.

Blood dripped slowly, but soon after the bleeding stopped and the wound healed completely.

The automated healing of the waiting room was still in effect.

No matter how many times I may get injured in the tutorial.

If I was able to run back to the waiting room, I could be healed and make a full recovery.

I found something really substantial.

During an emergency situation, it might even save my life.

At that moment, a portal in the corner of the room grew bright and Min Sik appeared.

“Min Sik?”

I felt slightly embarrassed since we had just separated with full determination to go forth Tutorial.

“Hahaha. I thought if I were you, I would test this out too.”

Min Sik scratched the back of his head awkwardly as he spoke.

I shared what I found out with Min Sik.

“This is really important information. Su Ah and Kyung Min should learn about this too... ’

But the two never came back.

In all probability, they must have continued on with the Tutorial.

Without being able to do anything, Min Sik and I went back to the tutorial stage.

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 23 Hours 42 minutes.]

[Tutorial stage, Welcome to the Hell difficulty 1st floor.]

Now, let's start again.

“Status bar.”

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 11

Intelligence: 21

Within three days of training, my strength increased by 2 and my endurance increased by 1. There wasn't anything like a proper workout machine, but after learning that stats could be increased by exercise, I exercised a lot.

HP and MP were not shown in the status bar.

I wasn't sure if this was like a game, where you would die if your HP fell to 0.

Here, you could probably die instantly from a lethal blow to the head or a piercing strike to the heart.

If I could avoid fatal damage like that and make a successful run to the portal of the waiting room, I would be fully healed from any damage that I would have possibly taken.

I know it's impossible to do this without a single drop of blood but I couldn't afford to be careless.

Even if I were attacked anywhere else on the body, I would concentrate to mostly protect my heart, neck and my head.

With the round shield held in my left hand, I lifted it up to the under of my eyes and covered my chest, neck and face. I bent my knees and back to a crouching position so the shield would cover as much of my body as possible.

With only my eyes above the shield and sword drawn in front of me, I slowly moved forward.

Chapter 8

Tutorial 1st Floor (1)

Tutorial stage.

Hell difficulty, 1st floor.

I walked through an empty dark corridor.

Step by step very slowly.

I kept myself curled up like a grub worm and slowly, very slowly went forward while keeping my shield in front of me.

Like, how long is this going to be?

[1st attempt, Day 1. 1 hour 26 minutes]

Around 5 minutes after I started, I was thinking ‘surely something will come out now?’

So I shortened my steps by half.

After 15 minutes, I was thinking ‘Something will definitely come out now.’

So I shortened my steps by half.

After 30 minutes, I was thinking ‘Something’s coming out, something’s really coming out!’

So I walked slowly as if I was dragging my feet along the ground.

And, now.

Nothing has come after all this time.

Am I being crazy?

That nice message, the message telling me the time kept bugging me.

Am I wasting this precious time? Is this something like a time-attack mission?

The anxiety and horror in my heart grew and grew.

My body is feeling tired also.

Due to the sword and shield I held in both hands, my arms and shoulders felt stiff.

My back, arms and shoulders were all shaking uncontrollably. It felt like I could hear my muscles making sounds whenever I moved. Sweat was dripping everywhere and I could smell alcohol in my breath.

Fuck. It was already hard enough to keep my sword and shield at shoulder level. With my legs squatting, my back bent forward and my shoulders and neck curled inwards I kept myself behind the shield as much as possible.

I felt like I was dying walking in this position constantly.

I was thinking of just giving all this up and having a rest.

Straightening my back, no, should I just sit down somewhere and have a rest?

No. I still don't have any information of this place. I shouldn't brush off this tension, I must stay alert.

I can't stay at ease at this time.

I'm not sure if I can react to a dangerous situation even if I'm alert and nervous.

Although it's hard...

I must withstand this for as long as I can.

With a determined mind, I went forward as slow as a turtle.

But then,

[You have learned: Battle concentration Lv.1]

[You have learned: Will Lv.1]

‘Uh?’

As the dazed sound came out of my mouth independent of will I stood still.

Although I was determined to not stop, I should probably think a little bit about that new message.

I straightened my back and walked back a few steps.

‘Status bar’

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 11

Intelligence: 21

Skills: Battle concentration Level1.

Will Level1.

...So I got some skills.

[Battle Concentration (Lv.1)]

Description: Your concentration rises in battle. Allows you to stay focused for longer periods of time.

[Will (Lv.1)]

Description: Increases your will.

They're both passive skills.

Battle concentration and will. They're both skills related to the situation I'm experiencing right now.

It feels like I learn new skills dependent on certain situations.

I thought you would naturally learn new skills by levelling up or by getting new items; I guess I was wrong.

If what I'm thinking is right, to learn as many skills I must try more diverse things.

Let's try different things when I'm in a safer place.

I wonder if Min Sik, Kyung Min and Su Ah found this out by now?

I shook my head as I thought of the other three.

I can't think of others right now. Let's focus.

I curled up again and went forward. Slowly.

Thinking danger could come out in any moment, I walked forward for roughly an hour as slow as a snail. Finally, the danger found me.

The reason I could respond to the danger wasn't because I was alert.

It was because of the shield I held up with my left arm.

Ting!

An arrow flew through the dark and got stuck on my shield.

Not until I felt the recoil from when the arrow hit my shield and gave a shock to my left arm, did I realise an arrow was shot towards me.

Ting!

Once again, an arrow got stuck on my shield.

Where is it coming from?

At that moment, I saw a silver flash in front of my eyes.

Instinctively I held the shield over my head

Ting!

That was close.

Phew...

I didn't realise the first two arrows, but I definitely saw and dodged the last one.

Lucklily...

Pick!

?? Another arrow...

Pook!

‘AARRRRGGHHHHH!’

The last arrow shot pierced my ankle.

More than half of the arrow had pierced through.

It hurts, it hurts!

‘Aaaaaahhhhhhh...’

For a moment I saw my right ankle with an arrow pierced through it with my shaky vision.

More than half of the arrow had pierced through

I laid on the ground screaming and squirming in pain, but the pain didn’t stop.

The blood gushing out of my ankle pooled the floor and reached my face to coat it.

Even with my chaotic mind due to the pain, as I saw my bright red blood my brain functioned to get me out of this.

The waiting room!

I need to get back to the waiting room!

Following my brains’ final decision made through the excruciating pain, I went back, tracing the steps I took to come here, back to the waiting room.

I tried whatever I could to get back on both feet; however, without being able to stay balanced, I fell.

AARRRRGGGGHHHH! FUCK!

The arrow must’ve grazed the floor as I fell; the pain arose again.

Tears were flowing from my eyes.

I stayed on all fours, and using the sword in my hand like a hook I stuck it in the floor as I dragged myself forward.

My muscles screamed as I crawled with my two hands and one usable leg.

They screamed in pain. Agony.

At the same time, the ankle with the arrow pierced through it screamed as if it were experiencing the most pain.

[You have learned: Pain Tolerance: Lv.1]

It took me a long, gruelling hour to get to where I was.

Crawling like a lizard with one of my retarded legs, I could see no end to this path.

The crazy speed of my desperate pain-induced crawling was slowing down.

‘Pant, pant, pant.’

The pain subsided from a fresh deep piercing pain to a more compressed and controlled pain.

It must’ve been adrenaline or some shit, but it felt like my brain was finally functioning.

I kept moving forward, even as I was moving forward I kept checking my body status.

I didn’t know if the leg with the arrow pierced through it became paralyzed or something, other than the pain I didn’t feel anything. I tried moving my toes but they didn’t move. No, I didn’t even know if they moved or not, because I couldn’t feel them.

[You have learned: Pain Tolerance Lv.2]

[You have learned: Haemorrhage Tolerance Lv.1]

Fucking tolerance my ass. I felt no effect.

My normal leg and both my arms and shoulders were trembling all over.

‘Pant. Pant. Pant.’

My lungs warned me to stop the physical exercise and demanded more air.

I could hear a high pitched ringing in my ear, maybe due to excessive haemorrhage.

I could feel a chill on my head of ever-rising temperature.

I stole the sweat drops of my arm and laid them on my face. It was still as hot as a bonfire.

Then, the chill I felt on my face was...

At that moment, I felt a growing dizziness and my vision started to fade.

The word ‘Death’ flashed in my head.

Think of this as a game? You fucking idiot!

This pain, this feeling. It’s real!

Death will be real too.

I couldn’t see anything anymore.

I tried rubbing my eyes, pushing on my eyelids and opening my eyes again, but I saw nothing.

In this pitch black place, relying on the faint senses on my arms and legs, I moved.

Luckily the corridor was a straight line.

If I ignored the stone floor I felt on my arms and legs, the only thing I could feel were my own tears rolling down my face.

I thought my tears had all dried up as I crawled my way through this misery, but the pressure of death let my tears flow once more.

Still, I didn't give up and allowed my arms and legs to play in this darkness.

I didn't want to die here in misery.

I don't want to die.

Even if I die I shouldn't die like this.

Never will I die like this.

How long has it been since I started crawling,

I wonder how far I've crawled.

Am I even crawling forward?

A flood of drowsiness filled my head.

I couldn't feel any part of my body anymore.

It is said that the most extreme feeling of pleasure a human can experience is the feeling right before death.

I've seen some perverts on the internet actually die by strangling themselves in attempt to feel this extreme pleasure.

Fuck, sure as hell do I understand them. I want to rely on this drowsiness. Instead of denying and struggling, I just want to stay relaxed.

Is it going to end like this?

Because of a moment of carelessness?

No. I won't become careless. I'll stay aware of my surroundings and slowly...

It was an attack I couldn't detect or even block with my skills.

If I didn't have a shield, the first arrow would've pierced through my heart and I would've died there in an instant.

Just why...

(voooooommmm)

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

Chapter 9

Tutorial 1st Floor (2)

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

[You have learned: Stun Resistance Lv.1]

[You have learned: Battle Concentration Lv.2]

[You have learned: Awakening Lv.1]

Have I arrived...

As I regained consciousness, I saw a faint blue light shining from the portal.

I see the portal. My eyes came back to focus in this miraculous moment. The fact that I was able to see again overwhelmed me with joy.

I did it. I stayed alive.

Now I had to decide.

There was one question that wouldn't leave my head even when I was confused and in pain.

What would happen if I went back to the waiting room with the arrow still pierced through my ankle?

What happens if I were to be healed in that state?

If I were to heal instantly with an arrow in me... maybe both my muscles and nerves would be crippled beyond repair, even with the

power of the waiting room.

Do I have to remove the arrow before I enter?

How would I know? I'm not a doctor.

Maybe the waiting 's healing power is omnipotent like that of a game and would send a message,

'You have been hit by an arrow. We will remove the arrow first then heal you :D'

And provide exceptional customer service like that.

But if it doesn't, I don't know what will happen to my leg.

And so I decided.

Although I was on the verge of death not too long ago, maybe it was the new skills I learned or maybe I saw the chance of being able to live but I could feel some vitality coming back in my body.

Perhaps my body is burning the last vestige of life, with death waiting just beyond.

I had no time to waste.

Alright, let's do this. I could simply enter the portal if the pain and danger was at critical level.

Maybe it was due to the new skills or my nerves must have all died but the pain coming from my body had lessened significantly.

With full determination, I sat next to the portal leaning on an adjacent wall.

I could really die at any time now. I couldn't even see just a moment ago.

If something went wrong, if I had the slightest thought that my consciousness was slipping, get in the portal.

I confirmed to myself.

“Hooo.”

I took a deep breath and bit down hard on the leather strap of my round shield.

I raised my right knee.

With my hands shaking, I raised my sword...

And struck downwards.

Tick.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHH

Tremendous amount of pain struck me again, as if it came from the very depths of hell.

Blood dripped between my gums as I made inaudible groans.

Instinctively to protect myself, I reached out to the portal. However, instead of teleporting back to the portal, I held on firmly.

I brought the sword up again after crying and groaning for a time.

It was impossible trying to hit the arrow off in one swing. It was too greedy of me. No, why did I even have the thought of it being possible to begin with? I must have just gone mental from the overwhelming pain.

I lifted the sword once more and placed it on the arrow.

I started sawing.

"Uuuh! Guuuh!"

With each movement of the sword, I felt the pain piercing through my spine up to my neck.

Tick.

Finally, the tip of the arrow had been sawn off.

The pain finally subsided.

With my hand shaking, I grabbed on to the other half of the arrow pulled it out at once.

I had to groan and cry once more from the burning pain within my ankle.

Now instead of physically feeling painful, I felt emotionally depressed. Fucking. Why me. Fucking son of a bitch.

These fucking cunts. I don't know who you are. But I will kill you.

[You have learned: Pain Tolerance Lv.3]

[You have learned: Haemorrhage Tolerance Lv.2]

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Finally it was over.

It was time to be freed from this pain.

It felt like I was about to white out due to the pain but I also finally felt a sense of relief.

To end it, I pierced a small splinter of the arrow into the palm of my hand.

[Travel to 1st floor waiting room?]

Yes.

And then I lost consciousness.

“Mmmmm...”

When I woke up and opened my eyes, I saw the familiar view of the waiting room that I had stayed at for a few days.

I couldn't feel pain any longer.

Slowly, I began to remember the pain I felt just before I fainted.

I actually nearly died.

It was beyond close, the closest anyone had ever reached.

I had pretty much done all the warm up exercises, changed into a swimming suit, dove straight into the River Styx, then was sent back because of a false start.

If I had come back here a little bit later, I may have had to introduce myself to my ancestors.

“Haaa...”

I felt a little bit relief. I avoided death and was free from pain.

As I looked downwards, my body was completely covered with dried blood. The white T-shirt I wore had dyed completely red.

And... Fuck. Did I piss myself?

Luckily the waiting room completely nullified the smell of blood and piss.

I looked at the ceiling all dazed and lifted up my right hand.

The splinter of the arrow was rolling around on the floor and my wound was completely healed.

How nice. The service supplied by the waiting room was much more exceptional than I had expected.

It pulled out the splinter from my hand and even healed it.

In other words, all that bullshit I went through for trying to take out the fucking arrow out of my ankle was for nothing.

Ahhh... Why am I so dumb? Am I retarded?

If I had to pull it out, I could've just pulled it out in the waiting room. Not only does the waiting room heal everything, it also nullifies all sense of pain.

To do something so insane just because I regained hope from getting to the portal.

It wouldn't have been odd if I died due to shock, or even excessive blood loss.

Simply said, I literally gambled with my life on the line.

Haa... Let's not do something like that again.

...How did everyone else do.

“Community.”

[Difficulty Hell, Noticeboard (1/1)] P1

.....

Um, what?

How do I take this in?

I read it once more.

.....

Difficulty Hell, Noticeboard (1/1)

.....

Again.

Difficulty Hell.

It meant the Tutorial's difficulty was Hell.

Hell difficulty, Noticeboard.

It meant the Noticeboard for Hell difficulty in the Tutorial's Community.

Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/1)

The first 1 meant the number of people currently on the Community.

In the Hell waiting room, there was one person and the person looking in the Community chat was only me.

Ok. I understand the 1.

The second 1 meant the total number of people in Hell difficulty.

1.

.....

I see. They're dead.

All three of them.

‘How did all three of them die? This is unbelievable.’ For some reason I didn’t feel any sort of emotion like that.

To be honest, the thought of them possibly dying did cross my mind. In fact, surviving it would be more of a surprise. It was a miracle to do so.

If I didn’t have my shield I would have definitely died 10 times out of 10.

On top of that, Kyung Min and Su Ah didn’t even know they could come back to the waiting room.

Even if they avoided instant death, it would be difficult to survive all the bleeding.

Was it because I was about to die just before? Am I still in too much shock to feel emotion? Or, have I already adjusted to this crazy situation.

The deaths of the other three did not send me into any emotional or mental shock.

Although It was only for 3 days, I thought I managed to make a bond beyond that of friendship with them. But, all I felt was a little sadness for them, only that.

Was I the weird one?

I don’t know.

Fuck.

Although my brain had calmly accepted the situation, tears flowed from my eyes. To think I could still cry even after all that shit that happened before.

“...Status bar.”

It's better to focus on something else to stop the crying.

I saw a lot of messages indicating I had received skills when I crawled my way to the portal. I couldn't check them because of the situation I was in before, so I opened the status bar to check it out.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 11

Intelligence: 21

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.2, Will Lv.1, Awakening Lv.1, Pain ToleranceLv3., Haemorrhage Tolerance Lv.2, Stun Resistance Lv.1

Battle Concentration and Will skills that I learnt before being struck by the arrow had levelled up by one.

I also received 3 Resistance skills and Awakening.

Just looking at the name of the resistances vividly reminded me of the pain I went through.

[Pain Tolerance(Lv.3)]

Description: Resistance towards status effect 'pain' is increased.

[Haemorrhage Tolerance(Lv.2)]

Description: Resistance towards status effect 'haemorrhage' is increased.

[Stun Resistance (Lv.1)]

Description: Resistance towards status effect 'stun' is increased.

All of them were passive skills that increased my resistance to a status effect.

They definitely looked like good, useful skills but I didn't want to look at its effects at all.

All they did were to increase my resistance a little. They didn't lessen the pain I felt or even stop any bleeding.

[Awakening (Lv.1)]

Description: Awakens the mind for a period of time in times of dire need.

This looked like another passive skill too.

It would be nice if I had an active skill. I was just a little disappointed.

Now with everything checked...

Do I have to go back again?

Chapter 10

Tutorial 1st Floor (3)

[1st attempt, Day 1. 8:20]

[Please enter the stage. Time left: 19 hours 12 minutes]

The waiting room of the Tutorial is like the healing well of an AOS genre game. Like a homebase, it is a place that completely restores one's health.

Moreover, you have a limited time you can stay within the area.

I shouldn't waste this precious time.

I[Enter the stage?]

"Yes"

[Welcome to Tutorial stage, Hell difficulty 1st floor]

This made it my third time here.

A dark straight corridor.

At first, I felt an unknown excitement and nervousness. It enthralled me. The second time was not very different but now...

Now I feel a slight horror in this place.

Mmmm...

No signs of blood stains but I'm sure I lost a large amount of blood when I crawled back here. Not to mention, I was a fucking idiot for

trying to pull out the arrow which made me lose even more blood.

However, the walls and floor were spotless. Not a single drop of red.

It was as if the whole stage reset when I went to the waiting room and back.

I took in everything and with it came a dreadful conclusion.

What if the arrow trap got reset as well?

Ahh, fuck. I'm gonna get hit again for sure.

But what could I do? I couldn't just stay here and idle at the Tutorial's entrance.

I don't know what penalty there was if I don't clear the area in time. Let's go. I must move.

I wasn't entirely sure, but I vaguely remembered the general target of the arrows that were to be shot.

I didn't know what awaited me before yet I somehow still managed to stay alive. I should at least try and clear this stage cleanly now.

Now, positive thinking. They say optimism could change the world.

Let's go!

Aaaaaahhhhhhh.....

I think it's hereeeeeee

I think roughly the trap was hereeeee.....

Every step forward got heavier than the last.

Was it because I got so fucked up from the first time?

I was scared to the bone.

However, I couldn't stop here.

I slowly took deep controlled breaths.

I covered my eyes and quietly calmed myself down.

I could do this!

One step forward.

Remember. Two above the shield. One straight ahead.

Lastly, one to the ankle.

Ahh, But what if the pattern changed too?

Ahhh..... I was getting paranoid.

I stumbled backwards.

What if the pattern had really changed?

I pondered for a while.

Final conclusion.

So what if the pattern changed? Was there really anything I could do about that?

No.

It was just like before, I didn't know when or where the arrow would come.

At that moment I thought, 'Let's just avoid instant death'. Yeah, I thought like that.

I should protect my heart and torso in general with my shield and with the sword in my right hand I should protect my neck and head.

In the end, I was back to square one.

After some deep thought, I raised my shield and slowly, very slowly moved forward.

It felt like I was scraping away my life every step at a time.

I've never played it before but, If I were to play Russian Roulette, I felt like it would feel like this.

I took a step.

Then another step.

My heart skipped a beat every time I took a step forward.

Again another step.

Tick!

An arrow!

Another!

Tick!

I shielded myself from the second arrow too!

Third one to the head!

The third one will come to the head!

I instantly crouched.

Nice, I dodged it! I did it!

But then, a silver projectile flashed before my eyes.

It was an arrow.

Pook-

I stopped the arrow that flew towards me out of the blue with my right arm.

With my unstable crouched position and the excruciating pain I felt in my right arm. In shock, I fell before I knew it.

And again,

Pook-

The last arrow pierced my ankle.

"Oooooooooooooooooooooo..."

The pain I felt in my arm and ankle felt like it was travelling up my nerves to burn my brain to ash.

At that moment,

[Level up]

[Dexterity increased by 2. Endurance increased by 1. Pain tolerance increased by 1.]

Huh?

As the level up message appeared, the pain subsided.

"What the..."

The arrows pierced through my arm and ankle had both disappeared. My wounds were all healed too, just as if I was in the waiting room.

Well, just my luck.

So, there was such a thing as levelling up.

It appeared that your HP is restored to full when you level up.

"Status bar."

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.1

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 15

Endurance: 12

Intelligence: 21

Skills: Battle concentration Lv.2, Will Lv.2, Awakening Lv.1, Pain tolerance Lv.4, Haemorrhage tolerance Lv.2, Fainting tolerance Lv.1

I found some slight changes when I viewed my status bar.

As the message said, My dexterity and endurance had increased a little and my pain tolerance level had increased by one.

And lastly,

Lv.1

Was I Lv.0 before? Did I even have a level?

Since there was nothing about levels in the status bar before, I thought there wasn't a levelling system.

I was so, so lucky that I had levelled up in that exact moment in time.

Otherwise, I would have had to crawl back to the waiting room again with an arrow stuck in my ankle AND my arm.

Or maybe, I could've died too.

Phew...

Now. Let's clear up this information.

I had to think about how I could use this new information to my advantage.

Firstly, there's the traps.

The pattern of the trap was exactly the same as it was in my first encounter.

One arrow to my left arm.

One to my heart.

One towards my forehead.

One towards my ankle.

Before my second encounter, I had thought of something.

How could a trap aim directly for those critical areas?

A person's physique could vary, or a person could just stick themselves to a wall and follow it.

But not this trap, the trap knew exactly where my critical areas were and shot arrows precisely towards them.

The trap wasn't set so it would follow a set path. It was set to aim for areas on my body and then fired.

That's why even though I crouched after I had blocked the first two arrows, the third arrow was fired directly towards my forehead instead of missing and flying above me.

If I hadn't quickly blocked the arrow with my right arm, I could've really just died there.

I couldn't simply memorize the pattern and dodge pre-emptively.

I had to dodge the arrow after it had been fired or alternatively, raise my shield to block it.

But still, if I knew the pattern, I would still be able to react much faster thanks to this precious information.

What I learned next was the level up.

After levelling up, my body was completely healed. Not only did it heal my wounds, it also cleared the fatigue that I was starting to feel.

I came to a realization, there were 2 ways to heal myself.

The waiting room and levelling up.

The waiting room provided me with the option to heal whenever I want, with the downfall that I must backtrack my steps to get there.

Levelling up allowed me to be healed instantly at that time, but I couldn't tell when I would level up.

In light of this information, my chances of survival had definitely increased.

The third thing I learned was the conditions to level up.

I guess it's like exp?

I definitely levelled up after being hit by the last arrow.

I could think of two conditions to level up in this situation.

Firstly, I had cleared the trap.

I cleared the trap twice.

And let's think about the times I got hit by an arrow or had blocked an arrow.

I had blocked 5 arrows and got hit by 3.

If I were to gain exp by blocking arrows or getting shot by one, to keep levelling up and progress further, I had to attempt as many traps as I could.

Even with two experiences on the verge of death, I knew it would be even harder from here.

The messages kept reminding me that this was the 1st floor of the Tutorial.

There will be a 2nd floor, and there will be a 3rd floor. I think if difficulties can rise, they will rise. But I don't think things will ever get easier.

The last piece of information I gathered from this experience was that, I levelled up during my second attempt and not my first.

I gained experience points from a trap that had been reset due to my actions of going in and coming back from the waiting room.

With all this information summed up, my final conclusion was simple.

I had to venture on.

I must attempt and challenge more and more to gain exp and grow.

Whether I dodge arrows or not, I still gain exp.

So, it was just like from the beginning, I just had to avoid instant death.

I could still rely on levelling up and heading back to the waiting room to heal any non-fatal wounds.

No matter how painful and unberable it was.I must grow and level up as much as it possible to in the 1st floor.

This wasn't the time to be scared of injury. This was the time for me to move forward.

I couldn't let fear rule me and inhibit my growth.

[1st attempt, Day 1. 9:05]

I don't know how long I am allowed to stay in the first floor.

Who knows, there could be a time limit.

I couldn't waste any more time.

I had to change my playstyle.

With full determination I walked forward.

Instead of walking at a pace where I'd be yawning of boredom, I walked with faster strides. However, I took these steps cautiously and didn't keep my guard down.

[You have learned Will Lv.2]

[The God of Adventure shows interest in you.]

[Endurance increased by 1.]

Chapter 11

Tutorial 1st Floor (4)

[1st attempt, Day 28. 4:05]

I was lucky for not sleeping in today.

I looked at my surroundings after quickly washing my face using the water bottle I took out from my inventory.

I'm inside the waiting room.

Finally, the 28th day.

Day 28, I had decided it as the D-day, my Maginot Line. I will clear this floor.

For the last 28 days, there was nothing but focus for growing and getting stronger.

I had lost count on how many times I was on the verge of death.

There was only determination to clear the 1st floor of the Tutorial today.

Excitement and uneasiness loomed on the horizon, maybe it was because it was the day of the test.

Before departing I opened my inventory to fill my stomach a bit.

I took out the jerky I saved up for today.

Usually I had a salty beef jerky, but today I had a special sweet pork jerky.

Of the jerky bundle I had in my inventory, it was the last portion of pork.

The spicy kick that helped to alleviate the feeling of the greasiness, on top of not being hard and chewy, made it easy to have.

After having a mouthful of the jerky, I cleaned my greasy fingers on my clothes.

I had one last swig of water and put my water bottle back in my inventory.

“Community.”

It was the Community noticeboard where I could converse with other survivors in the Tutorial.

Although I was the only one alive in the hell difficulty, there weren't that many survivors in the other difficulties.

Like how the difficulties differ, the Tutorials were also different. However, there were still shared similarities across all difficulties.

It was already made known that a few people had cleared the 1st floor of the Tutorial.

These individuals had shared the information they had gathered on how they cleared the 1st floor.

After checking for new information in the Community noticeboard, I turned it off.

It was time to leave.

[Enter the stage?]

“Yes.”

[Tutorial stage, Welcome to the 1st floor of Hell difficulty.]

After a bright light was shone, I was in the 1st floor of the tutorial in a blink of an eye.

It was the same as every other time, a dark straight corridor.

After today, I will never have to see this corridor.

I jogged at ease through the dark corridor.

If it were like some time ago I would proceed with utmost caution, but this time it was different.

My eyes shone in the dark.

[Night Vision Lv.2]

[Eye Lights Lv.1]

The skill Night Vision was just like it said, it allowed me to see a little clearer in the dark.

The light and shades weren't all so clear, but thanks to this skill I was able to move easily in the dark without much hindrance.

On top of that, after learning Eye Lights, I had a clearer field of vision.

Eye Lights was the only active skill I had learned.

When I use it, the light that hit my retina was reflected outwards. Just like the shiny eyes of cats in the middle of the night.

It seemed like the Eye Lights skill barely used any of my magical energy.

Since there was nothing about MP, I couldn't really tell.

One thing was for sure, I could use it all day without any trouble.

It might even just be a toggled skill that doesn't require any MP.

Without pause, I carried on running.

The distance I still had to cover was long, but there was no need to conserve my energy.

Thank you, boosted endurance stat.

Moreover,

[Sprint Lv.1]

I learned a skill that aided me when I was running.

My body got lighter and used less energy when running.

Thanks to this skill, running was a breeze. It made me faster too.

You could feel how refreshing it was, just by running.

I didn't know before but, running was something that made me feel good.

Before I even realized, I was at the first arrow trap.

There weren't signs around but with all that I've been through, it was familiar enough for me to grasp the location of the trap by sheer instinct alone.

It was like a slight signal or even just a sudden eerie atmosphere that indicated a trap nearby.

Pew- Pew

I could hear two arrows being fired from far away.

[Heightened Senses Lv.3]

Not only did this skill boost my hearing, but it also amplified all five of my senses like sight, touch and weirdly enough my sense of taste and smell.

Before, I couldn't even tell that an arrow was flying toward me. I only knew when the arrow had already struck my shield.

Pook-

Pook-

The first and second arrows were caught in my shield.

The third arrow was in flight towards me.

I tilted my head slightly to dodge the arrow.

Next,

Jump!

The arrow glided beneath my feet.

With my increased dexterity stat, dodging these arrows were a piece of cake.

It was needless to say my experience, fitness and focus had improved greatly too.

Clearing the first arrow trap was a walk in the park.

Without stopping, I carried on.

There was much to go.

Tat. Tat. Tat.

I ran a little faster.

Towards the left side of my face, an arrow was fired from the ceiling.

While looking at the arrow, I calmly blocked it with my shield.

This arrow pierced through the shield and got stuck. It was fired with a stronger force than the previous arrows.

When I previously blocked this arrow, it had pierced the shield and my left arm.

The right side next.

Tick-

With my sword held up flat, I parried the arrow.

It fell to the floor with a 'tick' sound.

You wouldn't wanna know what I had to go through for trying to block that arrow with my sword.

I failed a few times and was actually hit a few times too.

[Beginner Swordsmanship Lv.1]

[Cut Lv.1]

However as a result, I learned some skills.

The next was an arrow directly from the front.

Although my senses had been enhanced, I couldn't tell the trajectory of the arrow and I also couldn't hear it.

I could only predict where the arrow would come from by memory and try to dodge it.

After ducking to dodge the arrow coming head on, I took a big jump

forward.

A few arrows flew beneath me as I jumped.

I landed with a forwards roll.

After checking that it was the last arrow that was shot, I stood up and started running again.

Occasionally, hard to detect arrows like these were fired.

If I think about it though, it reminded me about my first attempt of the trap.

Let's not talk about the first two arrows, I couldn't even see them.

The third arrow, I barely dodged.

As for the last arrow, I heard it.

Of course, I didn't dodge it though.

Each and every arrow was fired at different speeds and correspondingly, they all sounded different as well.

As I memorized each and every unique arrow, a sudden thought came to me.

This was real training. A tutorial.

I could tell it was all designed to train the challenger.

If it was an arrow that was hard to dodge, it was easy to detect, and if it was an arrow that was easy to dodge, it flew quieter.

Now, dodge this.

For this one, you got to use your eyes. But I'll make it easy and fire it

straight ahead of you.

The last one was hard to dodge right? I'll make it louder, easier for you to hear.'

I thought that's how the Tutorial worked, how its thought process was like.

If these traps were placed to try and kill me, I'm pretty sure it would have done so already.

For ordinary people, the difficulty that they were in may seemed like it was designed that way.

Where death was inevitable.

Ahead of me was the most dangerous trap of the 1st floor.

The bottomless pit.

The width was roughly 20 metres. The only way to get across was by dragging yourself along the rope tied across the pit.

When I first attempted this trap, I hadn't learned Night Vision and nearly fell into the abyss.

I almost slipped to death, but luckily I held on to the rope firmly, clinging to life.

Continuing on, I slowly dragged myself across the pit via the rope.

Thanks to growth of my muscles and stats, it wasn't that hard to cross.

The problem however, was the arrow that was fired at that moment.

Since I was literally holding on to life, I couldn't dodge the arrow and had no choice but to be hit by it.

The danger of the arrow plus the danger of falling. The number of

times I nearly died while attempting this trap was too much to count.

But this time...

Tat. Tat. Tat.

There was no reason to stop. I charged forward.

When I reached the rope, instead of hanging onto it, I ran forward.

I could hear the whizzing sounds of the arrows flying towards me but none of them actually hit.

I was able to run across without falling like a trapeze artist thanks to my balancing skills.

It was only possible due to the combination of my heightened senses.

At this moment, I learned that similar skills could be combined.

Alright, there goes the cliff trap.

Now it was time for the most tedious trap.

Now, from here it was a running section. You have to run without stopping for 30 minutes.

After 30 minutes of running, there was a trap.

And after that, you had to run again for another 30 minutes and yet another trap would await your presence.

It goes on and on like this, multiple times.

If you were able to go on a long distance without hindrance, an arrow would fly towards you out of the blue.

That was a critical trap.

It was mentally exhausting to go through such a thing. Just picture, travelling with nervousness and tension, but just as you start to get comfortable, an arrow silently flies towards you.

I couldn't really tell the specific distance that triggers it either, even after running for thirty minutes.

It felt like the distances in which the traps were spread out weren't equal.

So, without dropping your guard you had to keep running and dodge the arrow when you noticed it.

It wasn't a battle against the Tutorial, it was a battle to keep a focused mind for long periods of time.

A battle against myself.

[Battle Concentration Lv.5]

If this wasn't one of the few skills that I had learned initially, my entire experience here might have been more perilous.

With that, I was able to keep myself focused enough for such dangers to not become a matter when running long distances.

Honing this skill made it gradually easier for me to detect and dodge arrows that came from nowhere.

I was quite proud of myself for improving and growing like this for the last 28 days.

I kept running forward with the refreshing air hitting my face.

Chapter 12

Tutorial 1st Floor (5)

"Uh... Uh..."

I took a momentary pause to catch my breath. Despite my improved stats and abilities, this journey proved to be strenuous and time consuming.

I had left the waiting room at 4 O'clock and had ran for 15 hours non-stop.

Effortlessly making my way through the ridiculous arrow traps that were planted along the way.

I just needed a little more time. No more, no less, just 3 more hours, it would have changed and made things easier. However, it looked like Tutorial had deemed I wasn't to be given such a luxury.

A few days ago, new information had spread in the Community chat,

Every 1st attempt had to be completed within 30 days.

The penalty for not clearing the 1st floor within 30 days was still unknown to us.

You could be ousted from the Tutorial due to failing, maybe even receive judgement due to failing. Who knew?

This only meant one thing. I had to clear this floor today, tomorrow, or at least by the day after tomorrow.

I took out the water bottle from my inventory and splashed water on my face.

A small burst of renewed energy surged through me as the cold water touched my face.

While jumping up and down, I checked my status.

There was no problem with my focus, and I wasn't bleeding too much. There were no weakened senses either.

There were 2 arrows pierced through my right arm.

Throughout my time here, I had grown a considerable amount and experienced multiple traps. Despite this, I still wasn't able to get through this stage without taking any harm.

I couldn't produce a strategy in time, so I just tanked a few arrows instead of dodging and subsequently, even though I knew they were coming, they naturally found their way through to me.

This was the time when I was barely able to tell the difference between different types of arrows that were fired.

If the first arrow was shot from a damaged long bow, the later traps felt like they were shot from a powerful recurve bow. Some of them were fired with such power that it made you wonder if there was a ballista lying around.

Truth be told, I've never seen a longbow or even a recurve bow but I'm going to assume that this was the force those respective bows would exert on their arrows.

Luckily I levelled up just a moment ago, so I only have 2 arrows pierced through me.

Ah, I could only imagine how good it would feel if there were no arrows in me.

Whatever, this was still good.

I've been hit by so many arrows that being hit by just 2 felt like just a minor injury.

“Phewww-“

As I looked towards the ground I saw a red line drawn.

It was just screaming to me ‘Theres a trap here!’. This was the only trap in Tutorial where it actually warned me that there was one.

As soon as I crossed the red line arrows were flying towards from up down left and right.

The scary part of this was, there was no pattern in which how the arrows were fired.

This trap was a close second in terms of danger compared to the cliff trap earlier on.

On my first attempt, I was hit by so many arrows that I looked like a hedgehog and dressed in my swimming gear trying to cross the River Styx.

Thanks to my luck of the gods, I levelled up and was able to survive it.

For my second attempt I memorised the ‘pattern’ that I had experienced in my first attempt.

Since there were arrows shot in every direction, I couldn’t memorise the order of all the arrows, but after memorising the arrows that were aimed towards my critical points I attempted the trap.

In result, I nearly died.

The arrows that were fired other than the arrows I had memorised were deadly.

I couldn’t respond to them in time.

The outcome. I got hit by double the amount of arrows I got hit in the first attempt.

This time I pretty much crossed the River Styx and held hands with my great grandfather.

The whole time it's been about patterns!

Why are there no patterns out of the blue?

Wasn't this just a bit too much?

If I didn't see it ahead of the trap after my first attempt, I would've died just there.

Now this was my third attempt at this trap.

First, I roughly broke off the arrows in my arm.

I couldn't take them out and heal myself at this very moment so I broke them off so they wouldn't get in the way when trying to move.

It was impossible to move my right arm to swing the sword due to the damage from the arrows. My limit was to just hold the sword in my hands. I'll use my right arm and the sword like a shield.

A round shield on my left arm. A retarded shield on my right arm.

Perfect.

I was fully prepared.

Now I just lumbered up and massaged a few sore spots on my body.

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHh.....!

Fuck. You can do this Lee Ho Jae.

Who cares if there isn't a pattern. You can do this. No, you have to do this.

Even doing pointless shit like psyching myself before the trap took up some time.

Although there was still some time left to clear the 1st attempt, I wasn't sure how long it would take to fully clear this.

I needed to be more resourceful with what time I had left and move with haste.

Ok, let's go.

I realised something after my first two attempts of this trap.

Arrows were fired only 3 seconds after I had crossed the red line.

In other words, I had to gap as far as I could in those 3 seconds.

I took a few steps back from the red line.

After I controlled my breathing, I got into a ready position for running that I had learned in high school.

Now was it hands at shoulder width?

Argh, it was hard to get in the position with the sword and shield.

With one knee bent.

Now raise your leg and ass.

Aaannnndd..... GO!

I sprinted with all my might.

I was at the red line at an instant.

Damn! This felt like doing long jump off a cliff!

This was the greatest high I've ever felt!

Tat!

I crossed the red line.

I didn't slow down.

I couldn't stop now!

Three!

Two!

One!

Nice! I'm already past halfway!

As soon as I reached zero on my countdown I saw a flash of an arrow tip ahead of me.

I jumped to slide tackle across the floor.

From there, lots of arrows were fired at a low height.

There was no need to pay attention to the arrows coming from behind and from the sides.

I was going forward at a very fast speed.

Slowing down wasn't an option, so I ended up rolling without control to try and dodge the arrows.

With a *PABABABT* I heard arrows getting stuck in the ground.

I deflected arrows on my left side with the shield as I was rolling.

I felt a dull pain in my wrist.

My wrist must've been twisted due to the shield strapped to my arm when I was rolling along the floor.

I ignored the full pain I felt and ran forward.

I couldn't stop for even a moment in this trap.

Since there were arrows being fired from every direction I had to maintain a high running speed forward so I would be hit by less arrows from the back and sides.

If I got hit around my waist or my legs by at least one arrow I wouldn't be able to move and my chances of dying would increase greatly.

It was a price to pay when you could detect pretty much everything in your path with heightened senses.

Tong!

As I blocked the arrow that flew to the left side of my face with my shield, another arrow flew to my bare stomach.

I panic and blocked it with my right arm.

With a pook sound of my muscles tearing, the arrows pierced through my right arm.

Damn!

The arrow had pierced near where the previous arrows were already stuck in and that exponentially increased the pain.

I was trying to maintain my speed without stopping once, but due to the pain and shock I stopped for a split second.

POOK! POOK! POOK!

A few arrows were fired from behind.

I bent over to the side to dodge the arrows, but due to the slowed speed I was struck by one arrow to my back.

ARRrrrrghghhhhh!

Fuck, now there was no choice.

I had to carry on running forward blocking the arrows I saw and tanking every other arrow like a rampaging hulk.

Forward!

Instead of trying to dodge the arrows aimed at my face, I raised my arms and shield to block it.

One careless head tilt to the side of an incoming arrow that wasn't in my field of vision would be the end of me.

Pook, pook.

A few more arrows struck my body.

Ignoring the pain, I carried on.

It felt like every step I took tore my back muscles due to the arrowhead stuck in there.

Pook.

An arrow struck my left calf.

As the arrow struck deep in the muscle, my left leg ceased to move for a moment.

In that one moment, my rhythm got tangled and I ended up falling.

I stood up instantly with death flashing right in front my eyes as motivation and began to run. It was more like a half hop with speed.

Arrows weren't flying towards me from just the behind...

Ahead!

At the very moment my focus was slightly hindered, I tried to dodge an arrow coming from ahead by tilting my head, however it ended up piercing my ear instead.

Arrrrgrhgh!

I was losing vision and my balance. Then.

Pook!

An arrow struck my right heel.

Ahhh great, now I couldn't use both my legs.

I thought to myself, 'Was this really how I'm going to die?'

I threw my body forward with all my energy.

Puck!

Eeeuughhh!

Since there was nothing sound about giving up, a forward roll as a landing was a luxury that I couldn't even dream of in these circumstances.

And,

Pshhhhhhh...

I heard water.

I must've cleared the trap.

I lived again...

[Healing Well]

Description: Heals when consumed or rubbed. It may work for your bald head too...

When I had taken more damage in the second attempt compared to the first attempt of this trap, it was the healing well that allowed me stay alive.

I slowly crawled to the Healing Well.

With what strength I had left, I threw my body into the healing waters.

And just like that, I lost consciousness.

Chapter 13

Tutorial 1st Floor (6)

[1st attempt, Day 29. 2 O'clock]

‘Gasp!’

Wow, out of all the ways to die... I nearly died from drowning.

Everything was fine until I decided to toss myself into the healing well, I nearly became the ghost of the waters.

Wow...

I looked around myself and saw the healing well dyed in red.

Just from the look of things, this was more like a leva pool from hell than a healing well.

I’m almost completely healed from it, so it’s fine.

“Hup.”

I let out a short shout and concentrated as I took out the arrows in me, one by one.

Blood gushed out of my wounds as I pulled out the arrows from my bare body.

Luckily the healing well instantly acted to heal it.

Awwww, Ho Jae you’re so good at taking out arrows!

Is anyone going to compliment me?

I felt a little proud about myself, just like when I was young and finally got the hang of using chopsticks.

Wow, I'm growing stronger. At this rate, soon I'll become a troll.

Perhaps later you could even use my blood to create potions.

Hahahahahahaha. Fuck.

I made my way to the fountain of the healing well to drink some of the water that wasn't contaminated by my own blood.

It kind of tasted like coconut water. Ew.

After I had thoroughly checked that my body had fully recovered, I waddled out of the healing well.

While waiting for myself to dry out from all the water and blood, I decided to sort out my thoughts.

First, the mistakes I made in the previous trap.

It was my third try.

Even on my third attempt I got injured too much.

Like, wayyy too much.

I think it was even worse from the first attempt.

I shouldn't have taken this amount of damage, not from how far I've come and grown compared to when I initially attempted the crazy trap.

There was only one explanation. The time when I blocked an arrow coming straight towards me with my bare right arm.

The arrowhead must've hit some sort of nerve in there and my body stopped moving for an instant, causing me to become disorientated at

the high speed that I was moving at.

On top of that, I even calmly thought that it would be better to tank a few more arrows rather than to dodge them. In my head, I thought it would be alright because there wasn't much distance left to cover.

In result, I nearly died, yet again.

Now let's think of it again. The arrows that were fired didn't have a consistent pattern like the previous traps.

But the frequency in which they were fired in was.

Then maybe, Tutorial wasn't trying to test how fast I could clear it, but instead to calmly dodge each arrow one at a time?

I couldn't say for certain without any proof but I think it might just be so.

So the traps in this tutorial wasn't simply to inflict excruciating pain while you clear them.

If you think of the concept of the traps, they were designed to help you grow and improve.

Perhaps if I stood still, or even moved slowly to calmly dodge the arrows...

I maybe could've learned a new skill based on dodging.

Even if I didn't, it would've been good experience.

To constantly gain some sort of experience was the key element to becoming stronger.

If I just had a bit more time, I wonder how things would've changed if I had tried that trap four to five... no just even one more time.

It was a little saddening that I didn't have much time left.

Honestly, there was no choice. There wasn't enough time to backtrack to the waiting room and get back to this point.

I had already attempted this trap for the third time.

There were plenty of opportunities to gain something out of it.

It was my fault for not taking advantage of that fact.

"Status."

[Lee Ho Jae]

Lv.6

Strength: 12

Dexterity: 21

Endurance/Stamina: 16

Intelligence: 22

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.5, Will Lv.3, Awakening Lv.1, Night vision Lv.2, Eye Lights Lv.1, Sprint Lv.1, Heightened Senses Lv.3, Beginner Swordsmanship Lv.1, Cut Lv.1, Pain Tolerance Lv.8, Haemorrhage Tolerance Lv.4, Fainting Tolerance Lv.1, Piercing Tolerance Lv.1

Miscellaneous: The God of Adventure has interest in you.

In that time, Pain Tolerance had gained a level.

I prayed that at level 10 it would evolve into a skill like Pain Immunity. Please do so.

Pain Tolerance allowed you to withstand pain, not lessen it.

Thanks to Heightened Senses, it felt like my sensation of pain was more noticeable now. This fucking...

I turned off the status bar after checking that not much had changed other than that.

I took out some jerky from my inventory and walked as I munched on its chewy goodness.

The salty taste out of the blue shocked my tongue.

A new piece of information was spread around in the Community chat. It was some weird theory that there was a boss room at the end of each floor. Many didn't believe it but as more and more people who had cleared the first floor confirmed its existence, the theory became a fact.

In addition, if I followed the information given in the Community chat, it also stated that the Healing Well was the last part of the tutorial.

In other words, the boss room was right ahead.

I was finally at the point of clearing the 1st floor of the tutorial. At this point, I've reached this Healing Well and there was only one more trap left, the boss room.

"Finally, I can see the end."

If I really wanted to clear this a little quicker, I probably could've attempted the boss room a few days ago.

However, I decided that it would be better to grind my way through as much as I could and hence attempted each trap multiple times.

Now today, on the second last day of what time was allotted to me, I will finally challenge the boss room.

I was constantly wringing out the water from my clothes while I walking when the corridor was suddenly filled with a thick fog.

I took a few more steps, a large stone door appeared.

As I laid my hand on the stone door while thinking, ‘How do I open this?’, a message appeared in my field of vision.

[Will you attempt this?]

Um, I need an explanation.

Can that be arranged?

A warning sign about a boss room would have been nice.

“Yes.”

Anyway, it was fine. I had worked so hard so I that could walk with confidence at this very moment right?

I worked so hard that I puked blood pfft...

I believed in what I had achieved over the time.

Guguguguugug- With the loud vibrating sound of the towering stone door, it opened.

A pond appeared ahead of the stone door.

Kooguguguguugugu- Boom!

The stone door closed tightly shut with a loud crash. I guess it had no plans of opening again. Damn.

Without a choice, I turned to face the pond again.

[Please enter.]

Damn.

No. Fuck, Why are you doing this to me, like really.

I remembered everything that was shared on the Community chat in regards to the boss room.

But apart from that, there was nothing about this fucking unbalanced difficulty of a boss room.

The theme of the Hell difficulty 1st floor was arrow traps.

So I predicted, based on the information given on the Community chat, that the boss room would be related to these types of traps.

I was dead right.

The walls and ceilings were packed with arrow traps.

Except I had one little error.

The pond right in front of me.

A lava pond.

With temperatures that was high enough that it looked like it would cook my skin instantly, my heart felt like it was being squeezed as I gazed upon it.

These crazy shits.

There were 9 circular stone bridges.

They were arranged as a 3 by 3 formation. The 9 stone bridges were separated with equal distance, roughly 2 metres apart.

The bridges weren't even flat.

The stone was carved with a round surface and the texture was smooth.

Man, who would even call this shit stone a ‘bridge’.

However just before, a message appeared for me to enter, asking to stand on those bridges.

[1st floor stage, Welcome to the final gateway. The trial begins the instant a step is taken upon the stone bridge connecting the pond together. The trial lasts for 5 minutes.]

[Please enter.]

Inside I was constantly muttering *fuckfuckfuck*, but the message never appeared again.

The good thing was, I could easily grasp the whole trial.

Like how the traps were right there in the open, it was pretty obvious.

Firstly, a lava pond where I would instantly die if I fell into it.

Secondly, 9 stone bridges that were hard to balance yourself on with the round surfaces.

Lastly, a shit ton of arrow traps packed with barely any space in between them on the walls and ceiling.

This trial was obviously about dodging the arrows for 5 minutes on the stone bridges without falling.

I couldn't just drag out the time any longer, so I jumped lightly onto the closest rock.

I ducked in anticipation of an arrow flying towards me as soon as I set foot on the bridge.

Luckily, although the stone was shiny like it was waxed, it wasn't all so slippery.

Due to the round shape of the stone, there wasn't enough area for me

to stand on with both feet, but it was enough to stand on one foot comfortably.

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds.]

Oh ok. Thanks for letting me know.

Chapter 14

Tutorial 1st Floor (7)

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds]

There was apparently 30 seconds to go until the damned trial began.

Sigh.

First, I jumped to the rock in the centre.

2 metres.

My body had become somewhat abnormal thanks to the modification from the stats and skills. Making a 2m jump while standing still was an easy feat.

But still, the fact that one slip would result in my death from the lava made my heart quiver a little.

Phew, I managed to land on the centre rock with my right foot.

I was afraid that my body might lose balance during the landing but surprisingly, I managed to stay balanced.

Of course my heart was in a state of great disturbance.

Among the rocks which were positioned in a 3x3 formation, I stood in the centre and remembered the position of the other rocks without mistake.

And,

Ping!

An arrow flew without warning.

* * *

Huak.

Bending my knee, I barely dodged the arrow that was coming towards my face.

Standing on this circular rock made dodging arrows a difficult task.

So, I can't just dodge the arrows as easily as I thought.

Ping!

There were some arrows that made loud noises.

These arrows usually fly much faster, and on impact, would be more lethal.

I had to dodge these arrows.

If I block it with my shield, I'll fly backward from the impact.

Tik.

But I can't dodge all the arrows.

I couldn't maintain a proper stance while trying to dodge the arrows at the same time...

With no other choice left, I raised my shield and deflected the incoming arrow with the edge of my shield.

It's a very difficult technique for a novice who has never had proper training, and using it made me sweat on my back every time.

I managed to get a shield skill from deflecting some of the arrows

while evading all the others.

[Basic Shield Skill Lv.2]

Whad'ya know, its level 2 already.

All this time I thought it was the action and how much the action is performed that was basis of skill formation.

But within an extremely stressful situation, the shield skill grew rapidly in such a short time.

And I'm surviving thanks to that.

There was no end to the arrows...

Rather than dodging or blocking them, I jumped backward.

A backspin.

I flew without even looking back, but I was quite confident of myself.

Confident that I wouldn't slip on the landing.

I figured out something since the boss room trial began.

That Heightened Senses was an incredibly overpowered skill.

Heightened senses not only improved sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing, but also it also included all the other senses that a human may have.

If my sense of balance wasn't enhanced from the multiple tries of the rope trap before, I would have fallen in the lava a long time ago.

And if I didn't have the bonus from the Heightened Senses skill which improved not just the 5 senses, but also balance, direction and body control, I would be swimming in the lava.

I landed perfectly on the rock 2m behind me.

I twisted my waist to dodge the arrow that was fired when I landed.

My balance was shaken, but I managed to recover by swinging my arms.

Hiss

Damn it!

My clothes was caught on fire.

I don't even remember when it happened.

Was it when I jumped to the other rock, or when I ducked to dodge the arrow?

Anyway it didnt matter anymore, the moment it touched the lava it was set ablaze...

Ping, ping, ping.

Did they know that I was on fire?

The number of oncoming arrows suddenly increased.

I wanted to cut the clothes, or rub it or do anything to get the fire under control, but with these arrows, I didn't have a chance to.

As I dodged the arrows forcefully, the flames on my clothing became larger and larger.

"Uaaaah! FU! CK!"

I moved to the rock on the right as I screamed.

The arrows were getting to the point where it was impossible to dodge

them while standing still.

I had to continuously move to dodge them.

Meanwhile, the flames continued to grow and was already burning my torso.

I have heard that the worst pain a human could feel was from a burn.

Nothing could top the excruciating pain from being burned alive in this hell of arrows.

If only my senses were dulled.

I was desperate to lose consciousness.

But the moment I lose my focus, I'd fall into the lava and perish.

[You have received Pain Resistance Lv.9]

TLN: For all the tolerance skills, changed from Tolerance -> Resistance.

[You have received Burn Resistance Lv.1]

I've thought to myself multiple times, but these resistance skills are useless.

Pain was still pain, damn it.

These resistance skills improved the body and the mind's tolerance, but not lessen the pain.

The fire was now spread around my entire shirt.

The thick smoke began to shoot up my face.

I couldn't think straight as the smoke began to sting my eyes and nose.

My mind fell into misery from the sudden encroaching of death.

As I leapt toward the rock in front of me, I ripped the shirt with my strength.

And because of that, I lost my balance from the landing, and an arrow pierced my right arm as I tried to regain my balance.

It's alright.

I could still take it.

They said the trap will continue for 5 minutes.

It's a death trap full of lava, but I'm doing rather well.

I only got hit once at this point in time.

Ting-

I deflected another arrow.

Good news!

And there is also a bad news.

My ankle caught fire.

I knew for sure now.

The damn lava made anything that got close to it, even without direct contact, catch fire.

Damn it, there's no way I could take my pants off amidst the barrage of arrows. It was impossible.

My only choice was to continue while withstanding the pain from the burns.

Man, how much time had past?

I'm sure it had already been 5 minutes.

But the traps didn't seem like it was going to stop any time soon.

The entire world seemed to move slow.

The flying arrows, and the shield trying to block the arrows.

Even the bubbles forming on the lava.

As the world began to slow down in my mind, my vision became wider.

Was it similar to how professional sports players felt when they were extremely focused.

Or was it similar to the vision of death where you see your past flash before your eyes.

Only after a few minutes of the trap and I was already on death's doorstep from each passing moment.

A flying arrow.

The arrow was aimed at my stomach.

Calmly, with no hesitation, I deflected it with my shield.

There was no impact in the process.

I managed to redirect all the force the arrow had in it.

Now I looked for the next one.

It was coming straight in between my eyes.

Large movements were dangerous.

I bent my neck and shoulder with as minimal movement as possible.

My lower body hardly moved.

I was confident that I would dodge that arrow.

I watched the arrow fly past me as I tilted my head.

From the tip, to the shaft, to its feathers.

I could see everything clearly in this slow world.

If it was a baseball instead of an arrow, I felt like I could see all the individual strings on it.

Once the arrow finally flew past the side of my head, I looked for the next arrow.

There were no more.

The pain was still there, but the flames on my pants were gone.

The lava below my feet began to disappear, slowly.

The wall opposite to where I came from crumbled, making a path.

This really was a bridge huh.

Jumping across the few rocks, I headed towards the path.

[Congratulations. You have cleared the Tutorial, Hell difficulty, Floor 1.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 1000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 1000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[There is a god that has taken interest in you. You have received 500 points.]

[You will receive additional reward proportional to your play record.]

[You have received Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1]

[Please continue.]

My entire body shone with light and all injuries were healed, as if I had leveled up.

I've done it.

At the same time, multiple messages appeared before my eyes.

If I were to continue, I had to go through this path.

Before pressing on, I should check first.

Status Window.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.6

Strength: 12

Dexterity: 31

Endurance: 16

Mana: 22

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.7, Willpower Lv.3, Awakening Lv.1, Night Vision Lv.2, Light Radius/Eye Lights Lv.1, Sprint Lv.1,

Heightened Senses Lv.3, Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1, Cut Lv.1, Basic Shield Skill Lv.2, Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1, Pain Resistance Lv.9, Bleed resistance Lv.4, Stun Resistance Lv.1, Piercing Resistance Lv.1, Burn Resistance Lv.1

Extra: God of Adventure has taken an interest in you.

My level didn't increase among all that.

Shouldn't you atleast be given one for effort.

The new skills I received were Shield Skill and Burn Resistance.

Furthermore, Pain Resistance leveled up.

And the reward for clearing Floor 1, Wind Spirit's Protection.

From what I've seen in Community, most additional prizes were potions, consumable scrolls or items such as accessories.

I had never heard of receiving skills as a reward.

As it stated, the reward was proportional to the play record. It seemed all the bullshit that I've went through weren't for nothing afterall.

[Wind Spirit's Protection Lv.1]

Description: A newly born Wind Spirit's protection is with you.

Dexterity +10

Although the skill's effect was just an increase of Dexterity by 10, it was still an incredible help.

Considering that stat rewards for level ups ranged from 1 to 4, an increase of 10 was quite significant.

I closed the window, and continued down the dark path.

As my body began to relax from all the stress, my limbs were being dragged as if I were exhausted, even when I should have been fully healed.

A message appeared and I quietly replied, enter.

After a moment's feeling like I was afloat, I arrived on green plains.

What was this?

It looked like The Hobbit Village from Lord of the Rings.

And on the very plains was a girl in a white onepiece dress, crouching.

The girl was...

"A rabbit?"

Chapter 15

Tutorial 1st Floor (8)

[You have cleared the 1st Floor.]

[Auction Window and Store Window has been unlocked.]

As I stood upon the grassy plains which stretched beyond the horizon, new messages appeared before me.

Store and Auction window.

There has been some information in the Community about them.

I'll get to details about it later.

First, I needed to solve my unanswered questions.

I couldn't hold my curiosity for the crouching girl in the white one piece dress any longer.

She even had rabbit ears on her small head.

"Rabbit?"

The rabbit... the girl twitched her ears at my words,

then hopped her way towards me like a rabbit.

I was puzzled by her rabbit like movement and before I even realised, she reached in front of me and spread her chest wide and shouted.

"That's right! A rabbit!"

I could see the feeling of pride in her wide smile.

I never would have thought that the word rabbit was such an amazing compliment.

I thought it was usually used as an insult to males.

"Are you a rabbit? Or a... human?"

"Rabbit!"

Okay, I got it.

If I had to determine what she was... she was a rabbit that looked like a human, rather than just a human with rabbit ears.

Still, her figure heavily resembled a humanoid.

Well, the most important fact was not what she is, but who she was.

The master of the area who appeared right after the boss room.

According to those in the Community, they were existences like Merchant NPCs.

They provided information, and sold items using the points that were obtained from clearing the Tutorial.

In Easy difficulty, it was an old mage that appeared.

In Normal difficulty, a pale man who looked like a vampire.

In Hard difficulty, it was a giant who was more than 3m tall.

Those are the informations about them that were posted on the Community

But in Hell difficulty it's some girl with rabbit ears.

As I was contemplating how to accept the situation, the girl asked a question.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Lee Ho Jae. A human."

I wasn't sure if I had to mention my race which was visually evident, but I did it anyway.

"Lee Ho Jae? Leeeee- Hojaee? Hooooojae? That's a name?"

"Yes."

The girl grabbed onto her stomach and began to laugh at my reply.

She even fell to the ground and began to roll about.

Damn. I really wanted to smack her.

Watching her giggle away like that reminded me of that rude nephew of mine.

"Hoojaee? HooJaee! Kyahahahaha. That's your name?"

The girl's fanatical laughter lasted for a long time.

I simply sat down and watched the girl giggle away on the ground.

She might be rude and have rabbit ears but even so, she had a cute face.

And, beyond those white legs and the short skirt of the one piece dress was...

Um. Anyway.

Her laughter didn't feel so mean anymore, perhaps because of the

good eye candy I saw.

Yep. Very good. Why don't you raise those legs up abit more.

After her long laughter, she suddenly stopped with a serious face.

Then she crouched, just like when I first saw her.

The way she sat was really similar to how a rabbit sat.

Then...

Hop hop

With a face stiff as stone, she began to hop about like a rabbit.

My mind went blank when she started to move about in the plains. It was like she didn't care about me, as if she had forgotten about everything.

I was at a loss for words.

Ah, yes. It was a similar behaviour to the puppy I had raised when I was a kid.

It's just like she said, she must be closer to rabbit than human.

Especially in the head.

"Hey! What's your name?"

I shouted towards the girl who was quite a distance away now.

It looked like she managed to hear me, as she started to hop in my direction.

I'm feeling a bit of Déjà vu here.

"I'm Kirikiri!"

Kirikiri?

"Kirikiri? That's your name?"

"Yep!"

You have guts to laugh at my name, when yours is Kirikiri.

That was what I wanted to say, but seeing that proud and satisfied smile on her child like face, made it impossible.

"I see. Kirikiri, don't you have some things you need to tell me?"

"I do!"

"Then tell me."

"OK!"

Her level of intelligence really was at the level of a puppy, a puppy that could talk.

"Congrats! You can use the store and auction windows!"

"Store and Auction windows?"

"Yep!"

[You cannot use the Auction Window. Please try again in the Waiting room or Residential areas]

[Store Window]

The Store opened and multiple messages in separate categories popped up.

It seems I can buy objects using the points I've received by clearing the 1st floor.

Equipments, books, food, beds as well. They even have toys.

All sorts of items were sold in the Store.

Kirikiri began to pull at my sleeves as I glanced through the items in the Store.

"If you have something to buy, you have to buy now!"

"Why?"

"The items sold in the Waiting Room are useless for combat!"

I'm beginning to understand why the people who appeared after bossrooms are called Merchant NPCs, despite the fact that the Store could be used even in the Waiting rooms.

Combat items could only be bought from here.

My weapons are still usable.

The shield does turn into a rag after blocking a few arrows, but it could still perform its function.

Since items are fully repaired when entering the Waiting Room, there is no reason to switch it right now.

The sword was... well, I've never got the chance to use it properly so far.

Anyway, this might take a while.

There were so many items listed on the Store that it would take a whole day to go through all of them.

"Hey Kirikiri. I have a question."

"What is it?"

"What happens when you fail to clear the 1st Floor after 30 days?"

"You go back to the Waiting Room."

My face froze when those words came.

I thought that would not be possible.

"Then you can stay safe even if you don't clear the 1st floor?"

"Uum... Well."

"Don't try to brush it off, give me the details."

"When the first Round ends, all jerkies and water in the inventory disappears. After that, your only way of getting food is to use the points you accumulated to buy food from the Store. Even if you don't clear the floor, you will still receive some points when the Round ends, but the amount you get corresponds to how far you ventured in the tutorial. In the end, you have to challenge the Tutorial."

I understood after that explanation.

"Of course, you don't feel any hunger when you're in the Waiting Room, but as you know."

"You are kicked out from the Waiting Room after 24 hours."

"Yep, that's right."

"Then..."

"No."

Kirikiri suddenly closed her eyes tightly as she pulled her ears down.

What's going on now.

"I can't tell you."

"Why?"

What could she not do, and what could she not say?

"My job is to provide advice to players who manage to reach here."

Oh really now. Could you even do it? Wouldn't it be hard for you?

"But there's a limit. I can only tell those who have potential, who have achieved great results and those that I like."

"But, you've been telling me a lot of stuff now."

"Yep. we only have 1 left! So don't ask anymore. I have something to tell you."

Damn, was there a limit to how many questions that could be asked? There were many things I wanted to ask.

What was the Tutorial for and what was its goal.

The reason and why I was invited.

Returning to our real world, how and the chances.

Kirikiri's identity.

There were countless questions.

Thankfully, as long as i'm not over the limit, I can ask most of these questions.

I will have to wait until our next meeting to ask those questions.

"Whoooo... Is that so. Thanks. So, what did you want to tell me?"

Wait, I didn't waste one of my questions, because you just explained your role in here right?

I thought if I asked, I would lose my last chance, so I kept my mouth shut.

"Buy status effect potions!"

"Status effects?"

Status effects are effects which cause abnormal condition on the mind or the body such as confusion, stun, fear, burn, frostbite, poison, diseases and the like.

They are usually considered as crowd control effects in a normal game.

"How much do I need?"

"Lots of them! As much as possible!"

Being told by Kirikiri that I needed an abundance of potions in all sorts of varieties, I could imagine the theme of the 2nd Floor's stage.

Must be a festival of status effects.

My resistance skills was going to rise again. Ahahaha.

As advised by Kirikiri, I bought all sorts of potions and a few items on top.

When I was buying the items, Kirikiri gave a brief description and her opinions of them, it was a great help.

I asked Kirikiri if she was allowed to do this, she replied that simple explanations about items in the Store are possible.

Kirikiri's eyes shined brightly whenever she explained about the items.

She must like helping or teaching others.

Or, maybe, she likes to show how knowledgeable she was.

"Umm... I have one last question. Kirikiri."

"No!"

Once again Kirikiri pulled her ears down and shut her eyes tightly.

Could you really not hear anything when doing that?

"What happens to those who die in the Tutorial?"

Her eyes started to open slowly.

Kirikiri didn't speak a word.

But, she didn't have to.

Instead of the usual lights of life that shone in her eyes, there was only sadness and pity in its place.

I opened my mouth to speak, but no words came.

After taking deep breaths, I was able to finally speak her name.

"Kirikiri."

"Yes..."

"Thanks for helping me with the shopping. I'll head off now."

"O, Okay!"

As I respond to the message about travelling to the Waiting Room,

lights shone around my body and I felt myself float.

My vision started to go hazy white, I thought I saw Kirikiri hopping about and waving her hand.

"Goodbye! Come back soon! Don't die!"

Chapter 16

Tutorial floor 60 (3)

As usual I was humming to myself as I was walking through the empty residential district.

This was the good thing about being along.

There was no one to comment if I was tone deaf or couldn't keep the beat. Hahahahahah.

I went to the outdoor café that I've been going to a lot recently.

I took a seat and ordered.

‘One caramel macchiato please.’

My points were deducted and a caramel macchiato appeared in front of my eyes.

Nice. Really nice.

I'm starting to taste the feeling of life these days.

Instead of feeling despair and powerless every day, it was filled with hope and excitement although I was alone and I couldn't go any further.

This was all thanks to the newbie Lee Yeon Hee who entered the hell difficulty 30 days ago with the start of the 81st Attempt.

These days my time passes as I think of her day by day.

What can I do to help her grow stronger more efficiently?

Are there any other safer roads she can take?

What if she gets real unlucky and just dies?

I had daily thoughts of her with a certain worry and also an expectation.

I needed to help her even just a little to make sure that her growth was safe and efficient.

Hence, I gathered all the information I had seen on the Community chat and made a small guideline fit for her.

She was growing stronger by the minute, faster than anyone that had entered since the Tutorial's 1st Attempt. If we took a look at her growth rate, she's probably growing stronger faster than I did when I was attempting this during the 1st attempt.

But of course, she has the information that I didn't know back then, but this didn't mean that she didn't have much ability as me to get stronger.

Actually, she was overwhelmingly superior to me in that sense.

When I entered this place during the first attempt, I was a nobody with small muscle mass from atrophy of the muscles. I wasn't that fit either, at the best it was just subpar average.

She on the other hand was a professional archer.

On top of that, she was Korea's national representative, a qualification that is rumoured to be harder to get than the Olympic gold medal.

Basically her muscle mass, stamina, flexibility and reflexes were much more superior than mine.

Although archery itself is not a sport that requires large movements, if you get to the professional level, your basic training would be much more intense than a normal person.

On top of that, the concentration, ability to think, originality, ability to make decision, motivation to challenge, mind control etc... Her mental stat would be amazing.

Due to the large psychological impact of the sport, I heard that the archery national representatives have a special training to become numb to such distractions.

She would know highly of bio feedback and even thinking routines and active routines.

It may be hard to think of a programme like an actual professional, but she should have some experience so her ability to relate certain training programmes and apply them would be exceptional.

What was even better was that she had the determination and motivation to clear the Tutorial too.

Although she did disregard my aid in getting the tolerance skills and ability to tank hits to help aid with training, she takes into account most of the advice I give her. She's using this to the best of her advantage by applying them to her own training practices and planning of growing to clear the Tutorial.

The best. Perfect.

This wasn't something that could simply be done just by relying on superior specs.

The multiple sports players, fighters, and even special agents that were dragged into this tutorial world. How many of the gifted and talented have been killed here?

Even those so called 'specialists' couldn't ensure their survival in Hard difficulty.

Let's not bring in Hell difficulty here, where the difference is off the scales...

With no relation to the outcome, the fact that she cleared the 1st floor

proved that she was smart and had promising talent.

Of course just clearing the 1st floor doesn't assure your safety for what's to come.

Even with all that said, clearing the 1st floor doesn't mean that you're prepared enough for what's to come.

A plenty number of people had died on floors higher than the first, nothing was to be taken for granted.

But I couldn't help it. I was excited about Lee Yeon Hee's arrival, maybe a little bit too excited. Clearing the 1st floor and the progress she was making to grow stronger was evident, it was plenty to keep my hopes up.

‘Five cookie gift sets.’

My points were deducted and 5 boxes of cookies wrapped in pink wrapping paper appeared.

This was perfect.

I took out the bag I had prepared in my inventory.

I put the cookie set in the bag and checked what was in the bag once again.

A light leather armour set with no specifications required.

A finger tab and arm-guard for archers.

A necklace that amplified intelligence and protected the mental status.

Rings that had useful everyday skills.

A one-use warm lunchbox set and a variety of drinks.

Thin clothes and underwear to wear underneath the armour.

Basic toiletry and a high quality sleeping bag.

A mirror, perfume and cosmetics.

100 quotes to boost motivation and a poetry book that was good to read before going to sleep.

A rubiks cube and other mentally stimulating devices.

I made sure that I didn't send too many items that would protect her.

I didn't want to hinder her growth rate by giving her exceptional equipment from the start.

She has to grow as much as she could in the lower levels. Otherwise, it will be hard for her stay alive in the later floors.

Although there was the potential to clear the other floors with some of these overpowered items, it had its limits. Nothing was guaranteed in Hell difficulty.

There were more than just traps to threaten the players stuck in the Tutorial.

Horror, anxiety, loneliness, the list goes on.

The number of people that fell due to mental problems were numerous.

Due to this, I chose to gather equipment that would lessen the stress she was experiencing.

Would it be enough?

If it was a guy I would have even sent maybe a porn magazine.

I wasn't too sure what to send to a girl.

Would it be ok to send her a vibrator?

As I was thinking of this, a message appeared.

[Park Jung Ah: Aren't you going to say anything?]

Park Jung Ah.

One of the few girls I knew.

The leader of the JaGyeongDan which was a group who kept public order and law in this place.

[Lee Ho Jae: Hell difficulty 60th floor. No problems here. I mean, it would be weird if there were any problems. You know there's only me in this place, why do I have to do this every week?]

I too was a member of JaGyeongDan.

Evidently, I didn't really do much.

[Park Jung Ah: Are you saying that it's ok to be late every month just because you don't want to do that?]

I mean, it wasn't a big deal.

I wanted to talk to her anyway.

I talked to her about the vibrator that I was about to send to the newbie and asked Park Jung Ah if it was ok.

[Park Jung Ah: Of course you can't, you retard!]

It was pretty expensive.

It wasn't something a newbie that just cleared the 1st floor could buy easily with their points.

[Park Jung Ah: It doesn't matter if it is expensive you fuckwit.]

It's important to relieve yourself from your sexual desires.

You can get positive results physically and mentally. Not only does it help you relieve stress, it can also help with depression.

What do I do?

Should I at least send her a glue stick?

[Park Jung Ad: You're a pervert I swear...]

"Auction."

I opened the Auction tab and listed the bag.

The opening bid was 77 points.

When you send a gift to a person through the Auction tab, the starting bid was always 77 points.

Although there were times where people who bid on items for 77 points just to disrupt this unofficial method of gifting, but it wasn't too common.

There is a law passed down by the JaGyeongDan stating that disrupting the sending of gifts was illegal. If such an act were to be committed 3 times and the person does not apologise or compensate for it, the person goes on the Wanted List.

When you're on the Wanted List, you're liable to be arrested when stepping into any JaGyeongDan territory.

And of course, it goes without saying that you get punished.

Due to the tutorial's distinct characteristics, the punishments the JaGyeongDan performed were standardised.

With no relation to law, once an outlaw was captured, they get sent to a waiting room or a residential area for a JaGyeongDan representative

to lay judgement.

Judgement could vary from imprisonment to the death penalty.

The judgement is strict and fair. Luckily,there hasn't been anyone in JaGyeongDan who has attempted to manipulate the laws to their advantage.

However, these were rules that were easy to use for one's self gain. There were many times where people of the JaGyeongDan complained that these rules were too loose, however they have never been changed once.

The reason for this was to plant a seed of doubt into the minds of the people, hence preventing crime.

I agreed to this point.

During the time of the Tutorial's inception ,there were a lot of assault and rape victims.

Most of them were underage and elderly women.

But now, the elderly and women could grow through the Tutorial and become superhuman.

As you go up floor by floor, members of the JaGyeongDan could be seen stationed in waiting rooms. The number of members varied, from 3 to a maximum of 20 people. If it weren't for this, then perhaps chaos and anarchy may have continued up to now.

As long as these responsible people are part of the JaGyeongDan, then the rules,laws and punishments were always enforced in a proper manner.

‘Hooooo.’

The bag was safely sent to Lee Yeon Hee through the auction tab.

Hopefully this bag will give her some help.

Chapter 17

Tutorial 2nd Floor, Waiting Room (1)

[Tutorial, Welcome to the 2nd Floor.]

[1st attempt, day 29. 4:40]

[Time left until end of 1st attempt: 43 hours 20 minutes]

It's finally over. For real.

It felt like something that had been constricting my airways deep within my chest had been unwound.

The time left until end of the 1st attempt was 43 hours.

That was still plenty of time before the 2nd attempt would commence.

If I knew it would have ended like this, I would've tried that trap in front of the boss room once more.

Who knew the boss room would be over that quickly?

2nd Floor waiting room.

It didn't seem that different to the waiting room in the first floor.

It was the same stone room.

No, there was one obvious difference.

[Enter the stage?]

This so called 'stage' that the message was referring to would not be to Tutorial's 1st floor.

It will probably take me to the 2nd floor.

This meant that strategies could be developed for the floors above before the attempt timer hit zero.

People in different difficulties would have definitely developed strategies for the 2nd floor.

The first information about clearing the 1st floor was spread around the Community chat at roughly 20 days after the 1st attempt.

Those people who had cleared the floor roughly 9 days earlier wouldn't just be sucking their fingers in the 2nd floor waiting room.

What if they were able to develop a sufficient strategy for the 2nd floor before the 1st attempt had even finished?

There could even be people who had cleared the 1st and 2nd floors and were even looking at attempting the 3rd floor in the 20-ish days that I've been here.

This would be more than possible for people in the Easy and Normal difficulties.

There was a reward for the person who cleared a floor first.

As for me, I'm the only person left in Hell difficulty so it's obvious who will get it but, what about the other floors?

The ones in the high ranks of every floor would be competing to clear the floor first.

Moreover, those in the higher ranks wouldn't be so willing to share their knowledge in the Community chat.

Although their fight barely relates to me, I still wonder.

If I clear more than one floor in one attempt, what kind of rewards would I get?

Are there extra rewards that could be earned?

I should definitely ask Kirikiri about it after I've finalized my tactics for the 2nd floor.

After summing up my thoughts I wandered around the 2nd floor waiting room.

Was this waiting room ever so slightly larger... oh!

There was a bed in the dark corner of the waiting room.

I guess there was a slight upgrade.

It was old and stained, it even looked like there would be the stench of fungus on it.

But I wasn't in a place to be anal about that.

I threw my body on the bed and instantly my eyes closed themselves.

As my nervousness subsided, my whole body was buried in the soft sheets of the bed.

Damn. What is this? It's so comfortable.

There was much to do.

There was so much to think about.

But... Let's think about after having a deep sleep.

I couldn't beat my exhaustion.

How long did I sleep for?

[1st attempt, day 29, 17:05]

[time left until end of 1st attempt: 30 hours 55 minutes]

Did I sleep for like, 12 hours?

I slept for way too long.

There's so much to do.

I think that was the longest that I've slept ever since I came into the Tutorial.

Was it because I was so relaxed?

I lifted my body and sat on the edge of the bed.

Sigh, what did I have to think about?

Oh, yeah.

My mental state.

If I couldn't even trust my own choices and accept my past mistakes, then there was no chance for survival.

I needed to test my mental state so I that I know that there was nothing wrong with it.

A few days ago, I thought about this when I first discovered the healing well.

At that moment, instead of going to the boss room and clearing the tutorial faster, I went back to the waiting room at the very start to retry the trap.

It was also to improve my stats and skills.

It was a typical gamer's mindset.

It was definitely the right way to grow stronger and improve, but with that reward came a risk. The pain.

Oh and of course, near death.

Yeah, they could say this was a brave thing to do, to walk the road of pain. One that was painted so obvious. Just because it was the most efficient path.

However, you could actually die while walking.

If the chances of staying alive from that was lower than the chances of living with no purpose, and a person still walked that road without hesitation... you could say that person was retarded.

Am I retarded?

Am I still not able to grasp the reality I am in and still thought of this as a game?

After falling into the Tutorial, my dedication had also changed a lot.

Before coming here, I was always just drinking and watching TV.

I didn't feel any sort of rush towards life and I couldn't entertain myself enough to put aside the boring life of mine. So I always fell asleep slightly tipsy.

Without a doubt, if time passed a little longer, I would've been an alcoholic.

I thought that just dying somewhere other than home wouldn't be too bad either.

There was no meaning or motivation to my life.

But look at me now.

I'm looking ahead and running towards it.

I wasn't even thinking about the pain or the safety of my life.

I was able to feel the excitement and anticipation that I had forgotten since I came here.

I worked day and night for one game when I was a pro gamer.

And on the day of the match.

The prize-money, the glory that victory awarded me for all the effort I put into the game. My future changed due to the outcome. The fans that cheered me on, their anticipation, hell even the squad and the problems with sponsors.

I put all that on the line and played against my opponent.

Others may label that as just childish play, but for me it was having a duel on a single log bridge.

It was a cold and brutal battle, but that was the life I loved living.

Even if I lost, even if I fell from the top, If I stayed in the world of gaming, if I was able to feel the spark I felt through nervousness and victory...

I've regretted ever since. How I longed for it, drinking day by day.

And at that moment, enthusiasm was given to me once more.

At that moment, I knew.

Pain or death, it didn't matter for me.

I was like a craved drug addict, and this time I got my hands on some.

Without caring for side-effects, I just enjoyed the rush and pleasure.

It was time for my personal diagnosis.

Mmm... it wasn't bad.

There wasn't anything wrong in my head.

My current mental state would actually be of great help to my growth.

This abnormal enthusiasm wasn't going to stop me, but would instead be the fuel that would bring me forth.

Let's sum everything up positively. It felt like my heart and even my body had gotten so much lighter.

On to the next thing in my to-do list.

“Shop.”

As I opened the shop, like Kirikiri had said, all equipment, potions and essentially any item that would be useful for battle were all locked and only food and lifestyle items were the only items available.

Thanks to Kirikiri's advice, I had already bought all the necessary items earlier.

I took out clothes that I purchased with Kirikiri.

I was pretty much half naked the whole time.

My clothes were stained with blood and it had holes everywhere where the arrows had struck me. Moreover, due to the fire in the boss room it was all ragged and in tatters.

Spending points on just normal clothes instead of equipment that would give me beneficial stats felt a little off, but it was better than staying naked so.

Although there was no beneficial effect provided from the comfortable, thin, white t-shirt and sweat pants, it actually felt quite

good when worn.

It felt like going from barbarism to civilization.

“Auction.”

Oh, this was quite fascinating.

People who had cleared the 1st floor were able to buy and sell items in the Auction tab.

Most of the items listed were beginner items and the extra rewards gained from clearing the 1st floor.

They were weapons that wasn't suitable for the owner or was just plain useless.

In all of those, there were also stuff like this.

[Cat collar with a bell]

Description: Cat's don't like this. If you try force this on your cat, even if you are its owner, it may show its claws.

Kyaaaa! What an amazing item.

I can't believe they gave you that shit as a reward.

I could only laugh because it was someone else's, if that shit was mine I would've just thrown it away on the spot.

I checked the Community chat and it seemed that extra rewards were completely random.

Even if you clear with significant results (as the author of this post claims), you could get a shitty item, and even if you clear just barely, you could get a godlike item.

Well. The messages said that the extra rewards were given based on

your play history.

It could just be an excuse from the people who got shitty items.

Since it hadn't been that long, there weren't enough examples to make a conclusion.

I'll be able to tell when I check later.

Now, the last key problem.

The problem which was to check the 2nd floor before the 1st attempt ended.

Chapter 18

Tutorial 2nd Floor, Waiting Room (2)

[1st attempt, day 29. 17:15]

[Time left until end of 1st attempt: 30 hours 45 minutes]

Now, let's think.

What are the pros and cons of attempting the 2nd floor with the leftover time?

Well, the pros are obvious...

Even if I don't clear the 2nd floor before the 2nd attempt started, I would still gain knowledge of the 2nd floor.

Moreover, there could be extra bonuses for entering the 2nd floor.

On the other side, let's think about the cons.

The cons were also quite obvious.

Firstly, the danger of entering the 2nd floor.

It was the uncertainty of the challenge on the 2nd floor.

It was too vague.

The bonuses I might gain from entering the 2nd floor or even what kind of dangers lay ahead.

The only thing I learned about it from Kirikiri was one key word, 'Status Ailment'

Let's think calmly.

There had been no information about extra bonuses from clearing the 2nd floor.

Only the assumption that there may be.

I could easily learn about the dangers that might await me if I rush into the 2nd floor.

It could be just dangerous enough to kill me. No more, no less.

Although there was no information, I didn't even need to think about this one. It was a given.

The fact that I could gain knowledge about the 2nd floor wasn't too appealing to me.

If the attempts reset, there was no certainty that the patterns of the traps would stay that way.

Plus, there was only so much ground that I would be able to cover right now. The rest would only be possible to learn when the 2nd attempt began.

Being up to date with information is always a strong weapon, however I have no competitors to have a race with.

This tutorial was something like a solo marathon for me.

It was important to make sure I managed my pace and went steadily.

If the amount of info I could gain while attempting the 2nd floor lessens, then naturally my approach will become inefficient.

If I were to push my attempt of the 2nd floor to when the 2nd attempt

began, I would be able to use my remaining time to learn about other things.

There was only so much that my body could do, it's slowly reaching its limits for a human being.

But still, it was impressive to say that this superhuman body was achieved in a short time of one month.

There were still areas where I could improve.

I still wasn't able to judge what this new enhanced body was capable of.

After all, my mind was still used to the poor body I've had for the past 20 years of my normal pathetic life.

I had to deeply think about what kind of power I could show with this body and how to use it.

Ok then, let's push the 2nd floor challenge until the 2nd attempt began.

So, should I just start training again?

It felt like I've went back to the beginning, before the 1st attempt began.

Well of course, the difference here was that I was the only person in this 2nd floor waiting room.

Out of the blue, the people from the 1st floor waiting room popped into my head.

Choi Min Sik, Cho Kyeong Min, Park Su Ah.

They were all nice people.

Even I, a person who lacked social skills was able to become friends

with them in only 3 days.

I wonder what it would have been like if I met them normally outside of this world?

The thought of not being able to see those people again saddened me.

As I began to picture the three of them, miserable thoughts flooded my mind.

No, I couldn't be like this.

I knew too well that dwelling on misery with a depressed and negative mindset would only hinder the body's concentration and how badly that could turn out to be.

I forced myself to not think of them.

It was because I was lying on this comfortable bed that I was thinking of such fragile thoughts.

I stood up immediately and moved around.

With deep breaths I steadied my breathing.

With many hours of stretching, I deeply observed how much my body had changed with multiple exercises like running, high jump, long jump, push ups, burpees, throwing punches and kicks.

Since I had no knowledge of training my fitness, I just repeated simple movements to compare my current self with my past.

As predicted, the results were unbelievable.

Even those considered superhuman in American football can't compare to what I have achieved with my body.

It revealed so much potential and it was performing above and beyond expectations against what I could see from just the change in my

muscle mass and my build in general.

It felt like I could get a gold medal in any sport in the Olympics with this superior body.

This power and speed was definitely at the limits of any human.

It was unbelievable this power was mine. I guess this is how it felt like wearing Iron Man's suit and whizzing around in it.

But what was more was that it wasn't just the power and dexterity.

This body had its own quality.

Easily said, a 'genius' quality.

Abilities that people would not be able to obtain through logical training.

Only a few are born with this ability, and these people are called 'gifted'.

Reflexes beyond human logic.

Flexibility which allows the body to fly in critical situations.

Vision which allows these people to observe and learn quickly in certain situations.

Thorough understanding of the human body.

Critical thinking in highly pressured environments and executing tactics others wouldn't even be able to think of.

Adaptability allowing them to perfect a difficult movement in just one try etc.

There were people like this in the sports world.

It was just a small amount.

The growth of my body from the Tutorial seemed to have also improve these “talented” qualities as well.

I have to admit, it excited me.

It felt like I went over a line that said “The limit of biological physiology” in an instant.

On top of that, I was capable.

I had talent.

I’m not trying to simply make bullshit up for the moment, it was the truth.

I had a wide field of view, critical thinking and imagination. In addition, my reflexes allowed me to reach the top as a pro-gamer.

At the very least, my mind and eyes were the best quality of mine.

Let’s add exceptional fitness to that now.

My confidence grew.

But then again, this could just be a side effect of my personality due to the sudden improvement of my fitness and body physique, since before it was awfully weak.

Anyway, the strength I felt from this body was making me excited and upbeat.

I opened the status bar with excitement.

I’ll check the changes in my body for the final time.

I should keep moving my body constantly and get used to this superhuman body.

As I was reading my status bar slowly and thoroughly, I saw something I had never seen before.

[Battle Concentration (Lv.7)]

Description: Improves concentration during battle greatly. Can maintain high levels of concentration for longer periods of time. Can consciously push concentration beyond the limits for a brief moment. Can maintain concentration beyond limits for longer periods of time if mental strength allows it.

Requirements – Battle concentration skill Lv.6 and above, mental strength beyond base standards, experience of high concentration without aid of the skill.

There was an active for battle concentration.

I'm allowed to use this consciously?

The 'experience of high concentration without the aid of the skill' must be like that weird time I was in the boss room.

I could keep that kind of concentration whenever I wanted to?

Damn, this was the best skill.

After checking my Battle Concentration skill, I checked how long I could maintain it and how much I could move around while using this skill.

Surprisingly, it didn't feel like I needed some sort of magical power.

'As mental strength allows it', just like the skill description says, it seems that the only thing that was being used was my own mental strength.

The one downside to it was the fact it used my mental strength. That was actually scary.

As I maintained this skill for 5 minutes, I felt a dizziness and a headache. As time passed more, my vision was shaky.

I forced myself to maintain it longer, only to feel the need to vomit and my legs gave way.

After all that, due to the mental fatigue I really couldn't do anything.

Actually, I just didn't want to do anything.

Although I learned the active ability of Battle Concentration's limits and risks, I kept using the skill whenever I could.

It wasn't simply to try and level up the skill or to improve my mental strength.

It was really helpful when doing workouts and also when I used my sword and shield, it made everything a lot more effective.

With this enhanced mental strength, the world seemed a lot slower and that allowed me to observe my body and its muscles. I could tell how they were moving and what kind of energy they were exerting through the movements.

With this constant repetition, the slightly awkward movements were becoming more comfortable.

As I began my training, I felt a little frustrated.

Oh how great it would have been if I had a personal trainer.

A person that knew how to wield a sword and shield well, a person that understood the body really well.

Or even a person that could give me advice after understanding how my feeble body had improved.

All this pent up frustration for nothing.

There was no one here to help me, I was all alone.

With nobody around to guide me, I just sucked it up and went through it all by myself.

As I devoted my whole time into training, the 1st attempt ended.

[2nd Attempt will now begin.]

[Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/6)]

Chapter 19

Tutorial 2nd Floor, Waiting Room (3)

[The 2nd attempt will commence.]

The 2nd attempt has begun.

As soon as the attempt started, the portal in the corner of the waiting room vanished.

Just like the beginning of the 1st attempt, it seemed like you had to stay the first 3 days within the waiting room.

With the combination of 3 days in the waiting room and 30 days to challenge the floor, it seemed like a total of 33 days were allowed per attempt.

To be able to prepare for another additional 3 days with no pressure was definitely good news.

There was still room for growth while in the waiting room.

As long as I devote myself to training instead of dozing off for the next three days, there should be significant improvements before entering the 2nd floor.

I had to prioritize my understanding and use of this body. This could probably be done through gym based exercises which would also improve my stats.

I was still in my baby steps for shield and sword wielding, not to mention I also had to get more familiar of using the Battle Concentration skill.

Improving my tolerance skills wasn't a bad idea with the healing effects of the waiting room present.

However, my priority should still be to improve my general fitness and use of skills.

Hmm. Come to think of it, to try and improve my tolerance skills in the waiting room seemed like an amazing idea.

Could I improve my haemorrhage tolerance?

I mean, it will be healed before I bleed so maybe not.

But there shouldn't be a problem trying to improve my tolerance for pain and piercing resistance.

With that, I decided to inflict self-harm in my break periods between training.

But I mean, I don't know if it should be called a 'break' when I'm constantly gouging into my own flesh by myself.

[Time until Tutorial begins, 71 hours 50 minutes]

[Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/6)]

Huh?

I opened the Community tab to see if there was any new information but I saw something unexpected.

What?... A total of 6 people?

Unable to brush off the sudden shock, I stared at the number.

As I looked at the other Community chats of other difficulties, I could tell what had happened.

As the 2nd attempt had begun, new people had appeared in the 1st

floor.

[Kim Kyung Jin, 2nd Floor : Yo, seems like there are new people on the 1st floor?]

[Lee Jin Seok, 1st Floor : Yeah, seems like more people were kidnapped when the 2nd attempt began. I'm here with the new people.]

[Kim Kyung Jin, 2nd Floor : Hey uh, did you not pass the 1st floor?]

[Lee Jin Seok, 1st Floor : Yeah fucker.]

[Kim Kyung Jin, 2nd Floor : Why are you swearing?]

[Nam Seon Woo, 1st Floor : What is this... Ah, I'm going fucking crazy.]

[Lee Hee Jin, 1st Floor : This doesn't feel like a dream, where am I? Why can I see weird things and who are these weird people...]

A flood of confused messages filled the Community tab quickly where the messages left by the 1st attempt players once were.

It was the completely same situation as the beginning of the 1st attempt.

Where is this? Who brought me here? What are these crazy messages?

These were questions that obviously had to be asked in a situation like this.

Likewise, questions like these couldn't be answered.

When the 1st attempt had begun, no one in Hell difficulty wrote questions like that to try and find answers.

We knew there would be no sufficient answers.

With the leadership of Choi Min Sik, the 4 of us shared opinions and prepared for what would happen next.

It seemed like it was the same for the people in the 2nd attempt.

None of the five that entered Hell difficulty wrote anything in the Community chat.

However, there was never knowing what was truly going in the waiting room of the 1st floor.

I couldn't help but feel a little worried.

Even if they were having structured and constructive discussions about their future, they didn't know the real danger of Hell difficulty.

I could easily predict their future.

A wipe out. Every single one of them would die.

As the sole survivor who cleared the 1st Floor of Hell difficulty, I was most certain of this.

[Hell difficulty, noticeboard (4/6)]

3 people from the 1st Floor entered the Community chat!

Without wasting time, I quickly wrote in the Community chat.

[Lee Ho Jae, 2nd Floor : New people of Hell difficulty, please write in the Community chat. Let's talk]

There was no information regarding Hell difficulty throughout the entirety of the Community chat.

The only person that knew about it was me, and I didn't write shit.

As a result, the 1st Floor players could only get information about the floors from Hard difficulty or lower.

Surviving Hell difficulty with only that type of information wasn't reassuring.

Actually, with information like that, they could be at more of a risk due to the misleading information.

And then they would just die.

[Lee Ho Jae, 2nd Floor : I got here in the 1st attempt. I am in Hell difficulty too. I will give you important information so please, answer me.]

But there was no response.

I found about direct 1:1 messaging while scanning the Community chat the other day. I was trying to give information to the people on the 1st Floor but how am I supposed to when they won't even reply?

There wasn't a listing of people or anything of the sort in the Community chat, so I couldn't directly message anyone who hadn't written a comment before.

I started chewing on my nails in anxiety for them.

Just why?

There was no reason to ignore me like this.

They were definitely in the Community chat.

It had definitely been a few minutes since they had entered this chat.

I couldn't find a reason.

If I could find a reason I would be able to persuade them but, I just couldn't.

[Hell difficulty, Noticeboard (1/6)]

Ah, fuck.

They left Community chat.

I had graded the intelligence of Kirikiri quite low when I saw its peak the other day.

But compared to the retards from the 1st Floor, Kirikiri was quite a smart bunny.

With frustration and rage, I disregarded what pity I had left for them and lifted my head up.

I literally tried spoon feeding them, all they had to do was chew and swallow.

But they didn't even open their fucking mouths.

I did what I could.

What else could I do here?

On top of that, I was in a situation where I didn't even have enough time to invest for myself anyway.

There was no purpose for me to waste my efforts into this.

Damn.

But it wasn't right to just leave these people to die.

I thought for a long time.

Ah, fucking hell.

I pondered for a moment and came up with only one answer.

I wrote about everything I knew about the traps in Hell difficulty in

the Community chat.

I regretted this decision.

* * *

‘puff puff’

I was short of breath.

However, I couldn’t afford to stand and rest, there was no time.

From here, the only way to move forward was to tackle any obstacles head on.

I quickly bent my knees.

After, a quick forward roll.

As I stood up I tilted my body to the way I was facing and flew my body to the left.

This movement may be too stressful to your knees and my back, but I was able to perform this with no trouble.

I kept rolling to the side and as I stopped, I swung my shield to the left.

In situations like these where I come to a complete stop, I had to be careful of arrows flying behind me.

After quickly scanning my surroundings, I began to run again.

After dodging the last arrow that was heads towards your ankle, just keep a steady pace and you clear the trap.

‘Huaaa.’

I took deep long breaths to calm myself down.

Since a few days ago, I've been doing simulations of the trap right before the boss room of the 1st floor.

Although there was no pattern to it, the speed of the arrows fired and the sound of the arrows being fired were the same throughout.

There may have been quite a few differences with the actual trap since this was just a simulation, but it still helped me a lot in terms of training.

Even after a few attempts of my personal simulation, I didn't get any severe injuries.

I was getting quite used to this body. With the blessing of the Wind Spirit, the additional dexterity stats it provided and the battle concentration active skill allowed me to improve greatly.

This self-assurance didn't come from just the simulations you know?

I knew that if I went back to the 1st floor, there would be a big difference. I would be able to clear it without any major injuries.

If I just concentrated on dodging the arrows with composure, clearing it would be a breeze.

Of course, I wasn't too sure about this with the boss room though.

The thing about the boss room was that it wasn't just about the wounds, if luck wasn't on your side either, or even if you had a slight hindrance in your concentration you could just die in the lava.

I told myself to never let my guard down until I had the confidence to clear the 1st floor boss room... no, each and every boss room without any injuries. My training had to continue.

After one more attempt, I sat in place as a little break.

Of course I wasn't just resting. I was constantly stabbing myself in the arm with a knife while reading the Community chat.

Unfortunately, none of my resistance skills had levelled up.

Maybe the waiting room didn't allow for the levelling of these type of skills? Or Maybe I just didn't do it enough, so I kept stabbing myself.

I should ask Kirikiri about this.

I mean, the 2nd attempt will begin soon.

There wasn't any new information in the Community chat that was eye-opening.

No replies from the 1st Floor either.

There were a lot of reactions from people of different difficulties about my experiences of Hell difficulty.

Most of the reactions were along the lines of 'What? For real? It was like that?' or like 'Lies. What a fucking liar'.

There was a chance that all the traps in the 2nd floor was different to the information I put up in the Community chat.

No matter what, they could at least tell how gruesome this difficulty was with the info I provided.

Please, believe in the information that I wrote.

I prayed for the safety and wellbeing of the new players on the 1st Floor of Hell.

This was all I could do for them.

I did what I thought was best.

I had no thought of doing more, and I couldn't do more either.

[The Tutorial 2nd attempt will begin soon.]

[A portal will appear to enter the Tutorial stage.]

[Portal activated.]

[Enter the stage?]

It was time to focus on myself now, not anyone else.

Chapter 20

Tutorial 2nd Floor (1)

[Now, now. Calm down. This will all come back to help you later...]

[Madness, really... This is madness...]

* * *

[Welcome to Tutorial Floor 2, Hell Difficulty.]

The 2nd floor was quite similar as the 1st floor in terms of looks.

A straight, dark corridor made of stone.

Only difference would be, that the ceiling is slightly lower than the 1st floor.

Unlike the similarity between the 1st and 2nd floor, I have become quite different.

It's not just the change in stats and skills, but my looks aswell.

I no longer wear the t-shirt I wore at home, but a leather armour which I bought using the points from the 1st floor.

It was a light armour, so that it won't weigh me down.

Ofcourse, I can't rely much on this armour in terms of defense.

My reaction to the traps are still evasion and parrying with sword and shield.

I believe it would be unwise to rely on the ability of my equipments so

soon.

Thanks to the points from the additional reward, I could have been able to buy a full plated heavy armour if I wanted to.

But, relying on the armour's defense would hamper the growth of my skills.

Therefore, I purposely chose the thin, light armour.

It was reinforced with a steel plate on the chest, to prevent any accidents which may injure my heart.

Other equipments would be the thick leather bands around my wrists and ankles.

After the increase in my stats, I was unable to adjust to the changes, resulting in injuring my wrists and feet from running or swinging the sword too fast.

It was to protect my muscles from these situations.

Lastly, I checked the numbers and variety of potions which were bought with Kirikiri's advices.

Now, let's start.

I walked at a moderate pace.

Forcing fast progress was dangerous.

An unexpected attack from an unexpected source was what made Hell difficulty truly a nightmare in the Tutorial.

But it wasn't necessary to progress slowly either.

It wasn't the same as when I made it through the 1st floor with tensions high, guards up all the time.

I was different now from back then.

I could take tension better now.

My physical capabilities and my reflexes have increased dramatically aswell.

This wasn't just for boast, or saying I could let my guard down.

I've assessed my strengths and weaknesses and subsequently am confident on making statements like these.

That wasn't all.

There was support from the Sprint skill and the Wind Spirit's blessing.

I found out that there were two buffs from the Wind Spirit's blessings.

First, +10 to Dexterity.

And the wind spirit's blessing itself.

I was able to find out what these effects were during the time I waited for the 2nd attempt in the waiting room.

To explain simply, it was similar to the Sprint skill.

When my movement speed exceeds a certain threshhold, my body becomes faster and lighter.

It was difficult to notice because of the similarity with my sprint skill and the increase in dexterity.

But, as I kept on with my training, I have felt something different.

It wasn't just the strength and speed of the run, but the weight of the body lightened aswell.

It was as if a mysterious magic was aiding my movement.

Allowing movements that would normally seem impossible, like the movements seen from an elf in a fantasy book or movie.

That was the effect that the Wind Spirit's blessing had.

And it's performance was quite astonishing.

I may not have the exact details of it's effect unlike in a game, but as long as this skill was in effect, my ability to dodge would increase substantially.

The freedom of movement it allowed was out of this world, even if it didn't increase the speed by much.

Therefore, for the last few days I have tried to find the minimum speed at which this skill activates.

I wasn't sure of the exact speed, but it's alittle faster than a brisk walk.

As long as I maintained this speed when travelling, most traps wouldn't pose a problem.

Especially if it's the normal arrow traps like the ones on the 1st floor.

I don't even need Battle Concentration for that.

Ping-

As if reading my mind, I could hear an arrow being released.

It was coming from the ceiling straight ahead.

Tung!

I blocked it with my shield cleanly.

And

Shook- Shook-

I rolled forward as I lower my back to dodge the two arrows from ahead.

The two arrows that came after the first did not make any noises.

I continued to dodge the arrows as I watch them fly by with my eyes.

Arrows of this speed could never hit me, as long as I watch out for the ones from my blind spots.

Tang.

I decided to parry one of the oncoming arrows with my sword, as dodging them was child's play at this point.

It would be dangerous if I were to fail, but whenever there was a chance, I tried to improve my swordsmanship skill.

Pang-

A loud sound came with the arrows that were just fired.

And it happened to be coming at the very same path of the arrow I just parried.

Annoying.

The centre of my balance was currently shifted because of the sword strike I just made.

[Battle Concentration]

The arrows seemed to travel slowly, as my consciousness accelerated greatly from my skill.

First I dodged the arrow that was coming toward my ankle and let through the arrow which was flying past my cheek.

Then I looked ahead again.

Weird.

That arrow was too big.

And it's too fast as well.

Among all the arrows in this slow world, that arrow flew towards me with considerable speed.

Damn it. I couldn't dodge this.

It's difficult to let it slide past my shield too.

This wasn't the time to have an adventure.

If I failed to parry that arrow, my life would be in danger.

In the slow world created by Battle Concentration, the arrows weren't the only thing that's slowed.

Even my body cannot keep up with my consciousness, and move at a snail's pace.

The only thing which it enhanced were my consciousness and awareness.

Thankfully, I was able to raise my shield and recover into a proper stance to receive it.

But still.

That arrow was too weird.

I adjusted the placement of my shield.

And.

BANG!

Even though I managed to block the arrow, the shock from the impact was significant.

I rolled backward in order to absorb the impact as much as possible.

But, the arrow managed to pierce my left arm, not to mention the shield, completely.

Uaaaaaaah! Damn it.

It seemed like the arrow shattered through my bone aswell.

If the arrow wasn't blocked by my arm, it would definitely have gone through the shield and into my chest.

It was a good decision to place my arm in it's path.

If I didn't have much knowledge on how to block aswell, it's possible that the arrow would have gone through my arm aswell and hit me in the chest.

I mean, how was this considered an arrow?

It's more like a ballista's bolt.

Ping ping-

Shit, that wasn't the end.

I could hear the noises from behind me.

It seems the Battle Concentration skill was canceled when I got hit by

that arrow.

I tried to dodge by rolling in the air, but managed to get hit in the ankle.

It stung pretty badly.

Thankfully, there weren't any more which was coming toward me.

First, I checked my ankle.

It seemed like what was on it wasn't an arrow, but a needle.

Poison sting?

I quickly reminded myself of Kirikiri's advices.

There must be something on the needle which causes some sort of status effect.

That must be for certain.

First, I carefully pulled the needle out of my ankle.

Then I checked my body for any reaction.

Since it's a needle, I would assume that it was dipped in poison...

But I can't be certain.

I can't drink the potion with just an assumption aswell.

I simply sit next to the wall, with my inventory open.

Damn it.

The arrow in my left arm was bothering me.

The left arm's in a critical state aswell.

The tip of the arrow shattered right through the muscle and bone of my arm.

I wasn't even sure if I would even be able to tell the what the symptoms with this pain coming from my arm.

I was getting worried.

I tried to focus on the ankle, trying my best to ignore the pain from the arm.

Whoo.

I could feel myself sweating now.

I'm not sure if it's because of the intense exercise I hade, or the arrow in my arm, or because of the sting I had on the ankle.

After a while, I could feel pulsating pain on my ankle.

The pain radiated slowly, then began to feel hot as if it was burned.

I think it was poison.

It's not going to instantly kill me right?

As I waited alittle longer, I could feel my ankle becoming paralysed.

Let's wait, just a little more.

The paralysis began to come up my leg, the head started to feel hot, and headache was starting.

Afterward it was a stomachache.

It was poison for sure.

I took out an antidote from my inventory.

There should be many types of poison out there...

I was curious as to whether there was only 1 type of poison in the Tutorial or whether the antidote potion removed all different types of poison.

Let's ask Kirikiri about that one day.

Trying to open the potion with one arm was quite the struggle.

I barely managed to take the cork out, and put the potion next to my mouth.

There was a rotten smell inside the potion.

Was this really a potion?

This better not actually be poison that was slyly written as an antidote.

Wow.

This being the first time I was poisoned, I was getting quite startled.

I could feel pain from throughout my body, not to mention the heat and paralysis as well.

All these symptoms...

Um...

Wait a minute...

It's not so bad actually.

Shall we wait alittle more?

Chapter 21

Tutorial 2nd Floor (2)

The poison crept up my bloodstream.

As time passed by, more symptoms arose with greater intensity.

But, I was still able to withstand it.

It may probably sound like my usual boasting, but I have a special ability.

A special ability I received after being on the verge of death time after time in the last month.

It's like sensing death.

I could tell, at any current situation, how close I was to dying.

Really.

Hm, this time I crossed the Styx river, greeted my ancestors and came back.

Oh, I only came back half way this time.

Seems like I just washed my face on the river. Good.

I was just doing warm ups for the swim in front of the river now.

After describing each danger I came across like this, I managed gain the ability.

Although to say, it's lacking in credibility.

Anyway, from what I feel, I am quite far from river Styx.

Like the final stop before the Styx River toll gate?

All these symptoms I've never felt before, paralysis, headache, stomach ache and edema were apparent, but the pain wasn't significant enough to be lethal.

What would probably be serious for me to cause a swift death would be from getting into a state of shock.

And with this body equipped with the highest pain resistance skill available, mediocre pain like this wouldn't even come close to causing shock.

It's still somewhat bearable.

Let's stay like this alittle more to get some poison resistance skill, then drink the potion.

I closed the potion's cork, after planning my actions from here.

Hm... actually, it was such a waste to drink the potion now.

This trap happened to be the first trap of the 2nd floor.

I was still fairly close to the waiting room.

If I could, I would just go back to the waiting room, without using the potion.

I briefly thought about how probable it was.

[You have received Poison Resistance Lv.1]

Nice timing.

I pulled out a strap from my inventory.

I brought it in case if the bleeding got out of hand, to survive alittle longer by tightening the blood vessels.

I strapped it on the calf above the ankle, to prevent any more poison from spreading.

But, it has probably spread everywhere by now.

Slowly after, I stood up.

I remember the instructions I was told in the case of getting bitten by a poisonous snake in the mountains.

Maybe it's from the end of the year Workshop I went to in my pro team back in the day.

I moved my body slowly to not raise my heartbeat, just as I was instructed.

I picked up the poisonous darts on the floor.

Including the one that was on my ankle, there were 5 in total.

I began my slow walk toward the waiting room.

During the walk, I found the situation I was in quite funny.

Here I am, with a giant arrow piercing through my arm and all sorts of symptoms coming out from being poisoned, but I look like I'm just having a walk in the park with the way I'm walking.

Maybe in the near future, I would really become something like a troll.

Or perhaps, an amoeba that was able to simply duplicate when cut in half.

As I snickered at myself, I felt something abnormal in my body.

The paralysis suddenly became worse.

Waht was bearable before now became much more intense. The paralysis which was simply spreading across the body before, changed.

With the intensity greater, moving my body became much more difficult.

It wasn't to the point of being unable to move, but very difficult.

There were times I just kicked the air without walking, and I almost fell over once as I stumbled my way back.

My breathing became quicker.

Ah, the poisons gonna spread quicker this way.

I'm slowly seeing the parking lot for the Styx River.

Cold sweat appeared all over my body.

I'm gonna be dehydrated on top of everything now.

At some point, I managed to reach the portal to the waiting room.

Rather than entering straight away, I sat right in front of it.

I took the strap on my leg off.

Then regretted immediately.

The rate at which the poison spread and it's intensity increased dramatically.

My hands and feet began to shake.

I was having trouble breathing.

The paralysis became much stronger.

[You have received Paralysis resistance Lv. 1]

My vision became much more narrow aswell.

My thought process began to slow down.

It's the opposite of the effect when I use battle focus.

I can only hear my heartbeat in my ears.

Babump. Babump.

I was listening to the sound of my heart without a thought, as if it was a lullaby.

I raised my right arm, and twisted the arrow on my left.

The pain woke me up slightly.

At this moment, I thought I may die with the portal just in front of me.

Did the paralysis reach my brain aswell?

Wouldn't it be so sad to die without entering the waiting room, just because my brain slowed down.

With the portal just a hair's breath away?

This was the end for the dangerous game.

[Will you enter 2nd Floor waiting room?]

Yes.

I felt the portal's lights wrap around me, then lost conciousness.

When I opened my eyes again, what I saw was the waiting room's ceiling.

Phew.

I was scared for a second.

When the poison spread to a certain point, the body's state deteriorated at an extreme pace.

It seems I need to be careful when raising the poison resistance by withstanding the poison in my body.

But at the same time, it's not like its to a point where I don't want to do it again.

I've done it once now, and with the resistance skill aswell, I should be able to stand it much better.

[Poison resistance Lv.1]

[Paralysis resistance Lv.1]

Seeing that poison resistance was received, I can say for certain that it's poison on those darts.

The paralysis resistance is because of the paralysis symptom from the poison.

Once I reached the portal, the paralysing effect of the poison became stronger.

Not just the paralysis of the body, but breathing stopped, and conciousness dropped.

In my honest opinion, rather than the poison, it's the poison's paralysing effect I'm more worried about.

Ah, what happened to the poison darts?

I found the 5 needles next to the giant arrow on the ground.

Regrettably, perhaps because of the waiting room's effect, the poison was completely purified.

I saved the needles in the inventory, just in case I needed it later.

I stood up and reached the portal again.

There's no point in waiting, so let's venture more.

In the 1st round, I left without conquering the floor completely because I was short on time.

I won't let that happen again by wasting the time away.

Telling that to myself, I advanced into the 2nd floor once more.

[Welcome to Tutorial Floor 2, Hell difficulty]

My first aim was to attain Poison or Paralysis resistance to Lv.3, if not both, by the end of today.

The required experience to level up increase exponentially with each level, so I need to hurry.

If I reach my aim, or the day has gone past, I will stop the poison resistance training, and reach beyond the 1st trap.

It's important to raise the resistance skill from the 1st trap for safety, but it's also important to progress through the tutorial in the given time.

* * *

Pang-

I twist my body to dodge that ballista of an arrow.

I didn't make any wasted movements beforehand like parrying with a sword, not to mention I knew when it would come aswell, so I was ready to dodge it before it was even coming. I didn't even need Battle Concentration for this.

This is why information was important.

Ping- Ping-

Lastly, the poison darts coming from behind.

It was easy to block with the shield, since I turned around as soon as I dodged the last arrow.

But this was not the end.

I took out the needles on the shield, and took it to the portal.

"Of all things I've done until now, I'm doing something like this now."

I mutter to myself as I lean on the wall next to the portal.

I don't usually talk to myself when nobody was around, but with the situation I'm in, it just came out on it's own.

It wasn't something new to me.

I've already been cutting myself in the past in order to raise my resistance during spare time.

But it was quite different to poison myself by stabbing poisonous darts into myself.

It felt like I was taking the right steps into evolving into a troll.

I picked one of the darts and stabbed it deep into my right hand.

It was pierced much closer to the heart, compared to the time at my ankle.

The spread of the poison may be different because of that, so I needed to be careful.

And I needed to know and differentiate between each limb when they are poisoned.

I began to feel the effects after a while.

Pain on the area and paralysis.

Cold sweat appeared, while having a sick stomach.

My head began to spin with dizziness, and consciousness dropped.

The paralysis spread, and soon it began to intensify.

It's definitely the same as before.

Everything was going smooth.

Let's try my best and finish it by today.

Chapter 22

Tutorial 2nd Floor (3)

[2nd attempt, Day 2. 2:22]

[You have gained Poison Resistance Lv.2]

[You have gained Paralysis Resistance Lv.3]

In conclusion, I failed to achieve my goal of reaching level 3 in both poison and paralysis resistances.

I was able to get level 2 in poison resistance relatively quickly, however it was only up to that.

I felt a little uneasy because the skill didn't level up to level 3 as easily as it did reaching level 2, so I pushed myself a little too much and lost consciousness, wasting more time.

At least paralysis resistance levelled up quite fast, unexpectedly. That gave me a little comfort in this situation.

I was investigating if the poison on the poison dart was a type of neurotoxin or a paralyzing poison.

If it wasn't, how else would the paralysis resistance level up faster than poison resistance after stabbing myself with a poison dart?

It would've been useful to have some knowledge about poisons.

Anyway, my poison resistance didn't end up reaching level 3 within time.

Now I had to go ahead beyond the 1st trap.

It would be better to progress through to the end as fast as I could and calmly increase my resistance skills then, rather than being chased by the time limit near the end of the attempt.

The traps past the 1st one will surely be traps related to poisons, so my plan was to increase my resistance in a day's time.

Well, at least I got the minimum level, that itself was ok.

The first trap didn't pose much of a challenge; I was used to it now.

As I walked further for maybe another 5 minutes, the 2nd trap appeared.

Ping-

The awaited sound of the arrow being fired.

I easily blocked the incoming arrow with my shield.

The arrow was shining quite a bit though.

Was there poison on the arrows now?

If that was the case, that means that more arrows will now fly towards me.

Ping- Ping-

[Battle Concentration]

As soon as I thought that the trap would become tedious, I activated my Battle Concentration skill and observed my surroundings.

Soon I knew that activating this skill early was the right choice.

There were 6 arrows in total flying towards me from the left, right and straight ahead.

Was there some flying towards me from the back?

While I thought about it, I heard exactly 2 sounds of arrows being fired.

I could hear the softest sounds as my senses were greatly improved over time.

However, this time I could only hear 2 sounds.

The rest were near perfect silence.

I couldn't hear any firing sounds.

This was a trap that exploited my confidence in my hearing. It made me rely on my hearing too much as it allowed me to stay a little relaxed.

If I were to say this in a g-rated way, this was a cheeky wee trap.

If I were to say this in my honest opinion, this was a fucking dogshit trap.

There was nothing more to think about in this type of situation.

I had to quickly make a decision and swung my body to the left.

The arrows flying towards me from the left were blocked by my shield with two blunt sounds.

The other arrows from every direction continued flying where I was before.

So there were arrows coming from behind me...

Without any breathing space, I had to dodge all the arrows that were constantly being fired.

As I had Battle Concentration activated, this wasn't too difficult.

The problem was, in addition to the arrows being fired, there were also poison darts.

On top of that, they were flying in the same trajectory as the arrows so it was hard to detect the ones flying right behind the arrows.

If it weren't for the persistent effect of the activated Battle Concentration, if it weren't for the Eye Lights ability to let me see in this dark place, I may had been hit by another poison dart in this place.

Tick- tick-

While dodging the arrows, I dodged the poison darts flying behind them with ease.

A few of the poison darts were blocked by my shield and scattered all over the floor now.

Like this, with the same pattern, more arrows and poison darts were fired together.

That was the end of the 2nd trap.

It used my sense of hearing against me with its cheeky tricks, firing poison darts hidden behind the arrows. Maybe it was because two new patterns were introduced in this trap, it was quite short.

No, it could also be that there was something special about the poison slathered on the poison darts and arrowheads.

For example, the poison may have been stronger.

For all I know, it might not even be poison.

Hmm, should I test this?

I have thought about this before, but I think I have some sort of obsession now.

Whenever I find something new, I want to test every single one of them on my body and see how many times I have to repeat it to earn a new skill.

Hmm...

Let's not, for now.

There was a high chance that this could be just like the 1st trap and it could just be poison.

The grinding of my resistance skills could wait until I find the 2nd floor healing well.

Of course, I needed to have some resistance skills so I don't die before I find the healing too.

After stashing all arrows and poison darts into my inventory I carried on forward.

The next few traps to come were all also just traps combining arrows and poison darts.

There were various patterns and the speed of the arrows increased as I went on, getting more dangerous. However maybe it was because of how much I grinded in the past, I was able to clear it without big issues.

The problem was not the arrow traps.

I don't know since when, but slowly the air was getting warmer.

If it weren't for my Heightened Senses skill, it would be the slightest increase in temperature that no normal person would be able to detect, but I was sure that inside of this tutorial the temperature was rising.

At first it was such just a slight change that it was quite hard to finalise if it was rising, however, as time went and the air got significantly warmer, I finally came to my senses.

Suddenly I was at a stage where my body was hot and there were specks of sweat on my forehead.

On top of the increasing heat, as we add the heavy, humid air in the equation, just staying in this environment made me tired.

With these conditions, the traps kept appearing.

Ping- ping-

Ahh, fucking hell.

I kept moving to dodge the arrows in this disgusting heat while having Battle Concentration active.

[2nd attempt, day 2. 7:21]

Wow, this was really, really shit.

I was able to clear yet ANOTHER arrow trap.

Of course poison was slathered on these arrows.

However, it wasn't the poison that was the important part here...

It's so hot...

The situation was critical.

Even a sauna wouldn't be as hot as this.

It was so hot I couldn't even breathe properly.

I drank cold water from my inventory and sprayed the leftover water in the bottle over my head.

The cold water turned into an uncomfortably warm temperature as it flowed down my face.

Fuck, now I understood why the 2nd floor arrow traps felt a little easy.

It was aimed to just train the challenger in intense heat.

No wonder I had to plan my way of dodging in such extended movements.

On top of that, they ever so slowly raised the temperature to hide the intensity of the heat.

There is a saying that if you put a frog in boiling water it will jump out in reflex, but if you put a frog in cold water and slowly boil it, the frog won't be able to detect the change and just die.

Quite a metaphor to describe myself as a frog in boiling water.

However, unlike a metaphor, I was actually about to die like that frog in boiling water.

...This is really dangerous.

First I thought this was just a device to blur my mental strength.

I thought that I would easily be able to clear this if I withstood the temperature and held onto my senses.

One miscalculation here was that this wasn't just a trap about perseverance.

My body simply could not withstand this heat.

From some time ago, my leg muscles were in a slight tremor.

The effects of dehydration, like dizziness and the feeling of throwing up, had struck me from a long time ago also.

It was too dangerous to go on like this.

Another arrow trap will surely appear and with my body like this, I was unsure if I could dodge all of them.

On top of that, I'd be a goner if I were to be poisoned by the arrow I got hit by.

I could even get in shock from the pain only.

[You have gained Heat Resistance Lv.1]

Luckily, I earned a resistance skill.

At a time like this, where I could barely breathe because of the hot air, for an instant it felt like a gust of crisp, cold air was blown all over me.

It felt just like the air you feel when you leave the sauna.

But this was, like I said, just for an instant.

Soon after I could barely breathe again.

A fucking hell, really.

Chapter 23

Tutorial 2nd Floor (4)

‘Now, what do I do?’

I needed to make a decision.

A very fast one.

Not a second to waste.

Even now the extreme heat was making my body into leather.

‘Can I survive if I turn back?’

The traps I had already passed should not activate again on the way back.

But, this heat would remain.

Could I survive the way back to the Waiting Room while this heat remained?

It was doubtful.

My body was deteriorating quickly.

‘Perhaps I’m having a heatstroke.’

‘I never thought that heat would be so harmful to the body.’

‘I thought it would be just more of a nuisance. Damn it!’

I marched forward.

The probability that I would escape this heat before my body collapsed wasn't high.

In fact, it was very low.

I'd come too far to turn back now.

And the body was in critical state.

'Now that the decision has been made, let's move.'

Sweat was pouring all over the body, and severe dehydration came with it.

Not to mention the muscles began to alternate between convulsion and rigidity as well.

I may not have had much medical knowledge, but even from my perspective, this was a very, very serious situation.

"Inventory."

Losing count on how many water bottles I had opened, I drank furiously, and poured the remainder on my body.

Next, I took out a potion.

[Freezing potion]

Description: Potion which chills an area for an extended period of time. Is harmful when touched onto skin. Oral administration is not recommended.

This potion was Kirikiri's recommendation.

'I have to say thanks when I return.'

The liquid within the bottle had a sticky, jelly like texture.

It didn't even pour out well from the bottle, being so tightly packed.

I took out a large cloth from the inventory.

It was originally intended to be used as a blanket when I bought it.

Cutting an edge of the cloth, I quickly made a suitable shape with it, and poured the potion on one side of the cloth.

It quickly soaked into the cloth.

Some of the heat dissipated after wrapping the cloth around me like a hairdresser gown.

Next I took out a towel, wet it with water and poured the remaining freezing potion on top.

Putting the towel on my head, I could finally breathe again.

‘Now, let's continue onward.’

In order to replace all the salt I've lost with sweat, I put some of the salty jerkies into my dry mouth, and walked while chewing on it.

I maintained the minimum speed at which the Wind Spirit's blessing triggers.

To go as far as I could, while I still had some stamina.

But I quickly reached my limit.

The cloth and the towel were doing their job, but the body was too exhausted in the first place.

Muscles trembled repeatedly, and the mind couldn't keep its focus anymore.

‘On the bright side, the extreme heat and humidity which tortured me has disappeared.’

Instead, the air was dry like that of a desert's.

‘Wait, that's not a good thing.’

The high temperature and high humidity before had placed both physical and mental exhaustion on me.

But with the sudden change into an arid environment, I could feel my body turning extremely dry.

I took out a stamina potion and drank it like water.

This was really expensive too...

It cost 400 points to buy just 1 bottle.

It was a ridiculous price, considering most status effect potions cost below 100 points.

In fact, this leather armour I was wearing was worth 350 points.

I wasn't keen on buying it due to its price, but Kirikiri made her recommendations.

‘Better say thanks for this too.’

‘If I can meet her.’

"Cough, cough."

The lungs didn't seem right.

I could feel a ripping pain on my chest, continuous coughs, and the breathing became heavy and rough at times.

I tried to regain normal breathing, but it wasn't happening.

It was turning difficult to even keep moving, let alone maintaining the

speed.

The hands were shaky and cold, with skin color turning white.

‘How can the body turn cold in this heat?’

‘Is that even possible?’

‘Damn, this is not just another visit to my ancestors beyond the Styx.’

‘I’m moving over there for a place of my own.’

My sight began to spin about.

I couldn’t even tell whether I was walking straight anymore.

Just the fact that I could still stand in this situation was amazing.

A normal person would have collapsed a long time ago.

The sweat which was pouring like a waterfall had stopped.

I thought it was the effect of the freezing potion, but I was mistaken.

It was abnormal for me to not sweat at all.

Unlike before, my skin felt like it was burning.

[You have received Burn Resistance Lv.2]

‘Burn Resistance?’

‘I’m getting burns now?’

It was certainly as hot as hell here, but not to the point of burning.

The environment had the climate of a desert, but unlike a desert, this tutorial didn’t have a sun.

Yet I still got burned.

Maybe just like how meat was cooked slowly in low heat, my body was getting slowly cooked underneath.

I quickly took out another freezing potion.

I applied it on my hands, feet and any part of the body not covered by armor.

Just as the description said, as soon as the potion touched my skin, I could feel the chill and pain.

Perhaps because of the pain, I could see a little more clearly.

‘Seems like I’ll be getting Frostbite resistance too.’

‘But now’s not the time to worry about the pain or side effects on my skin.’

The outside of my skin was turning cold extremely fast, but the core temperature remained.

I could feel the heat coming out from within as if I had eaten fire.

My consciousness began to fade.

I forced myself to swallow the freezing potion.

I could feel the stomach freeze.

I could feel the extreme cold burning and causing ripping pain in my organs.

With pain added on top of my fading consciousness, my vision began to spin uncontrollably.

I had to move forward.

There wasn't much time.

I ran, shaky and exhausted.

With all that remained of my strength.

The legs were heavy like steel, while my lungs screamed in pain.

But, I couldn't stop now.

There must be an end to this heat.

Now, forward.

Ping-

'Fuck, sakes!'

'You bastards! Fucking scum of the world!'

I threw myself onto the floor after hearing the arrow, without even checking on it.

Stab- stab-

I no longer had the strength to stand in this situation, and could only get hit by the following arrows.

Stab- stab

There was only one thing I could do against these arrows and poison darts on my way.

To curl my body and raise the shield on top of my back.

Many arrows were blocked by the shield, but some landed on my back and the sides as well.

Stab- stab-

‘Just, how many are coming this way?’

‘Let's think quickly.’

‘Shit, I feel like I'm about to die anytime soon.’

‘Let's open the inventory as soon as these arrows stop.’

‘Then take out the antidote, stamina and healing potions.’

‘Then run again.’

‘Forward.’

‘Then... ’

‘Can I do it?’

‘Scratch running, can I even take out and drink a potion, in this situation.’

The situation was too grim

Maybe I was too excited.

Did I lose my awareness because of the newfound strength from the 1st floor.

These were very, very doable traps.

All I had to do was raise my Heat Resistance slowly, with a few trips back to the Waiting room.

But, I was too careless.

To not even realise the rising temperature until it was too late.

The arrows stopped at some point.

But, unlike my plan, the body could not move.

‘Am I dying here?’

From bad decisions, coupled with carelessness.

I guessed it was the price you paid in Hell difficulty.

‘But... But, am I really... ’

[Level up]

[Strength increased by 2. Dexterity increased by 1. Heightened Senses skill increased by 1. Pain Resistance improved by 1. Heat Resistance improved by 1. Paralysis Resistance improved by 1]

‘Level up... ’

‘It's a level up!’

The body moved again.

I stood as fast as I could.

The level up didn't simply heal my wounds but restored my body back to its peak performance, just like the Waiting room and Healing fountain.

The arrows on my back fell on the ground, while the pain from the poison, heat and the freezing potion dissipated.

The extreme heat was still there, but at this moment, my body was renewed.

‘Now, let's move before my body falls to the heat again.’

‘Forward.’

There was no time to even think.

It wasn't just a fast walk, but a run instead.

I could feel the Charge skill and Wind spirit's blessing's effects fuse with my body.

I quickly became short of breath from moving so fast in a hot environment, but my body, which was on it's way to becoming superhuman, could withstand for now.

[Battle Concentration]

I even turned on the Battle Concentration while running.

It may not have much of an effect, but I wanted to put all my focus onto this run.

Just a little faster, more efficient.

‘Damn, it would've been nice if I was on the track team for school now.’

Ping!

The arrows again!

I tilted my head slightly to dodge the arrow coming at my face.

The arrows continued afterwards, but I didn't slow down and kept running.

Only forward.

Chapter 24

Tutorial 2nd Floor (5)

"Gasp, gasp."

I kept on sprinting, progressing forward.

I had continued to run ever since I miraculously survived the heat stroke thanks to the Level up's effects.

I could feel my lungs burning with every breath I took.

This horrible temperature was akin to hell's furnace.

‘I thought it was the correct decision when I started running.

‘But is going forward really the right decision?’

‘Maybe it would’ve been better to run back to the Waiting Room?’

‘Even now?’

‘No. It's too late to go back.’

Even at that very moment of my run, the Waiting Room was moving that much further away.

‘Let's just focus on running forward now.’

I thought that to myself, and picked up my speed.

Then I was dumbfounded.

‘What is this?’

My speed was getting faster.

Abnormally faster.

This was not the effect of my strength or my dexterity.

I had already checked the effects of my stats before.

‘Wind Spirit’s Blessing.’

‘It must be one of its effects.’

An effect I had never been able to find, since I could never find an opportunity to run at full speed in the confined space of the Waiting Room.

‘What an outrageous effect.’

‘This is not just added dexterity in effect here.’

With such an increase in speed, the air began to lash at my face.

‘Thankfully, I can finally feel some cool... ’

‘No.’

‘The wind is so damn hot.’

‘It’s as if someone is blowing a torch in front of my face.’

I could hear the violent turbulence of the wind.

The kind of sound you hear when you lower the windows while driving on a highway.

‘Is this something you should hear when a human runs?’

This was clearly not in the realm of human feat.

If my previous comparison was with Usain Bolt, the comparison now would be that of a cheetah or a scooter.

To top it off, even though I was sprinting at my full strength, I didn't feel tired at all.

My muscles and my lungs were at peak condition.

I felt like I could run the entire marathon at this speed.

'This is dangerous.'

'The skill is so effective that it's dangerous.'

'It's too fast.'

'And it's still getting faster.'

'Should I slow down a little?'

'Do I have the time to waste?'

'No.'

'Then, let's focus on running even faster.'

'Let's figure out just how fast I can run with this.'

'I must focus.'

Although I had turned Battle Concentration off due to reaching my mental limit, I decided to use it now.

[Battle Concentration]

Everything in my vision passed quickly by me.

Just looking at how fast I was going was giving me the chills.

It was similar to the finals for my last year of highschool.

I woke up too late and had to call a quick bike service to take me to school.

The chill I felt now was the chill I felt as the motorbike weaved through the cars on the streets at ridiculous speed.

It's terrifying enough to just run with my eyes open and keep my centre of balance.

I could feel my hands, feet and my stomach go cold even in this scorching heat reminiscent of a desert during a heat wave.

‘Damn, am I scared?’

I clenched my teeth, and focused on my muscles’ movements.

‘Shit, shit!’

‘Big mistake.’

I was running fine when I didn't think about the individual movements of my muscles.

But the moment I was conscious of each and every movement of my body, I had to think how each arm and leg had to move in my head.

Just like how your breathing or blinking suddenly becomes unnatural the moment you become aware of it.

‘Uaaah.’

‘It feels as if my face is cooking from the hot wind.’

‘Actually, it is getting cooked!’

For the first time, I was grateful for the Pain Resistance.

This Pain Resistance skill did not remove the pain.

It just made you tolerate pain better.

‘I have always been unsatisfied with it, but at this moment, I have realised just how great of a skill it is.’

Even though I could feel my skin burning all over, I could ignore the pain while still being aware of it.

As a result, I could keep all of my senses intact while ignoring the pain, and run on.

Pain is not important.

What's important is the senses becoming dull or the body paralysed from either the cause of the pain or the pain itself.

And Pain Resistance helps to prevent it.

‘Anyway, it's about time for some arrows to come out.’

‘There is no way this sinister tutorial will leave me alone.’

Ping- ping-

It was as if someone was reading my mind.

Multiple arrows tipped with poison were fired at once.

Getting hit by an arrow while running at this speed would have been extremely dangerous.

But.

Whoosh-

The arrows could not keep up with the speed I was traveling at.

I managed to escape the traps before the arrows could even reach me.

I dodged one arrow coming straight at my face by just barely tilting my head to the side.

The remaining arrows from the front were from the ceiling being shot at a steep angle, so I could simply move through it without needing to dodge them.

The arrows from my sides and back couldn't even get anywhere near me.

To pass through a trap like this.

My head was filled with joy.

Even the burning pain from the hot wind could not stop this joy.

No matter how much it burned my skin...

‘Huh?’

‘The heat disappear... uh?’

‘Ah, shit!’

My legs got tangled.

The trip had much more severe consequences, since I was running at a speed closer to that of a scooter rather than a human being.

First, for a few seconds, I was in the air.

I believe I can fly-

I could see a light flash before my eyes as I felt the freedom of flying, just for a moment.

After the brief flight, I smashed, hit my head and rolled on the ground.

And lost my consciousness afterwards.

* * *

[Round 2, Day 3. 2:20]

‘Damn. How long was I out for?’

The floor was wet.

Of course, it was my blood that made it wet.

I was not even surprised at this point.

I took out a healing potion from the inventory.

It was my last remaining healing potion.

And I swore to save it as much as possible when I was buying it.

I drank all of this expensive liquid.

‘Hah-’

‘I feel empty.’

I just lied on my back and looked at the ceiling, with no enthusiasm in sight.

‘How many times did I almost get killed now?’

‘If I were to pick them individually, it would be at least 20 times.’

‘I have managed to survive through those 20 near fatal events, but yesterday was especially dangerous.’

‘It's abnormal that I'm still alive right now.’

‘Thank god, the level up came when it did.’

I slowly began to remember what happened before I went out.

Embarrassment rushed into my head.

To almost die from tripping over my own two feet.

All the confidence I had before plummeted to the ground.

‘I must really be a retard.’

‘Uaah... ’

The scorching heat had dissipated completely.

The metal plate on the armour which was hot as a coal had cooled down completely.

I sat up and began to check on my body.

The skin was burnt, with blisters, the size of my palm, sprinkled all over.

...It looked rather hideous.

Some of the hair was sticky and tangled with blood clot, while the remainder seemed to have burned away.

‘Did I catch fire as well?’

There were quite significant burns on my scalp.

To be so injured even after a Level up.

I thought I didn't get so damaged during the run, but I must have been

mistaken.

Perhaps, I was too focused on the running part.

It seemed the healing potion had little effect on the burn marks and blisters.

I took out a burn healing potion from the inventory.

I looked at my status window as I slapped on some of the potion.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.7

Strength : 12

Dexterity : 32

Vitality : 18

Mana : 22

Skills : Battle Concentration Lv.7 Willpower Lv.3 Awakening Lv.1
Night Vision Lv.2 Brighter Sight Lv.1 Sprint Lv.1 Natural Regeneration
Lv.1 Heightened Senses Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1 Cut Lv.1 Basic
Shield Skill Lv.2 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.10
Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.1 Piercing Resistance Lv.1
Poison Resistance Lv.2 Paralysis Resistance Lv.4 Heat Resistance Lv.2
Burn Resistance Lv.2

Misc : The God of Adventure pities you.

‘The God of Adventure is taking pity on me?’

‘...Is she thinking “I pity that foolish mortal, making things so difficult for himself” to herself, as she watches me making those stupid decisions?’

‘Ah, shit... It irks me, and embarrasses me as well.’

Only other noteworthy changes were Heat and Burn Resistance and Natural Regeneration.

‘Did I get that Natural Regeneration while I was fainted?’

I never saw the message for it.

[Natural Regeneration (Lv.1)]

Description : Increases the speed at which your body recovers from injuries.

‘Mother, Father. Today, I have gotten 1 step closer to becoming a troll.’

‘If this skill becomes stronger, will I be able to regenerate a hand or a foot even after it gets cut off?’

‘If it's that good then I wouldn't need to rely on the Waiting Room, Healing fountain or Level ups as sole opportunities for regeneration.’

Waiting Room was ok, but relying on Level up for healing was too dangerous.

This Tutorial world was different from the nice and user friendly game with proper interface.

Since it didn't show my experience bar, I had no idea when I would level up.

Plus, the amount of experience required to level up was increasing.

I mean, it was obvious that I would need more, but the amount of experience required was increasing too much.

From the way I felt it, each time I leveled up, it seemed like the experience required increased not by 2x, but by 2 .

If I excluded the Level ups, then the sources of regeneration I could rely on were the Waiting Room, Healing fountain and my used up healing potions.

Although weak, having a regenerative ability was welcome at this point.

‘Now, with the potion fully applied, what to do?’

I stood up, stretched myself as I thought.

The heat had disappeared completely.

I walked back a few steps, but could not feel the heat again.

It seemed, from near the start when the heat began to pick up, to where I was a few moment ago, a distance which needed half a day to travel, was one big heat trap.

I walked forward a little, and could feel some chill ahead.

It seemed, it was a cold trap from here onwards.

‘Let's go back to the Waiting Room.’

It was a clear decision.

My current condition wasn't too bad, but I needed to prepare for the cold which would come next.

But before all that, I needed to improve my heat and burn resistance as well.

‘Let's take some time increasing that burn and heat resistance, so that it rises quite high.’

‘Same goes for the poison.’

‘I would assume that, until the 2nd floor ends, all the arrows are

tipped with poison.'

I was too excited from the newfound strength I gained from the 1st round.

I thought with such positive outcome, I would be able to navigate through this Hell difficulty.

My thinking was too lazy.

'Let's be calm, thorough, think and think again before moving.'

'Let's not make the same mistake.'

As I confirmed that to myself, I ran toward the Waiting Room.

Chapter 25

Tutorial 2nd Floor (6)

[Round 2, Day 19. 6:30]

Yawn

‘It seems I’m not sleeping enough, yawning as soon as I wake up.’

I did a little stretching as I got off the bed.

‘Time to start another day.’

It was impossible to tell morning, noon and night apart in this world, but I had been living a routinely life, having planned time for sleep, meals and work times in my time schedule.

Not only did it help to use my time to the fullest, by repeating a certain action in a day, it made the Tutorial into a routine which helped to increase my focus.

Of course, this idea of mine doesn't include any professional advice, and I was merely mimicking the schedules given to me back when I was an active professional player.

Just before I retired, the team hired a physical coach, who looked after us by giving many advices including daily patterns.

It was to help me with my declining skills, but I always dealt with him harshly due to constantly being on the edge from stress.

I can't even remember his name.

It would’ve been nice if I stayed on his good side and learnt a few things from him.

After the brief stretching, I did a light jogging following the walls of the Waiting Room.

After the 30 minute jog, I had a simple breakfast.

You didn't feel hunger in the Waiting Room, but this was also to create a daily routine.

Eating something also makes you feel better.

I opened the Community as I was eating the jerkies and the riceballs I bought using the points from the 1st floor.

There were a lot of funny stories that were being posted by the newcomers from the 2nd round.

All the stories about the real world in the past month.

It seemed so peaceful that it felt unrealistic.

How a certain idol group had come back,

how a new blockbuster superhero movie was amazing,

how the result of president election in America was unexpected,

how there was a hidden ruling power in the Blue House exposed.

(TN: Blue House is the building for Korea's president, equivalent to White House in America. There was a recent event where one of the president's aides had been running the country using the president as a puppet, and it's a reference to that.)

[Lee Hoi Chang, Floor 2: Hey, honestly that sounds like horseshit to me. We've been making jokes that Korea is like hell but, that's just too far don't you think?]

[Jung Jin Soo, Floor 2: Yea maybe this is just a prank made by all the new kids in 2nd Round?]

[Kim Kyoung Jin, Floor 1: I'm telling you, it's real.]

[Kim Sun Young, Floor 1: I know it sounds unbelievable... Ah, it sounds more like a lie when we try to explain it...]

The Community was not just updating the real world news from the newcomers, but also releasing new information found by the 1st Rounders as well.

Most of it was information gathered by asking one of the supervisors you can meet by clearing the Floor, like Kirikiri.

At first, nobody wanted to share their information, but the atmosphere had changed since then.

It seemed the leading clearers in Normal Difficulty have begun to compete against each other.

When you looked at it, it looked no different from watching a group of peacocks shaking their tails to show them off.

Perhaps because of this strange environment, many of the people took pride in their status, image and friendships in the Community.

Well it was all worth it for me, since I could easily gain new information.

But, not all information was useful.

There were a few trolls who just wanted attention, while others seemed like they were just posting their fantasies.

And I was designated as one of them as well.

Mainly due to the information I released about the Hell Difficulty at the start of Round 2.

And lastly, there was a son of a bitch who spread false information around.

Of course, the bastard's name was discredited, to prevent anyone from Round 2 to ever listening to him.

But not all the information was unreliable.

Lee Young Jin in normal difficulty had already reached Floor 6.

Dear god, Floor 6.

It means he climbed each floor in an average time of 7 days.

That's amazing speed.

Like Lee Young Jin, some of those who were trying to clear the Tutorial quickly had been releasing their newfound informations they gained from the Supervisors to the Community.

They even made surveys to vote for which questions to ask, as they prepared for the boss rooms.

Most of the useful information in the Community was from these leading adventurers.

The most important information of it all was about clearing the Tutorial and how to return to our world.

It was first found by someone in Easy Difficulty after reaching Floor 5.

They said you could return to the real world after clearing Floor 100 in the Tutorial.

But there were many who didn't believe this information.

It would gain credibility if more adventurers asked the same question and received the same answer.

Anyway, this information was like a ray of hope to the many people in the Tutorial.

The same went for me.

It was just that, how long would it take for me to reach Floor 100, when it was so hard to even survive in this place.

Just thinking about it made me sad.

It was like I was walking in a pitch dark tunnel, with no sense of time, then hearing that there just might be an exit at the end of the tunnel.

And I better focused on the present, if I wanted to see that future.

I couldn't forget about the danger to the present from distracting myself by the gains I would have in an uncertain future.

There was information about possible bonus rewards that could be gained by clearing multiple floors in a single round.

To summarise, a significant amount of points was given.

But, many have decided that it was better to focus on growing our stats rather than the bonus points.

The main strategy to focus on growth in the lower stages remained.

And...

[Difficulty Hell, Forums (1/1)]

Not a single newcomer in Hell Difficulty had survived.

I had prayed for their survival, but it was for naught.

Considering how much thought and effort I had put in for their survival, I was surprisingly apathetic about it.

Was it because I felt the same thing in Round 1?

Or, did I know that surviving through those countless deadly traps was impossible in the first place?

It was not odd that an average person couldn't survive in Hell Difficulty.

Infact, I was an outlier by reaching up to Floor 2.

If anyone else survived through the 1st floor, I would think that the gods had given their divine protection to them.

I didn't feel sadness, but I still felt bitter.

I quickly turned the Community off before I got depressed again.

"Status"

‘Now, time to check the stats.’

After the description of Battle Focus's hidden active skill was unlocked, I had been checking on the Status routinely to check for any changes.

Personally, I had been wishing for a description of Wind Spirit's Blessing's status effects and the conditions to activate it.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.7

Strength : 12

Dexterity : 32

Vitality : 18

Mana : 22

Skills : Battle Focus Lv.7 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Brighter Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Natural Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.4 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Tough Skin Lv.1 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1 Cut Lv.1 Basic Shield Skill Lv.2 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.2 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison Resistance Lv.4 Paralysis Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.6 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3

Misc : The God of Adventure pities you.

It showed all the effort I had put in until recently.

At first, all it had were strength, dexterity, vitality and mana, but it has gotten quite long now.

‘If there was one thing bothering me, it's that the god of adventure is still pitying me.’

‘It's been a few days since I almost died from a mistake, but they still feel sorry for me.’

‘What's their problem?’

(TN: Author's ambiguous about the gender of the gods, so I'm using gender neutral words.)

The most notable changes were Willpower's increase and gaining of Increased Field of Vision and Tough Skin.

How to use or improve the Willpower skill was still a mystery.

I thought I would find out its effect once its level increases.

Increased Field of Vision literally increased my field of vision.

It was not just seeing in a wider angle,

but closer to increasing the field of vision around the object I am

focusing on.

Humans usually can't focus on everything they see.

From their large field of view, they apply their attention and decision making on a small area of focus, but just by having it larger, I can see and judge more than others.

It's what is often described as an athlete's ability to 'assess the field' or 'good eye' by others.

And, it was one of the abilities I had when I was a professional gamer too.

By having a skill on top of my natural ability, its effect would be tremendous.

Tough Skin literally made my skin tougher and stronger.

I gained it as I increased the Resistances for heat, frostbite and pierce.

It was not to the stage of not being cut by swords or pierced by arrows, but it felt tougher when I pinched it.

It felt more like cow leather rather than human skin.

It felt rather disgusting if I kept feeling it.

The last changes I should mention are my resistances.

In the last few days, I had been focusing on the growth of my resistances, resulting in their levels raising.

Although recently, this growth seemed to have stopped.

'Now, my monitoring is complete, time to start my day.'

[Will you enter the Tutorial Stage?]

Chapter 26

Tutorial 2nd Floor (7)

"Huaah, I can finally breath again."

[Round 2, Day 20. 13:20]

I took off the blanket I used to protect myself from heat and placed it in the Inventory as soon as the heat disappeared.

I had had many return journeys in this heat area and increased my resistance to it, but running for a long period of time while dodging arrows in extreme heat was still tiring.

Both physically and mentally.

Now I took out thick clothes and a cape to prepare for the cold.

I placed some heat stones in the pockets of the outer clothes to function as a hotpack.

Next, I equipped a scarf, a hat and some gloves.

Then I began to run slowly.

Soon after, the cold could be felt but the clothes did well to act as a barrier.

Since items which help in combat or aid in completing the floor were not sold when the round began, I had to buy the cloth, leather and sewing set and make them myself personally.

Truthfully, these weren't made because of necessity.

I began to feel that I was losing my mind in this dull and bloodthirsty environment.

These clothes were made as a hobby to hopefully aid my mental health.

I could feel a sense of achievement wearing these soft handmade clothes.

My satisfaction came more from the sense of achievement rather than their ability to keep me warm.

It was worth it to reduce my sleeping time to make these, since I couldn't lose any of my working time.

‘I wonder if I'll get any crafting skills.’

‘Perhaps I'll try sculpting as well.’

Recently, none of my resistance skills had increased in level.

Poison, heat, cold resistances had stopped at level 4, and frostbite was still level 3.

I had spent at least 18 hours trying to improve these resistances, but despite my efforts none of them showed signs of improvement.

It was a shame that I couldn't see the progress for the skills' experience.

I was starting to think the reason the resistances weren't increasing wasn't because of a ridiculously high experience requirement, but the highest limit I could reach from the traps in the 2nd floor.

Otherwise, there was no way they would be at a standstill for so long.

An evidence which supported this was my heat resistance, which had gone beyond level 4 and had reached level 6, by making a fire to burn myself without using traps.

‘So, today's goal is not to farm for my skills, but to progress through the Tutorial.’

‘It is time to leave the 2nd floor.’

I raised my running speed to bring out my Wind Spirit's Blessing's acceleration buff.

With the now familiar speed came the bone chilling winds cutting at my face.

Many arrows flew behind me menacingly.

One of the greatest advantages in running at this speed was not in movement, but the fact that I could ignore most of the arrow traps.

Some arrows still had to be dodged or blocked due to their path, but I had already memorised all of them.

With a thud, one arrow lodged into my shield.

There weren't any arrows I needed to worry about after this for a long time.

I just kept on running.

It felt like my hat was about to fly off running at this speed, so I put it back in the inventory.

I couldn't lose it here.

I had put all my effort in it.

The temperature had gone significantly lower at this point.

The cold winds lacing at my face were getting quite painful.

Having no other choice, I dropped my speed.

‘Damn, how can my resistance level not increase, even with this much pain from the cold.’

‘It feels very bitter.’

With the drop in speed, I had to start focusing on the arrows again.

There was no dangers though, since I knew all their patterns and their trajectories.

My hands and feet began to lose their feeling.

I checked on my wrist after pulling the glove down, and I could start seeing erythema, a sign of 1st degree frostbite.

‘Damn it, and the resistance level still won't go up!’

‘How unfair!’

I took some heat stones out from the inventory.

Then shoved them into each of my gloves and shoes.

When the heat stones touched my skin, I could hear the searing noise and a burning smell, but I ignored it.

I had already raised the Burn Resistance to level 6, and pain wasn't much of an issue to me anymore.

It was all worth it in the end by getting a few burns to buy myself some time before the frostbite began to affect my nerves.

I could raise my resistance skill while at it as well.

‘It's the last trap now.’

[Battle Concentration]

It was a trap without a pattern, just like the last trap of the 1st floor.

‘Is the last trap of each floor being a no pattern trap a pattern in itself?’

‘Is a pattern of no pattern a pattern? Or, is no pattern pattern a no pattern?’

This last trap posed no threat to me as well.

My improved sense could feel the arrow's location and its trajectory the moment it was fired, and if I could sense it, I could almost certainly dodge it unless something extreme happened.

With the combination of improved reflexes and speed from my dexterity stats and the experience I had gained, dodging arrows had become an art for me.

I easily passed through the trap, and turned off the Battle Concentration.

After a few steps, the cold dissipated, and a healing fountain appeared.

Since I had gotten this far without getting too injured so many times now, I felt quite apathetic at the sight of it.

I took a few sips to recover my limbs from the slight frostbite and burns and stepped forward.

Beyond the heavy fog blocking the path, there stood a giant stone door.

This was the second boss room I would be challenging.

Well, there was nothing like a boss in it, but the Community seemed to call the last room as boss room.

In different difficulties, they actually got a boss monster in it at times.

With a heavy sound, the giant door opened.

I quietly entered.

The boss room was a circular stone room, which seemed quite familiar.

‘Ah, it's similar to the Seokguram's inner area I've been to when I went to Gyeongju for a field trip from school.’

‘The differences would be that there's no statue of buddha in the centre, and that it's much wider.’

The stone door shut loudly just like it did in the 1st floor.

I pushed the door as hard as I could.

It didn't move, as expected.

This was the most dangerous aspect of the boss room.

That you couldn't stop the challenge half-way.

And since its challenges were literally life threatening, it truly was a gateway to hell.

Booong-

A blue portal appeared with a sound I had heard so much that I had gotten quite fond of it.

‘A portal?’

[Would you like to return to 2nd Floor Waiting Room?]

‘What's this?’

‘Why would a portal show itself in a boss room?’

‘To the Waiting Room no less.’

Another text showed itself before I could come back from the confusion.

[Stay in the room for at least 3 hours]

The confusion quickly became disbelief.

‘Analyse.’

‘Let's quickly analyse the situation.’

At least 3 hours.

Therefore, if I didn't have at least 3 hours to spare when I challenged the boss room, I would fail without even getting a chance.

And in the next round, I would have to try again.

It may have not been an issue now, but it was good to remember this.

‘And, the message to stay in the room and the portal.’

‘Staying in the room is the objective itself.’

‘The portal must be part of it.’

‘To make the challenger give up on their own volition.’

To sum it all up, the theme of the boss room was related to patience.

What could possibly come out for them to so nicely create an escape portal to the waiting room?

The poison filled darts and arrows, and the heat and cold traps which followed afterwards.

They could also be included on the theme of patience.

At first, you had to mentally endure through the cold and heat, and once you got past that stage, the body which began to break down was tested instead.

Then, this boss room would likely demand physical or mental endurance from its challengers.

And in order to break their endurance, they put a portal which led to the Waiting Room, to seduce them into taking the easy path.

‘It was a right idea to raise my resistances to their highest.’

And I was not worried about my mental fortitude as well.

‘I’ll take you on.’

‘Come! How will you test my patience?’

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds]

‘Uh... hm, yea.’

‘You're still quite considerate aren't you.’

Chapter 27

Tutorial 2nd Floor (8)

[Please stay for at least 3 hours.]

[The trial of the gateway will begin in 30 seconds.]

My curiosity was growing.

I was able to quickly grasp the theme of the 1st floor boss room, however I couldn't quite do that for the 2nd floor one.

'I wonder what kind of trial will appear before me?'

'Will it just be the poison, cold and heat of the second floor again?'

'Huh?'

'I couldn't see the message telling me about the time.'

'Is this just telling me to withstand this without knowing the time?'

As I was trying to figure this out in my head, I heard the voice of the message resonating:

[The trial of the gateway will commence.]

[Withstand your most painful times experienced.]

'Painful memories, huh.'

'Is it telling me to endure the pain of my past memories?'

'I'm pretty sure most of my painful memories would be the

experiences within the tutorial.’

I thought this was a tutorial that just fired arrows at you day in day out, but this was quite a sophisticated trap indeed.

Since I didn’t know what would come out, I lowered my stance and stayed right nearby to the waiting room portal.

Although I shouldn’t be even thinking of going back to the waiting room through the portal, my highest priority was my life.

It would be retarded to not grab the lifeline when you could clearly see it.

Hearing a ringing background noise, I assumed the trial was about to begin.

And for a moment I lost consciousness.

3 seconds? 5 seconds? It was short, but I just straight up fainted I guess.

‘What is this?’

My body was paralyzed by nervousness.

I couldn’t prepare for this type of attack.

A clear image was projected within my head which was once filled with complicated and jumbled thoughts.

It felt like I was seeing things in 2 perspectives.

The perspective of my actual body in the boss room and the perspective of the image in this holographic world it was suspended in.

I could feel both clearly.

‘What is this?’

‘Is this a type of psychological attack?’

I focused on the perspective of my body.

The waiting room portal was still in front of my eyes.

I could go back whenever I wanted.

With the confidence I gained from that certainty, I focused on the image in the world in my head.

Soon I was able to realise the situation my projection was in.

Tutorial 1sts floor, 1st trap.

It was just before I approached this trap,

It was my memory of that time.

As expected, this was my most painful memory.

I saw myself holding the sword and shield with such a grip and I could also see myself shaking with every centimetre of my body as I took baby steps forward.

Was I shaking that much back then?

I could feel the nervousness and anxiety I had felt.

It felt like I was possessed by myself from the past.

The sensation, the emotions of that time, very... too clearly...

Pook – Pook –

With those sounds, the arrows pierced the shield.

I couldn't tell this at all.

I accidentally blocked the third arrow... and the last arrow pierced my ankle.

I felt an excruciating, truly excruciating pain in my ankle.

Then it clicked.

It was the pain without the pain resistance skill.

The pain of the arrow itself was added with the horror, the despair, the regret etc. all that emotion was mixed up as an effect of not having the pain resistance skill.

It was just as if I had just been hit by an arrow.

'Hmm... It hurts a lot but... '

'Well... if it hurts it hurts.'

'When hasn't it?'

Even without the pain resistance skill, I could endure this type of pain whenever.

It wasn't like the pain resistance skill even lessened the pain at all.

'Will it be just a constant repeat of this for 3 hours?'

'That's disappointing.'

I calmly endured the pain of my projection.

It was actually harder to see myself screaming and crying like a dying duck.

I looked at myself with a pitiful look as I saw my projection crying

and crawling back to the waiting room.

Then the projection stopped.

‘What is it now?’

Soon, a new projection lied ahead of me.

This was the 2nd floor.

I had lit a fire in the corner of the waiting room.

Ah, this was the self-harm I inflicted a few days ago.

The sword I heated on top the fire was quite red

As soon as I poked the inside of my leg with it, with a ‘sizzle’ I felt an intense pain as my flesh cooked.

It was the most efficient way to level up my pain resistance, piercing resistance, haemorrhage resistance and burn resistance all at once.

My projection had a slight grin on its face.

‘Wow I do look like some mad man. Hahahaha.’

This time again, I felt a pain that was not diminished by the resistance skill.

This was quite a fresh pain.

Back then I had levelled up my resistance skill quite a bit, so I wouldn’t have felt this amount of pain through that kind of filter.

Well, this wasn’t too bad of an experience.

Like watching a movie I watched my projection pretty much doing cheap labour, but then the projection stopped again.

[The god of adventure feels embarrassment as he watches you.]

‘Why is that guy so interested in me?’

The message before told me to withstand my most painful times.

If it stays like this, I think I will be able to get through it quite easily.

Then the projections started again.

I looked pretty young in this.

‘Is this a memory from before the tutorial?’

I could see myself in a school uniform.

‘Was that my secondary school uniform? Or my high-school one?’

Soon, I was able to tell what kind of horrific event my projection was in.

I was facing a girl in the school hall where many hundreds of students gathered in.

It was my memory from my second year of secondary school.

‘Oh my god!’

‘No.’

‘Don’t do this.’

‘Please.’

‘Don’t.’

The surrounding students beamed of curiosity looking towards me.

A flustered girl.

A shaking me trying to say the words he had prepared.

In the middle of a hall of mumbling, my projection finally said what he had prepared:

[I like you. Let's go on a date.]

The cheers and screams exploded from the crowd.

The girl exploded also, in tears and collapsed to the ground from the overwhelming crowd.

I turned pale white and just stood there watching her.

It was the worst part of my past.

‘Ahhhhhhhh.’

'Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.'

It felt like my guts were turning inside out.

This was so much more painful than the first two memories I experienced.

‘Damn this.’

‘Since the physically painful memories weren’t working, you guys are going to attack me psychologically now huh?’

'Did you HAVE to choose this memory though? You bastards!'

I must have bitten my tongue or something due to the surprise, I tasted blood.

Bear in mind that one student in that hall had filmed that proposal on

their phone and uploaded that when I debuted as a pro-gamer. It was quite widely known.

EEEEEEUUUUUUUUUUUGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

The projections stopped again for a brief moment and a new one appeared.

This one was... ‘Fuck, fuck!’

This was something I really didn’t want to remember.

I could feel my face going pale from the lack of blood.

‘...I have to withstand this for 3 hours?’

Myself in the projection was standing still in a room pouring with cries.

At my father’s funeral.

Blarugh

I emptied my insides but the rumbling wouldn’t stop.

I cleaned whatever it was running down my face with my sleeves.

I couldn’t avoid this projection by simply looking away or closing my eyes.

This was being played in my head.

These projections I couldn’t avoid were being constantly played with relation to my father.

It was as if they had found a weakness and just focus fired.

‘These fucking remorseless cunts.’

The memory of the day before my father died in hospital played within my head.

The rage over this dog-shit like trap had subsided and it was overrun by the emotions of regret, despair, shame and guilt.

[Isn't it time you stopped playing that game?]

My father told me this out of the blue when I was called to the hospital.

That one lifeless sentence from my father fucked me up.

Had he never thought about how much I had endured, fought and all-in for this?

Even once?

Did he not know how I was earning the money for this hospital's fees?

Did I still look like a child that was doing what he wanted?

I got angry at him as he talked like that to me in that tone.

He also retaliated.

In result, the conversation found no common ground like two separate parallel lines and the worst came to the worst, it ended.

The next day I got a phone call that my father had died during surgery.

Why did he say those things to me the day before his surgery?

Why didn't he even tell me about the day of the surgery?

I couldn't even pay attention to that back then.

My sister thought that since there was that large argument between my father and me the surgery went wrong.

I couldn't justify myself at the funeral as she screamed and swore at me.

Because I thought the same way.

It was because of me.

I couldn't leave this hole of guilt.

From that point onwards my life had slowly deteriorated.

My shaky hands grabbed the knife on the floor.

And with all my might, I stabbed my thigh.

Chapter 28

Tutorial 2nd Floor (9)

I could taste blood and pebbles in my mouth, perhaps I've shattered my teeth.

My tears continued to flow as I suppressed the sounds of moaning.

The past emotions that I've felt in the illusion was diffusing into my head,

And those past feelings have rooted into the present.

I reached out for the sword that was on the floor with my shaking hands, and with all my strength, plunged it into my thigh.

Blood splattered on my face, and the pain I'm used to could be felt.

This sharp, but somewhat familiar agony brought me back to the present.

That was just the memory of the past.

I'm stuck in the Tutorial, being attacked by a psychological attack.

It's in the past, it's in the past.

Once more, I stab into my leg.

Yes, it's no different from this pain.

Just a process of enduring, gaining a skill, and growing stronger.

Back then, because of those memories, from the guilt and regret, I've

driven myself into ruin.

Turning back onto the future, looking only into the past, with alcohol in hand.

But that must change now.

The sword's edge drove into the inner muscle of my thigh.

I couldn't deny, nor redo my past.

Those memories may have imbedded into myself and swallowed me whole in the past,

But I will use it as a pedestal for my growth.

It's my guilt, regret and mistake.

If this was how the Tutorial's trial would come at me,

I can't deny, look away or evade it anymore.

It's time to look straight at it, and bear it with me.

I've made my decision.

The tears didn't stop, the body shook, my head was spinning to the point of throwing up.

But all thoughts of denying that past, to stop the illusion,

and the thought of escaping into the portal disappeared.

The emotions in my head have dyed back into anger.

You fucking bastards.

You guys are doing all kinds of fucked up shit now.

I'll take it all.

The memories of the past has changed.

The memories of my father that has gone on for minutes, or perhaps hours have stopped.

The illusion now is when I was a professional gamer, just before my retirement.

[Lee Ho Jae was indeed a great player. His accomplishments are astounding. But that's all before I started my career isn't it? Lee Ho Jae may be a player with great talent, but that is all. I will show you how effort can beat a genius]

Fucking asshole.

Such rude words from a junior, you could hardly believe it was said in an interview.

He went on as if it's a known fact that I'm a lazy player who wouldn't even train.

Days before the match, that interview has caused many debates on the internet, and everyone's attention was fixed onto the result of the match.

And it was my utter defeat.

The illusion's point of view changed, and it showed my defeated look on the day of the match, after all the matches were played.

Within the isolated booth, the feelings of humiliation, shame, loss, anger and annoyance as I watched the victor's ceremony.

Those feelings could be felt clearly.

I raise the sword once more, and slice the skin of my leg thinnly.

Rather than be swept away by the torrent of the emotion from the past, I fixated onto the feelings of anger alone.

I'll show you how far I can go when you trigger me.

It's time to improve psychological attack resistance.

* * *

I take out a jerky from the inventory, chewing away at it.

I'm feeling alittle dizzy, whether it's because I've cried too much, or bled too much.

The memories continue to show in my head.

Since I can't see the present time, I can't tell how long it has been since I've been here.

Ofcourse, it's easily past 3 hours now.

Since a portal to leave the boss room has been created.

But, I have no thoughts of leaving this place.

The memories of my father, my career, my school life have already been repeated now.

Rather than being painful, I began to feel sorry for my family and friends, especially for my father.

They wouldn't like the fact that they are being used for a trial like this.

I'm not creating this illusion, but it's being made because of me.

At this point, I'm starting to see ridiculous monsters of my childish nightmares come to rip my body into pieces.

So that's how it feels when that happens.

Well, nothing special here.

But isn't it hard to say this is my memory now.

Half of it's just fiction.

What memories will come out after this.

The memories of Tutorial have all been used now.

The memories of being scolded by parents, and nightmares, have been repeated to the point of boredom too.

Truth be told, what takes my attention isn't the boring illusion, but all the voyeurs that have taken too much interest in me.

[The God of Adventures is impressed by your actions]

[The God of Coldness is curious about you]

[The God of Warrior has taken an interest in you]

[The God of Slowness send praise to your determination]

[The God of Light has taken an interest in you]

[The God of Devotion pities you]

Seems there's still someone who's pitying on me.

These messages have been coming repeatedly since long ago.

I didn't know there were so many gods other than the God of Adventures.

Seems like there's more than 10.

As I was busying myself with those thoughts, multiple alarms rang in my head along with messages.

[Congratulations. You are the first to completely conquer the last trial of Floor 2]

[You have received Mind corruption immunity Lv. 1]

[All status increase by 5]

[Fear resistance Lv.1, Illusion resistance Lv.1, Hallucination resistance Lv.2, Confusion resistance Lv.2 have been combined into Mind corruption immunity Lv.1]

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty Floor 2]

[All status effects and injuries are healed]

[You have received 1000 points as reward for clearing]

[You have received 1000 bonus points for being first to clear the floor]

[Many gods show positive reaction to you. You have received 5500 points]

[Many gods show negative reaction to you. 400 points have been deducted]

It's finished.

It was a very long boss room.

Some things to review are mental corruption immunity skill and the god's reactions.

Let's think later, there are still more messages coming.

[Additional reward are being given according to play record]

[The God of Slowness wishes to gift some of her powers instead of additional reward. Will you accept?]

...?

Powers?

Did you say powers?

My head stopped at this unexpected development.

Yes. Uhuh. Ne (original say yes in korean, so i wrote korean yes in english). Accept. Give me. Give!

[You have received Blink Emblem Lv. Max]

Blink Emblem...

Let's read the message slowly.

"Status."

[Mental corruption immunity (Lv.1)]

Description: You are immune to all psychological attacks below certain threshold.

A new skill received from the Boss room by combining 4 resistance skills.

Normally in games, the greatest threats for a physical warrior like me is psychological cc.

It seems like it will be a good line of defense for such problems.

Not to mention this is immunity, not resistance.

Good.

[Blink Emblem (Lv. Max)]

Description: God of Slowness, one who loves the enduring and the patient, has gifted some of her powers to her possible apostle. If the one gifted with her powers were to turn away from her, she may become displeased greatly.

...How is this a description.

It's a blackmail written in the form of description.

So it wasn't a present, but a pact.

Can I undo this at this point...

But what kind of skill is this?

Why isn't there a single word of functional description.

[The God of Adventures is disappointed in you]

What's this guy on about now.

I should ask Kirikiri about the gods.

And... conquering the trial.

If it says trial, is it limited to the boss room?

If the reward for conquering is a skill like mental corruption immunity, then I should try to aim for it as much as possible.

After sorting out my thoughts, I stretch and loosen my body.

Then I sit quietly on the floor, which is wet with the blood from my legs.

Haah, so peaceful.

Maybe I might reach the Nirvana if I were to go on a pilgrim now.

It's the calmness you feel after crying for a long time.

Was it really because of the crying,

Or, is it the effect of mental corruption immunity?

Or maybe it's the fact that I've made through another ordeal, and the sense of growth which comes with it.

[Round 2, Day 23, 21:30]

Um.

...It's been 3 days.

I didn't think so much time would of passed.

I thought it'd atmost be 1 day.

No wonder I've been feeling hungry.

Everything's sorted now.

It's time to leave this 2nd floor boss room.

I took a few steps, and reach for the portal in the corner.

Teleport.

My vision turned white, then showed the green grassland I've seen before.

And,

"Hello! It's been a while! Welcome!"

Greeting as she was hopping towards me, was the white rabbit girl,
Kirikiri.

Chapter 29

Tutorial 2nd Floor (10)

"There isn't any."

Kirikiri replied with a face smeared with whipped cream.

Many times has Kirikiri's advices provide great help in passing through the 2nd floor, and each time I have told myself to speak my appreciation to her.

So, the moment I met her, along with a word of thanks, I bought a whipped cream cake from the shop as a present.

An expensive cake, almost the same price as my leather armour.

Spending so much points on a cake felt like a waste, but that thought disappeared soon after.

The cake was amazing.

Really.

Perhaps it's because I've been eating just jerkies, riceballs, water and my own blood and flesh for the last 2 months.

The sweetness of the cake was enough to make a culinary revolution.

Kirikiri was scouring through the cake next to me without a break, smearing the cream all over her mouth, but I could understand completely.

Because it's that delicious!.

And it looks cute to watch.

"What did you say again?"

"There isn't any."

"What?"

I had just asked Kirikiri for advices on the 3rd floor.

I was hoping for an answer akin to the advices on the status effect potions for the 2nd floor.

I asked for just about any advice that can help, but the answer was.

"Ah, THERE IS NONE."

Hey, what happened to your speech.

Were you always like this?

"There isn't any advice? What do you mean?"

"It's because you grew too fast. I can give advices, but as for advices that will help you, doesn't exist."

Kirikiri put her hands on the side of her waist and smiled brightly, proud of her self that she managed to explain it so well.

Hm... if that's the case I've not no complaints.

It seems I'll be able to pass through 3rd floor without much dangers.

I was quickly convinced, as I knew how fast my growth has been aswell.

"Hm... then, can you tell me what happened to the people in the 1st floor that entered the hell difficulty on Round 2?"

Kirikiri crouched and thought for a moment at my question.

"It's close. Maybe if you use all of your quota?"

Does quota mean opportunity to ask a question?

It seems it isn't the number of questions that are limited, but each question has a price.

"Let's drop it then. I'll ask something else."

Just what happened in the 1st floor, that after not a single reply, everyone would get wiped out.

I'm curious.

But, that's it.

They are strangers to me.

And have nothing to do with me.

Maybe I'll ask when I have so much quota that it's just rotting away.

There are more curious, and important questions out there.

"Hm... then can you explain to me what Blink Emblem skill is?"

"Yep!"

Kirikiri replied confidently, crouched on the spot, and began to think.

Then,

She started to hop away to somewhere else.

That stupid idiot, she's doing it again.

"Kirikiri! Play after you explain first!"

With those words, Kirikiri turned around, and hopped back toward me.

"Yep! I'll explain it!"

Yes, please...

"Blink Emblem is a power bestowed by the God of Slowness! Challengers you achieve greater result than a certain threshold can receive these gifts from gods instead of additional rewards!"

"And?"

"Also, all gods have only 1 chance to gift their powers to the challengers! This information is a bonus!"

But that's not what I asked.

Oh well it's still useful. Nice service.

That God of Slowness has used her one and only chance to give me her powers.

I'm starting to understand the description on the skill.

There are too many things I don't know about the relationship between gods and Challengers.

What do the gods want from the Challengers, and what do the Challengers give back in return.

This information takes utmost priority when I have enough quota saved up to ask about gods.

"Kirikiri, what I want is the explanation of the effect Blink Emblem has. With a thorough explanation."

"Yep!"

With a loud reply, Kirikiri showed off her trademark smile filled with pride.

"...I said, explain it."

"I've made it so you can read it on Status window when you return to 3rd Floor Waiting Room!"

Really.

"Really?"

"Yep!"

I'm worried.

"Just making sure. If I go to the 3rd Floor Waiting Room, I will have a detailed explanation of it's effect right?"

"Yep!"

"Huuh... then can I also get a detailed explanation for the Wind Spirit's Blessings?"

"Yep! Got it."

I'm getting worried, she's replying way too fast.

Well, I'll just trust her for now.

"If I don't get a good explanation for either of them, the next time I see you, I'll buy 2 cakes, and eat both of them without sharing alright?"

"No! Don't!"

Kirikiri screamed as she jumped at me.

I quickly try to pull her away as she try to grab onto me.

She acts no different from my nephew when he was young.

You're gonna smear the cream on me.

She was easily pulled away, but she continued to run at me many times.

"Ah, fine. I won't do it."

With those words, Kirikiri stopped her reckless charges.

I've read a thread about the manager's powers in the Community.

It seems someone picked a fight against the managers in the 1st round.

He was suppressed by being beaten almost to death.

But why is she so weak?

Her strength is comparable to that of a normal person.

"Ah, Kirikiri. Is it true that you can exit to the real world if you clear 100th floor?"

I threw the most heated question in the Community at her.

Her reply was,

"Nope. I can't tell you yet. Ask something else."

I knew it.

I did ask about the skills just before.

"then, about the gods..."

"Nope. Information about the gods are expensive!"

Ah, is that so...

Nothing seems to be working out right now.

"Then about the identity of the managers?"

She declined once more, explaining that I lack the quota to ask the question.

"Ah, what about that conquering the trial? Does it only apply to the last trial of the floor?"

"Nope. Conquering is just a mistake that was made during the creation of the trial."

"Mistake? What do you mean?"

"I can't tell that aswell. Heh."

Just what can you tell right now, brat.

Since she told me to ask something else,

I must still have some quota left.

"Then what's the colour of your underwear right now?"

"Kyaong!"

Kirikiri used Punch!

It wasn't very effective!

"No privacy questions!"

"There are rules about that too? Do they value personal space in

here?"

"Yep! Privacy is very expensive!"

So you'll tell me if I have enough quota saved up?

Then, what else do I have to ask.

A cheap, easy to answer question among the many informations I need.

"Kirikiri, at some point, my resistance skills stopped going up since Lvl 4. Why is that? Is there some sort of a limit to their levels?"

"Well. Yes. It's also a mistake during the creation part. You could call it a level cap. But usually you would never see the level cap of the skill... but to see it in just 1 round..."

Kirikiri crossed her head as she sighed.

Her ears swinging left and right as she did left an impression on me.

She didn't explain about the mistakes of the creation either.

"Do I have any quata left?"

"Nope. You've used it all. Can I eat that now?"

Looking at where Kirikiri was pointing, there was a cherry, left on top of a plate.

It seems she asked first, since it was the only cherry placed on the cake.

She's like a good child that had been educated well.

Or, perhaps, she was thinking that I would give it to her since I stopped eating the cake, because I was full.

"No."

Kirikiri ran at me immediately with a whine, struggling to get at it.

"Then let's decide who gets to eat it with a rock paper scissors. You know how to play it right?"

"Yep!"

"Rock paper scissors!"

I lost.

That brat. She had been holding scissors from the start, so I thought she would change it just at the end.

But she just continued with that scissor.

"Best of three."

Kirikiri jumped again, but I pushed the fact that since I bought the cake, I get to decide on the rules.

"Rock paper scissors!"

"Rock paper scissors."

COME BACK!

There was no way for me to lose, since she would show what she was gonna throw even before the match.

Tears began to form on Kirikiri's eyes, showing just how much she wanted that cherry.

Why didn't you just eat it instead of asking if that's the case.

As I stretch my arm and grab onto the cherry, the tears began to drop

onto her cheeks.

Her pupils followed the cherry as I swing it left and right with a villanous face, with tears flowing like river.

Hm. It feels like taking candy from a child.

Isn't that great?

Hahahaha.

It might be fun to just eat the cherry and see Kirikiri bawl her eyes out, but being on her bad side may not be a good idea.

She clearly stated that the price for information is, potential for growth, achievement, and my amity with her.

Ahem.

"Now, since Kirikiri has given such good explanations, I will give this as a reward. You have to work hard from now on too ok."

"Yep! I will!"

With a loud reply, she took the cherry like it was precious, and began to nip away at the cherry.

There wasn't a hint of tears in her bright smiling face.

I smile at her cute, innocent look and stood up.

"Then, I'm off. See you later."

As I say my farewells, Kirikiri replied as she was hopping about.

"Come back soon! Buy me another cake!"

Ah, was the cake your main objective.

"If those skill descriptions are done well, then maybe."

"Yep. Good bye!"

It seems she's rather confident about the skill description, considering the way she replied.

My doubt began to fade.

I couldn't stop laughing, seeing how Kirikiri furiously waved her arms to send me off.

Is it because I have someone who can wish me farewell.

Or is it because she looks so cute doing that.

I was thinking whether I should tell her about the cream that's smeared all over her bright smile,

but decided to waved farewell, and stepped onto the portal.



PbF by: traitor/SEN



The Tutorial Is Too Hard

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- Part 2 -

**-Author-
Gandara**

[Light Novel Bastion]

GANDARA 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



Chapter 30

Tutorial 3rd Floor (1)

[Becareful. You'll die if you fall off]

[Sorry?]

[You'll die if you fall]

* * *

[Welcome to Tutorial Floor 3 Waiting Room]

[Round 2, Day 23, 23:22]

[Blink Emblem ((Lv.Max))]

Description: God of Slowness, one who loves the enduring and the patient, has gifted some of her powers to her possible apostle. If the one gifted with her powers were to turn away from her, she may become displeased greatly.

As the God of Slowness hates to move with haste, she moves objects within space and time controlled by her in a blink of an eye.

You can jump distances upto 5 times.

Once all jumps are used, it will go into 5 minute cooldown.

As this skill uses the divine powers of the God of Slowness, it does not require any mana, spirit or holy power from the user.

It's a movement skill.

I mean, how can a power from the God of Slowness be a movement skill.

There seems to be some contrast compared to her name.

I think the usefulness of the skill depends on the distance and the speed of the 'jump'.

I will have to test the function of the jump, but having a movement skill itself was quite a merit.

Movement skills are associated with survivability, and in combat aswell.

One of the great advantage here was that it does not require any power from myself to be used.

Plus, I can use it upto 5 times.

It's containing all the specs it needs to be op.

Now, let's test this skill.

* * *

Um... how do I say it?

Imba? OP?

It's not in the realm of just an OP skill.

this skill can ruin the balance of the difficulty, even if I consider the difficulty Hell presents here.

If a game had a skill like this, I'm sure all the players would of raged and demanded a nerf.

Ofcourse, I'm not mad because it's so good.

It's good! I'm happy!

I mean, for such good luck to happen on someone so misfortunate like me.

It feels like I'm being properly rewarded for the struggles until now.

[Blink]

With one use, I moved 3 to 4 metres forward.

I could control the distance somewhat aswell.

It's not just a dash, but more of a teleport.

I am literally, moved in a blink of an eye.

It's quite similar to a certain skill of a certain character of a certain watch game. (OW)

I'm starting to wonder if I'm reaching the speed of light at this point.

Plus, I don't have to worry about the momentum from the blink.

All momentum disappears once I arrive at the location, and I can land softly.

There are infinite ways to use this.

If I use this while running, or falling,

I will lose all momentum my body holds, and arrive at location.

I won't have to worry about falls anymore.

What happens if there's an object between me and the target location?

As soon as I thought that question, I moved the bed in the corner of

the room to the centre.

And used blink beyond the bed.

Bang! Badadadump!

I've hit my leg onto the bed, and rolled beyond for a few metres.

Seems like I've hit my head on the floor, as I felt lightheaded.

And the leg...

Well, I can see crushed bone popping out.

It healed quickly as I was inside the Waiting Room, but it was a shocking sight nonetheless.

I should not use it so freely when there are obstructions in the way.

The calves were aching from the pain that remained behind.

Maybe, I could use the speed to attack enemies,

but let's seal that idea for now.

It's not in my realm of control yet.

I've went through alot of things in Tutorial, but this is the first time facing such a fictional, unscientific skill.

I think I'll need some practice to use it comfortably.

Let's put familiarising use of blink as top priority of Floor 3.

I also looked at another skill Kirikiri promised for explanation, the Wind Spirit's Blessings.

[Wind Spirit's Blessings Lv.1]

Description: A newly born windspirit's blessings are with you.

Dexterity + 10

Stage 1: Once reaching a certain speed, you gain the blessings of the forest.

Stage 2: Once reaching a certain speed, you gain the effect of acceleration.

Stage 3: ???

It's so easy to understand, when it's listed like this.

Blessing of the forest is what makes my body light and swift, while acceleration means literally acceleration.

I've also found out that there's stage 3 too.

It was a great idea to ask Kirikiri to explain it for me.

[Round 2, Day 24, 00:10]

it's time to sleep now.

I should take rest for now, and get used to using the Blink skill while progressing through Floor 3 tomorrow.

* * *

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 3: I'm serious. Are you guys taking responsibility if everyone dies because they didn't listen to me like last time?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 3: No, fuck. How can I, prove it to anyone you retards. There's just me in Hell Difficulty]

There are still several people who don't believe in my words, and treat me like a liar.

It's not that I don't understand them, but if I don't sort this out, the people from next round won't believe my information aswell.

[Kim Sang Shik, Floor 4: Tbh he's the only one to survive among the 10 who entered, so it's somewhat believable]

[Lee Gee Jun, Floor 3: Well, if he bullshits, then everyone ends up dying cus of it]

[Kim Sang Shik, Floor 4: Well that's why noone can prove if he's saying the truth aswell.

[Lee Myung Sun, Floor 2: Doesn't Hell Difficulty sound scary? Why is Hell after Hard. Wouldn't it normally be Extreme or something?]

[Lee Jin Suk, Floor 1: I think it's ok to believe him. Everyone, except him, died at the start of Floor 1 in Hell. I know because I have the Community on all the time except sleeping. I'm sure they all died on the first trap]

And once again, a debate is happening on the Community.

Well, atleast there are more people on my side compared to the first time.

Since nobody survived Hell difficulty other than me, it seemed to be convincing the others that what I informed about the traps are true.

Meanwhile, someone sent a 1:1 message to me.

[Invitation to the Representative Confederation]

Hello, Lee Ho Jae. We are astonished by your accomplishments within the Hell Difficulty, and sending this message.

If you wish, I would like to explain to you the reason and goal of the Confederation.

I sincerely wish that you will join us on our endeavor.

We will wait for your reply.

Lee Chang Suk.

What is this.

Representative Confederation.

There has been significant activities in the Community recently, and I've started to feel something like society or factions are developing within.

But I didn't they were THIS active.

Is it a gathering for the Top challengers?

Lee Chang Suk, huh.

I don't remember that name from the Top Challengers.

It could just be a Top Challenger who doesn't reveal himself in the Community.

Hm...

Well I'll leave it for now.

If that confederation gains support from people, I may be able to improve my position in the Community, but I have no idea where or what that Confederation is for.

Never head of it too.

And, since I'm left all alone in Hell Difficulty, I really have no chance to meet anyone.

Let's just leave it.

I take out a cup from inventory, dip it in the Healing Fountain, and have a sip.

Now, what to do...

[Round 2, Day 25. 14:35]

After 2 days of progressing through the Floor 3, I managed to get to the Healing Fountain without any injuries.

Twice.

Yesterday, when I got the the Healing Fountain for the first time, I was so possessed by the greatness of the Blink skill, that I praised the Lord that is the God of Slowness.

[The God of Adventures feel disheartened]

I don't care about certain someone feeling depressed, I'm happy.

Anyway, I have decided that I won't grow anymore if I continue like this, so I decided to progress through the Floor without using Blink.

And, I succeeded at getting to the Fountain, unscathed, once again.

Ofcourse, I didn't get any level ups during the progress.

The theme of Floor 3's traps were tricks.

Hiding a trick within a pattern, to put the Challenger in danger.

Tricking through sound, or sight.

Showing a certain pattern, then striking when they are offguard, expecting the pattern to continue.

For example, the trap I've just passed was like this.

There are black and white stones arranged like a chess board.

And the trap springs when stepping on the black stone, with poison arrows literally covering the entire room.

It's fine if you step on the white stone.

But, on the last row, the trap springs whether you step on the black or white stone.

In the end, the Challenger must break through the arrow trap.

I too, panicked when the arrows came out despite stepping on the white stone.

And managed to break through, using Battle Focus and Blink to dodge the arrows.

On the second try, I didn't use blink, but since I remembered the order and the angles of the arrows, I could dodge them.

Even if you fall for the trick, if you can get out of the trap that follows it, there is no significant danger, and that is Floor 3.

There was a reason why Kirikiri said there's no real helpful advices for Floor 3.

But even so, it's feeling alittle too easy.

Was it a throwaway stage?

I was hoping I could get some utility skills like Identify or Detect Trap, Remove Trap.

Adventure or dungeon skills given to Thieves or Adventurers in an RPG game.

But, despite my varying efforts to get that mystery skill, it failed.

I have not gained any skills.

It's just a waste of time at this point.

There was only one thing left.

The third floor's Boss Room.

Chapter 31

Tutorial 3rd Floor (2)

With a loud noise, the stone doors of the boss room opened.

Huh...

Beyond the stone doors was a view similar to that of a painting.

Two mountain peaks standing above the clouds.

It would of been very emotional experience, if it wasn't for the fact that I was standing on top of one of the peaks which was less than 4m in width and length.

The stone doors disappeared into thin air after leaving me behind on this peak.

What am I suppose to do on this tiny patch of ground.

One misstep and I'll fall to the floor which I can't even see from here.

The edges of the peak seemed to have been cut artificially.

There are no branches or gaps on the stone, so it's just one way down if I fall.

Looking down from the edge of the peak with my hands on the ground, I was beginning to get light headed.

Damn it, what's going to happen if I fall?

If I use the blink ability and remove all momentum on my body before hitting the ground, I will survive.

In theory.

I didn't want to prove it with an experiment either.

Not to mention I can't see what's underneath because of the clouds.

This is probably the greatest place in the universe for monks and saints who practice martial arts to meditate,

but for everything else, it's very uncomfortable.

Extreme winds pushed my body about.

I managed to hold on by lowering my body onto the floor.

Just standing on this place seems life threatening.

Plus, maybe because of the height, it was hard to breath.

As I was sighing at the ridiculous environment, the kind boss room message appeared as usual.

[Reach for the objective]

Sorry?

Objective?

From here?

The only 'objective' I can see with my eyes is the other peak few kilometres away from here.

The, a tile appeared in the air.

Square tile, identical in length and width.

Each dimentions were about 2m.

The tile which was green at the start, turned yellow, into red, and then fell.

Green, yellow, red, fall.

I've memorised the pattern.

After that.

A green bridge formed connecting this peak to the other peak waaay over there.

A bridge in thin air, extending for kilometres high in the clouds.

It was purely made of green tiles, with no pillars to support it.

Wait, can you even call this a bridge?

It's just tiles arranged in the air.

Even at this moment, the winds blew with the ferocity to drop me down the peak.

[Reach for the objective]

A message with an arrow pointing to the peak far into the distance showed.

You're kidding right?

Come on, this is too much.

Just think of the difficulty in the 3rd room's traps.

There's too much of a jump in difficulty.

I prayed, and prayed again in my mind, but the 'green' tile bridge proved what I feared the most in the worst possible way.

The very first tile in front of me turned from green to yellow.

Oh. My. God.

I think I figured out the theme of this boss room.

It's very similar to a running game type, often seen in a mobile game.

I must run forward, never stopping, and dodge the traps while I'm at it.

If I were to slow down, I'd be eaten by a monster from behind.

Well for this case, instead of a monster chasing from behind, I'd fall endlessly onto the ground.

Not to mention I have to run thousands of metres above the ground.

Plus, if I fall, I don't get a retry.

Oi!

Is this how it is!

Shit, shit! I really want to swear now.

I don't know who it is, but there must be someone who designed, and made this place.

I don't know if it's god or an alien.

I really want to say fuck you at his face.

Uaaah!

Leaving my anger and irritation behind, I stood on top of the tile.

The yellow tile turned instantly red the moment I stood on it.

It then began to fall.

As I had no wish to enjoy the view below the clouds, I quickly moved onto the next tile.

Standing on the next tile, I could see the clouds underneath my feet.

Just looking at it made me want to collapse in fear.

My heart was pounding with each step.

I can feel my life shortening every time.

One tile after another, they turned yellow similar to the speed I was walking.

And soon, fell after turning red.

Damn, just standing on this bridge is taking all I have.

Even as I continued through the bridge with shaking legs, the tiles began to fall faster.

What do you want me to do now!

Are you telling me to run facing against the howling winds!

Yep, that's what it meant.

As if all this was a warmup, the colour change and fall of the tiles became faster considerably.

I had no choice but to run.

[Battle focus]

I ran with the thought that my death was really, really close.

Unlike what I had originally thought, once I started to run, I could hold my balance well against the winds.

This body has gone beyond that of a normal human.

My sense of balance and reflex has reached the realm of extraordinary.

Let's run!

Uhah,

Uahahahah.

I'm going nuts here.

Is this how an addicted gambler feels when he all ins his entire fortune, or

maybe it's like pulling the trigger while playing the russian roulette.

The extreme tension and fear became destructive pleasure.

Is it because of the hormones?

Ping!

I blocked an arrow which appeared from nowhere.

Dear, god.

These shameless bastards.

They dare fire arrows in this situation.

If I didn't have a shield, I have to dodge, and if I dodge, I lose my balance.

Then I'd just end up falling.

Turning around, I could see 5 tiles between where I was and the one falling.

Alright, let's maintain this speed.

I can block arrows for days.

As I relieved myself with that thought, the bridge suddenly shook.

It began to move up and down.

There were no outside forces causing it.

The bridge itself, as if sentient with the thought of dropping me, moved.

These complete assholes.

When I see Kirikiri next time, I'll ask how I can send my swears to the god of this Tutorial.

[The God of Adventures pleads innocence]

Because of the shaking, my body flew into air for a moment.

It may have been few centimetres from the tile, but it felt like thousands of metres.

To be honest I'm already thousands of metres in the air!

As my life flashed before my eyes, my feet were back of the tile.

Thankfully, I managed to land without shaking up my balance.

Looking behind after landing, the tile before me was falling down after turning red.

Soon, the tile I was standing on was turning yellow.

Damn, I had about 5 tiles as safety net before that shaking!

I quickly raised my speed.

Whether I fall because I lose my balance, or fall because I'm too slow, it's death either way.

Pulling my speed up, I managed to get the Wind Spirit's Blessing's 2nd effect.

As I was accelerating from the buff, my body began to fly briefly after each step.

I had to be aware of how I land, trying to match the force of the wind with each landing.

Anyway I managed to hold on.

I can still somehow maintain my balance even at this speed.

It's thanks to all the growth this body had.

And I haven't used any of my blinks either.

Even if I lose my balance and fall, I can blink upwards, and get back onto the tile.

I could blink forward if I was starting to fall behind as well.

At least I'm wearing a life jacket.

As long as I use my blinks wisely, I can get past this bridge and reach that peak!

I can do it!

As I keep assuring myself, I ran.

Trying not to look below as much as possible.

* * *

At some point, I was getting used to this maddening acrobatics.

As if I was getting numb to the constant fear and tension.

My hesitation for each step became fainter.

Keeping my Wind Spirit's Blessing, I continued.

It's been a while since I've maintained this speed.

Just from looking at it, it seems I'm close to the goal.

Looking back, there was some distance between me and the red tile.

It seems I won't have to worry about falling even if I drop my speed
alittle here.

At that moment, I could feel small vibrations on the tile.

I've felt this vibration many tims now.

After this, the bridge shows 1 pattern.

It will shake, in order to drop me off.

From the direction of the vibration, it will shake sideways this time.

Confident in my prediction, I jump high into the air.

With the speed from the blessing and my supernatural body like that
of a superhero,

jumping in the air allowed me to be airborne for many seconds.

The tiles moved left and right as expected.

If I were to stay on the tile, it's likely I would of fell unable to hold on.

Even if I did manage to stay, the tiles would have caught upto me rapidly.

Jumping in the air was what I believed to be the best solution.

That shaking doesn't last more than few seconds.

Afterwards, the tiles will arrange in a straight line like before.

And,

the landing!

Landing high in the air is greatly affected by the wind, due to it's strength.

But, I keep in mind of the direction of the wind before jumping.

I remember the experience of golfing with my father in a windy day.

But this time, I'm the golf ball.

Because of the speed, I land with a loud thud.

Since I know that the tiles don't shake or fall from large impact, I have no need to think about the force of the landing.

Soon after, I kick the tile and begin to run again.

With a whoosh, an arrow passed by.

These arrows don't simply appear out of nowhere.

All the arrows come from the objective, in a parabola.

And, with the speed I'm maintaining,

none of the arrows can reach me.

The clear, plastic sound the tiles make was turning refreshing.

I'm rather used to it now.

I'm sure that even if any more stages are on cliffs like this, I'll be fine.

I've adapted completely.

As if annoyed from that last thought I had, the Tutorial made another diabolical trial.

Some of the tiles in the bridge are missing.

Quite alot of them.

From rough look, about 30 to 40 tiles are missing in the middle.

Is this really designed to cross.

Maybe it was made to just drop all the challengers off to death.

I could feel incredible malice from it, something I couldn't feel in the ridiculous traps I've faced in the Tutorial.

You're still not falling? Even after this?

That's how it feels in this boss room, as it tries its best to make me fall.

This boss room trap is rather strange.

But, despite that fact, I am confident I can pass this boss room.

The bridge is made of tiles 2m long and wide, with 4m^2 in area.

If it wasn't for a fact that it's miles above the ground, you can move through it comfortably.

Even the constant wind had a single direction, so I got used to it fast.

And the moment I got used to it, the dangers of this boss room's trap fell considerably.

Maintaining my speed, I jump as high as I can just before the gap.

Thanks to the growth I've had, I do have ridiculous jumping strength, but it's not enough to jump the giant gap here.

Once I reach a suitable height,

I blink forwards,

I used blink 3 times to be exact, and landed on the tile beyond the gap.

But, I didn't prepare for the loss of momentum from the last blink I used.

My body began to be swept away by the wind.

Once more, I use the blink forward.

Losing momentum seem like a disadvantage, but it can also be an advantage.

The moment I land, I lower myself and gain balance.

It was easy enough, since the momentum I had from the wind disappeared.

After landing, I raise my head, and look forward.

The objective, the other peak was close now.

Chapter 32

Tutorial 3rd Floor (3)

[Blink]

Using the last of the 5 charges of my Blink Emblem,

I landed on the objective.

This small patch of land at the peak of the mountain seemed perilous when I first entered the boss room.

But, after crossing kilometres of an airborne bridge, which twisted and turned with determination to drop me off,

the peak felt like the safest place in the world.

Huaaah.

An exhausted sigh fill the air.

My hands and legs have been shaking the moment I finished, and my waist was going limp.

The sweet scent coming from my mouth tickled my nose.

Horrible.

The 3rd Boss Room was just horrendous.

I managed to scrape by alive, but it has altered my thoughts about the Tutorial.

Until now, I have thought the Tutorial was aimed to train the

challengers, just as it's name says.

Although the difficulty is just ridiculous.

But, I could sense pure malice in this Boss Room.

I really wanted to just lie down on the floor, but I held on by putting my palms on my knees.

I can't let my guard down yet.

The message has yet to...

[Congratulations. You have cleared the last trial of the 3rd Floor, Hell difficulty]

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty Floor 3]

[You are healed of all injuries and status effects]

[You have received 1000 points for clearing the Floor]

[You have received 1000 points for being the first to clear the floor]

[You have cleared 2 floors in a single Round. You have received 1000 additional points]

[Many gods are pleased with your actions. You have received 5700 points]

[Many gods are displeased with your actions. 500 points are deducted]

[Additional reward is given according to your performance]

[The God of Adventures would like to gift some of his powers in place of the reward. Will you accept?]

There it is.

God of Adventures!

The bastard who would complain all the time, have finally decided to give me something.

[The God of Adventures look at you with disdain]

No, I have always believed in the God of Adventures.

I have never thought he was useless other than sending me weird 1 line sentences!

Never have I thought he was just a stalker with no respect to personal space!

I knew that one day, he will rise into a respectable being in time.

Why would I refuse a gift given.

I take with with a word of gratitude.

Blink Emblem was an overpowered ability beyond my imaginations, and was greatly pleased with its performance.

I was hoping that I might get something like it again.

[Talaria's Wings (LvMax)]

Description: The God of Adventures has recently made this power to gift a Challenger of great interest. As it was hastily made, it lacks in certain areas.

Ah...

Ah... this man...

Is it because of the God of Slowness, that he made this in a hurry.

Even the description says this is poorly made.

Normally, I would get a message like 'The God of Adventures is flustered', but it's surprisingly quiet.

I was looking forward to his reaction to this description.

I should check it on the extra tab on my Status.

"Status."

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.7

Strength: 19

Dexterity: 37

Vitality: 23

Mana: 27

Skills: Battle Focus Lv.7 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Vision Brightness Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Natural Healing Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.4 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.1 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.1 Cut Lv.1 Basic Shield Skills Lv.2 Wind Spirit's Blessings Lv.1 Mental Corruption Immunity Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.2 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison Resistance Lv.4 Paralysis Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.6 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max

Extra: The God of Slowness watches with satisfaction.

The Extra tab which showed the God of Adventure's thoughts switched to God of Slowness.

Just what is the standard for that tab.

When the God of Slowness gifted her power, it still showed a description of God of Adventures on the Extra tab.

But as soon as the God of Adventures gifts his power, it changed to the God of Slowness.

Hm...

I feel like a landlord who just kicked out his tenant.

And he even gifted me some powers too.

Despite the fact that it is poorly made in the description, it's from a god, with Max level.

I'm sure it's going to be useful.

I should ask Kirikiri as usual for a thorough explanation.

It's too bad that I couldn't receive a new skill by conquering the boss room.

To be honest, conquering be damned, I'm just glad I managed to make out of this alive.

Uuh, Huaah.

After reading the descriptions, my body lost all its tension.

It's time to find peace in my mind.

Goodbye.

The perilous, tiny mountain peaks. The turbulent, deafening winds.

Let us never see each other again.

"Uwah! You came back so fast! Buy me a cake!"

The white rabbit, no a girl possessed with endless desire for cake, welcomed me.

* * *

The gentle winds wrap softly on my cheeks as it passes by.

With the ground covered with soft, comforting grass

The weather is perfect with ideal temperature and humidity.

The sun shines brightly, but not enough to make me squint my eyes.

This world is so perfect that it is unnatural.

I have once slept on the grass of the national park.

When I woke up, my face was red from the heat, my back was aching, while rash covered my arms and legs.

This was a perfect nap in contrast to my memories.

I have never had such a satisfactory sleep ever since, no even before I've entered the Tutorial.

It feels like all my exhaustion has disappeared.

The perfect nap deserving of all my praises and more.

Except, the one thing which woke me from my sleep. The snores from Kirikiri.

Kirikiri's snores weren't that loud.

Infact, it's very quiet.

Its just that, I can hear it clearly, because she is using my stomach as a pillow.

Actually, I probably woke up from the discomfort I felt on my stomach, not the noise.

The culprit who woke me up from my greatest nap ever, slept with the happiest look in the world.

Was it because of the promise I made, that I will buy her a cake after the nap. She always had a bright look, but it seemed to be brimming with light this time.

But why is she using my stomach as a pillow.

The nerve she has to use someone as a pillow as.

I raise my hand and pet her ears.

It was softer than I thought.

Well, I thought it would be soft, but it was even softer than that.

I've raised dogs and a hamster before, but I've never felt anything like this.

Even just touching it seems to ease my soul.

As I pet her ear like petting a small puppy, Kirikiri screamed as she woke up.

"Kyaong!"

"Huh? Ah, sorry. Was it because I touched your ears?"

"Don't touch the inside of my ear! The noise rings inside my head!"

Um. I see your point.

"Hmph!"

Kirikiri snorted, folded her arms, and turned her head in 1 smooth motion.

It seems she really hates someone touching the insides of her ear.

"Are you made Kirikiri? Oh dear, and I was about to buy a cake too."

The moment I spoke the C of cake, Kirikiri twisted her head toward me.

"I'm not mad! Let's eat!"

Ofcourse.

I smile back at her, and open the shop.

* * *

"Kirikiri. Isn't the last trial for 3rd floor a little weird? The difficulty as well. The theme and method seemed to be different from the rest. Is that also an error during construction?"

She raised her head to reply, which was smeared all over with chocolate.

Atleast breathe while you're eating.

"Ah, that. That's just an illusionary trap."

Huh?

A trap?

Sorry?

I suddenly feel the tilt coming from my head.

"Should I explain more? You've cleared it already you know."

"Yes. If you don't tell me now, I just might get angry."

"It's a type of illusionary trial. Create an environment which forces you to fall off, and when you fall the illusion disappears, with all the traps that were prepared before triggers consecutively."

An environment which makes you fall.

If my growth was even slightly less, or didn't receive the Blink Emblem, I would most definitely have fallen off.

And as soon as I do, a trap hell filled with arrows would of started.

I realised that it is similar to the black and white stone trap in the 3rd floor.

Show an obvious solution at start, deny it and force the challenger into the trap.

It was a trap which required concentration, composure and thoroughness to doubt all they see from the challengers.

"I'm sure none of the gods would of guessed that a challenger would clear it without falling in the 2nd Round, heh."

I understand now.

But it still pisses me off.

I thought I was going to die this time aswell!

Damn it.

I ask another question, as if grasping for straws.

"Kirikiri. If the person who designed the tutorial exists, I would like to send some insults to him. Is there a way?"

"Nope."

Ofcourse not.

I wanted to ask for better descriptions on my new skill, and some recommendations on items which will help in clearing the 4th Floor, but Kirikiri went back to shoving her head onto the plate and eating the cake.

I'll ask once she's done.

Personally, I liked the cream cake more than the chocolate one.

I should buy a white cream cake topped generously with fruit.

And, well, I think Kirikiri looks better with white cream instead of brown chocolate on her face.

"Community."

I decided to browse through the Community while I wait for Kirikiri.

Now, is there any new informations out?

Most of the threads are patterns and walkthroughs on how to be easy and normal difficulty traps.

That's the advantage of numbers.

More information can be processed, analysed and answered.

Hard difficulty was a little slower.

The highest rankers were on the start of Floor 2, or just reached the halfway to the floor.

Casualties were similar to Hell aswell.

Ofcourse, Hell difficulty had much fewer people in the first place, and since everyone died except me, it's a little difficult to compare between the two.

It seems they are having a bad time.

Not as much as me though.

it was hard to find any information worth while for me.

As I continue to browse with disappointment, I've found some strange comments.

[Kim Sang Sik, Floor 4: Those Representatives. Are they really alright? Can we really leave them like that?]

[Lee Gee Jun, Floor 3: I know it leaves a bad taste, but what can we do. We have no proof as to what they are doing. We can't even intervene on it aswell. What can we do to those who don't even come out of Waiting Room. Not like we can go down Floors either]

[Lee Myoung Sun, Floor 2: They sent me a message too, but I just ignored it. I should of accepted and atleast find out what they are even upto]

It was a short conversation.

It seems, the chat room conversation was leaked into the threads momentarily.

I can't find earlier or later threads about it.

Representative Confederation.

Since I've received their invitation aswell, it felt wrong to leave everything as it is.

Representative Confederation.

Just saying it's name felt like it was leaving a bad taste.

Let's clear things up.

Representative Confederation.

What are they representing.

Just by looking at the earlier threads and their accounts, it doesn't seem to involve the higher rankers of the Tutorial.

My previous prediction that it was a meeting for high rankers in the Tutorial was a miss.

Just what, who can you represent.

I began to think Community as a group.

Since the only way I can communicate with others is through Community.

But, with Hell excluded, most people gather in Waiting Rooms, not Community.

An isolated, unnatural environment far from reality is the Tutorial's Waiting Room.

It's not just a bad taste now.

Among the comments, the phrase 'What can we do to those who don't even come out of Waiting Room.' gets me the most.

Once they enter the Tutorial, after the first Round, All meat jerkies and water which were provided for free disappears.

Afterwards, they have to use points to buy food.

Infact, after 24 hours of staying in the Waiting Room, they are kicked out of it.

Since I heard it from Kirikiri after the 1st Round, this information holds true.

If you were to make a confederation out of everyone in the Waiting Room.

How can you maintain the confederation without leaving the Waiting Room.

How will that confederation manage itself.

No matter how I think about it, it can't be normal.

Damn.

All the joy I felt from clearing the 3rd floor plummeted down to depression.

Just as that comment says, outsiders cannot find out, nor intervene with what is happening inside.

What do I do?

Chapter 33

Tutorial 4th Floor, Waiting Room

I've decided to ignore the Representative Confederation for now.

I'm sure I can ask Kirikiri about the Waiting Room where the Representatives resided at, just like how I could ask what happened to the people in Hell 1st Floor.

But, it would most likely cost all the Chances I've gained from clearing the 3rd Floor.

And most importantly was the fact that I couldn't intervene with what they were doing, even if I knew what the situation was.

It may sound like a cheap excuse, actually it was an excuse, but I'll just focus on myself for now.

"Kirikiri."

I could see a surprised look on Kirikiri's face.

On her hand was chocolate topping from the the cake.

"You can eat it."

"Ok!"

I started talking about the main issue after watching Kirikiri finish the chocolate topping.

"Can you give a detailed description for Talaria's Wings?"

"Yep! You'll see it when you get back to the Waiting Room."

"Um... and, Kirikiri. I still have multiple Chances to ask questions left over right?"

"Yep."

"Then, can I leave it for now, and use it later?"

"Yep. That's fine."

That's a relief.

I planned on asking about either the Gods, or how one would go about clearing the Tutorial in general the next time I see her.

With that decision made, I asked for assistance in buying necessary items for the next stage.

Kirikiri didn't ask for any payment just like back in the 1st Floor.

Using the saved up points, I bought a better leather armour and more potions.

As well as a few miscellaneous items and equipments as recommended by Kirikiri.

Hm... Kirikiri's recommendations have been somewhat unexpected.

I could somewhat guess the theme of the 4th Floor was.

But, I couldn't figure out what the main purpose of these items were.

I guess the rope, hook and binoculars were obvious but,

A mirror?

What on earth would I use this for?

I keep that question in my head, afraid of using my Chances by asking that question.

I looked into the mirror.

But instead of seeing my reflection, it showed a strange mark on my face.

On my forehead to be accurate!

What is this.

"What the hell is this!"

"It's the symbol of the Blink Emblem. I'll answer that for free this time. Heh."

There was a blue, circular magic seal seared on my forehead...

I wouldn't want this, even if I went back to being a teenager (chyuuninbyou).

And it was even glowing slightly!

Had it been on my forehead the whole time since I got the skill?

For the first time, I was somewhat happy of the fact that I didn't have to worry about meeting anyone in Hell difficulty.

It's too embarrassing to see anyone with a doodle on their face.

I sighed and stepped into the portal.

"I'll see you later. I'm off."

Kirikiri did her usual reply to my farewell, by hopping about around me.

I was expecting Kirikiri to ask for another cake when I returned, but what came out from her was different.

"I'll tell this as bonus for buying me a cake. There's going to be a grand conference opening soon."

Grand conference?

I was swallowed by the portal's light before I could ask what it meant, and was teleported to the 4th Floor Waiting Room.

[Welcome to Floor 4 Waiting Room]

A grand conference.

I checked the Community to see if anyone else had information, but none could be found.

If this grand conference could gather all the people in the Tutorial onto the same environment,

I just might be able to contact the Representatives directly.

Maybe not.

Well, I should be prepared for it just in case.

How should I act in that situation.

After clearing my thoughts for a brief moment, I invited some of the people I've been following in the Community to a chat room.

* * *

[Round 2, Day 25. 20:30]

[Talaria's Wings (Lv.Max)]

Description: The God of Adventures has recently made this power to gift a Challenger of great interest. As it was hastily made, it lacks in certain areas.

The God of Adventures could not stand the anxiousness any further, and created this skill using his powers.

When cast, it summons Talaria's Wings behind the caster.

Talaria's Wings allowed the caster to glide in the air.

Both wings have incredibly high magic defence.

When cast, the Wings use the powers of the creator, God of Adventures, and it does not require divine powers, concentration or mana from the caster.

It's a good skill as expected.

It's rather disappointing that the skill doesn't allow me to fly, and instead allow gliding.

But, if I use Blink to travel up, the gliding should come in handy.

The Tutorial's stages are mostly confined, narrow corridors, but according to the Community, the stages' size and height increase with each floor.

It's easy to realise how effective this skill was, just by imagining if I had this back in 3rd Floor.

The Boss Room would have posed no threat, as I would of used the gliding skill to pass through the trial harmlessly.

It's limited to gliding, but having the sky as possible areas of movement was definitely a good news.

And the magic defense.

If you asked what is the greatest weakness of a warrior, it's magic attack.

Just having the magic defence from it will be of use.

I decided to try it out at this point.

"Talaria's Wings."

Oh wow.

A pair of large, very large wings appeared behind my back.

About 3m each.

It's about 6m wide if I spread them out fully.

It's starting to make my heart pound.

It feels like its tugging at my primal instinct as a male.

A point to note was that they aren't connected to my back.

I was slightly worried how they could possibly fuse with my muscles or bone, or rip through my clothes.

The wings were floating in the air, about half a foot away.

That's interesting.

And it seemed like it's made of blue crystal, not feather.

Actually, it could be a type of gem, not just a crystal.

When I look at it, it feels like it's drawing me into the wings.

I test out the wings by moving them around.

Despite floating in mid air away from me, and being made of crystal instead of feather, the wings slowly moved as I had wished.

Since the wings were so much larger than me, I could hide my entire body with the wings.

I think they would make a great defence against magic.

I doubt it's effective against psychological attacks, but my Mental Corruption Immunity skill will take care of that.

The tips were quite sharp, so it seemed possible to use them for close quarter combat.

But, one sad part was no matter how much I tried flapping those wings, I could not fly.

It really can only glide.

I was considering if I had to start working on 4th Floor before the 3rd Round finished, but researching would take its place now.

I need to use the time to get used to Talaria's Wings and Blink, and how to use them in combination.

It's very nice to have something different to work on, since I haven't made any significant growth in the 3rd Floor.

Of course, I can't forget my usual pain, bleed, pierce and burn resistance grinding.

These busy days continue, just as it always had.

* * *

"Big Sis. Stop it. They'll find out"

I calm my little sister with my eyes.

Well, I doubt she was calm, but I wished she would atleast stay quiet.

Inventory.

We stick close to the corner of the Waiting Room and take a few jerkies out, little by little.

I can't take too much out.

If those sons of bitches found out, they would take the jerkies right on the spot.

The usual beating for opening the Inventory in secret, without permission would follow as well.

I shoved as many pieces of jerky as I could into my shirt.

There was definitely a limit to how long we can stay in the Waiting Room.

The holograph message was showing the remaining time left, and the conversation from the bastards confirm it as well.

24 hours.

It's unlikely I'll die, but it's too long to withstand without a single drop of water or food.

I might be fine, but my little sister may not make it.

After taking out enough jerkies, I close the inventory, and close the buttons on my shirt.

This still isn't enough.

Surviving was possible.

Those demons may beat the hell out of someone, but they aren't psychopathtic killers.

For food, I could sneak some jerkies from my shirt.

However, the most crucial fault was that I have no means to protect myself, or my sister from them.

That group of mobsters who introduced themselves as the 1st Round seniors had strength beyond logic.

Anyone who fought against them was beaten close to death.

The fight was our 7 against their 3.

We weren't even a match.

All of use raised our weapons and fought, but couldn't even scratch one of them.

The difference is that they are from the 1st Round, while we are 2nd.

They may have been normal people just like us, back in the days.

The, the process of going through the Tutorial may have given them the super human strength.

That may explain why they are surrounding the blue magic circle, and stop everyone from going outside.

I instinctively looked at my stolen weapons.

I shouldn't have lost my spears so easily.

I thought back to the time where I first got that spear.

Tutorial.

Starting weapon.

Dimensional teleport.

Inventory.

Status.

All these illogical sights.

It's easier to think that I was in a game world rather than a real one.

That would explain this situation better as well.

The floating holograph message was similar to that from games.

Maybe, this really was a game world, and I've become a character in it.

The only problem was, that this game was incredibly unfriendly.

It's not telling me all the crucial information that a normal game would usually provide.

I needed information.

Where we are, and what this world was.

What happens after 24 hours, when we are kicked out from the Waiting Room.

If there was anything to protect ourselves from them.

How do we gain strength like them.

I needed information.

* * *

Hm hm. Ptueh!

I forced spit from my throat.

Someone got hit by it, but there were no complaints coming.

In fact, the person was shaking, trying to avoid eye contact as much as possible.

Those gutless weaklings.

I chew at the jerkies in my pocket.

It's been a while since I've had food other than jerky.

What am I, an Old Boy?

It's making me go crazy.

But, despite my complaints of my meals, I am satisfied at this situation.

Very, very satisfied.

"Boss Chang Suk."

My sharp underling bring out a waterbottle for me.

Of course, both the jerky and the water aren't mine.

All my jerkies and water disappeared when the 1st Round finished.

Of course, I didn't buy new ones either.

I remember the 1st Round.

When after reaching the Healing Fountain, how scared and vulnerable I felt, standing in front of what the Community call the Boss Room.

I paced around the stone doors, and ended the 1st Round that way.

[1st Round has finished]

[You have failed clearing the 1st Floor]

[Bonus rewards are given according to your play]

[You have received 250 points]

I was relieved when I was returned to the Waiting Room.

I wasn't the only one failing the 1st Floor.

There was a delinquent looking high schooler from the same Waiting Room as me,

and some slacker from a different Waiting Room.

3 in total.

And soon, the 2nd Round started.

As the new people entered, I realised how identical they are to how I was in the 1st Round.

Scared, and vulnerable.

A world which cannot be understood logically, and no one would explain the rules for you.

They were normal people.

And weak.

At that moment, I thought up an idea.

This must be how Socrates felt when he shouted "Eureka!".

As I scanned the Waiting Room with a satisfied look, I found out a girl was looking at the Community in a corner.

"Oi, you bitch! How dare you read that without permission! Oi! Bring her over."

There were always idiots who don't know where they belonged.

The girl screamed about, but my minion pulled her by the hair.

She said she's a uni student. Time to show them an example.

For a brief moment, I'm the king of this small world.

King? King... A new idea came to me.

My seat of power would be temporary due to the limit of this system.

And I thought an idea to prolong my seat of power.

First, I needed to expand my group beyond this Waiting Room.

For its name... yeah.

The Representative Confederation.

Chapter 34

Tutorial 60th Floor (4)

"As time goes by, even if we forget, this heartaching feeling of longing, please don't forget~"

During my usual solo singing session,

a cup of coffee spawned with a clack, as if it was pleading for me to stop.

It's got to be an Americano when you're reading a newspaper in a cafe.

I took a sip of my Americano and began to read the newspaper.

The Monthly Normal Newspaper.

The sole Press company in the Korean Tutorial, founded by the Floor 30 NPCs in the Normal Difficulty.

Their naming sense was horrible.

Ever since its founding up till now, there had been many requests for a name change. However, it was ignored and they continued to use their name using a feeble excuse that the title contains the mind and soul of the founder.

You can subscribe to them by donating a certain amount of points every month through the Auction House.

For my case, I'm not just a subscriber, but one of their greatest investor at this point.

The monthly newspaper was created with 3 sections.

First was the news regarding what was happening outside the Tutorial, the real world.

Truth be told, it contained the least amount of useful information to the Players, but the outside news has always had the greatest attention from them.

The same goes for me.

Ever since I got trapped on this 60th Floor, reading the newspaper and finding out what happened outside this place had become my greatest joy.

What were the headlines for this month?

[Competition between America and Russia for the Returned]

[Repeat of the Space Race? Endless race for the Hell Difficulty]

[Lack of Korean Government's involvement on Hell Difficulty]

[America encourages future Players to challenge Hell Difficulty further]

Those crazy bastards.

They should know better than to encourage people to come here.

There was no way I couldn't swear at them.

Back in the past when it came to Hell Difficulty, China was first, and Russia was second.

In those days the number of people in Hell was just a tally on how many greedy people joined in.

But ever since the Hard Difficulty Players cleared the Tutorial and returned, everything changed.

Each and every individual who cleared Hard Difficulty had, with exaggeration, the power of an entire nation.

National might was now directly related to how many Returned that nation had.

The World's Policy was first the Returned, and second the Returned as well.

The most valuable resource was the Returned.

A nation's public order and military strength was based on the Returned.

The stability of the economy relied on the Returned.

Population and its density was about the Returned.

All first world nations gained information about the Tutorial from the graduates, the Returned.

In order to prepare the population from the random nature of the Tutorial's selection, they made its education and preparation an obligation to every citizen.

Plus, they began attracting the Returned from Third World countries by sending better contracts and deals.

Soon after, many of the Returned chose not to help their own countries, but choose their nationalities based on the contracts they were given.

There's even a saying that the moment you enter the Tutorial, you lose your passport.

Even if one accepted a contract with their own nation, in order to improve their terms, they would treat themselves as nationless before negotiating the contract.

All of the world scoured through the lands to gather as much Hard difficulty Returned as possible.

And soon, their eyes turned to Hell.

The first to move was China.

They would promote the relatives of all who challenged Hell Difficulty as Heroes.

From the rumours, half of the newcomers entered Hell Difficulty at one point.

The result was catastrophic.

They lacked too much information.

All of the challengers in Hell were killed through multiple Rounds, and China was now behind in raising new Returned from the world.

Since the number of Challengers are not determined by the nation's population, the blow was even heavier for the large, heavily populated nation.

The fact that only 100 people were chosen every time was very favourable to a country with small population.

And one of those countries was Korea.

For some reason, the survival rate of Korea's Returned were high.

Plus, Korea also had the highest Ranker for Hell, me.

Korea suddenly became one of the strongest nation for the Returned.

America soon approached Korea.

They determined that the reason for Korea's success was due to the society within the Tutorial and the high ranking Players who lead that

society.

America promised financial and military support and in return, received information about Tutorial including Hell Difficulty.

To be precise, from me and few others, through the Korean Government.

And soon, America made every challenger in Hell as America's Heroes.

They made their lives into a documentary, and encouraged them.

They made them into idols for children, and created toys based on them.

With that, America now has an astonishing number of 11 challengers, I mean survivors in Hell Difficulty.

What was the point of having so many?

What was the point of reaching the 30th Floor?

Their chance of leaving the Tutorial alive was ever so close to 0.

Idiots.

The Korean Government listened to my warnings too well.

They made entering Hell difficulty illegal.

...But wasn't that too much?

Well it's good that there were no more casualties resulting from it...

Thanks to that law, people only enter Hell by accident like Lee Yeon Hee, or fools who wouldn't listen to the warnings from others.

Back then I didn't think I'd get stuck on the 60th Floor.

Although I'm sure noone would of made it upto 60th Floor even if Korea made it legal.

Hm... but it still put me on a spot.

Maybe I should of made the warning lighter.

I closed the first section of the newspaper, and opened the second.

News within the Tutorial.

[More Controversies regarding extreme punishment from the Militia.]

[Park Jung Ah, Captain of the Militia, informs punishments will stay harsh as it is.]

[Lee Jun Suk, Hard Difficulty Floor 90. When will he final clear the Floor?]

In all honesty, I'm not so interested in the news within the Tutorial itself.

Since all these stories could be seen within the Tutorial or heard from others.

The main article for the 2nd section was the walkthrough for the Tutorial.

And I could speak with certainty.

This newspaper had nothing that could aid me.

But, I always looked through the newspaper in detail, hoping to find some information that would be able to help Lee Yeon Hee.

Of course, there was none.

Valuable information that I didn't know of and ones that could help me wouldn't be written on an article like this for free.

That was dead certain.

I clicked my tongue, and took a look at the last section, the Auction House catalogue.

I wondered if there was anything good that month.

Could I send something to help Lee Yeon Hee?

As soon as I opened it, there was a headline which caught my eye.

[Finally Released! The Dragon's Egg!]

It seems Kim Yeon Ooh from Hard Difficulty Floor 77 has failed to hatch the dragon egg.

Through the constant requests from the Auction House, Kim Yeon Ooh has decided to list it for an auction on the 83rd Round.

Dragon...

Dragon's egg...

Hey, wait a minute.

Normally dragons are at the pinnacle of magic,

and they liked to transform into humans through polymorph and, huh?

"Hallelujah!"

I finally saw an exit through the 61st Floor!

I hatch the egg!

I raise the hatchling!

I teach magic to the hatchling!

I teach polymorph!

I train it to a point where it can survive alone in 61st Floor!

61st Floor Cleared!

I calmed my pounding heart, and checked how many remaining points I had.

Alright, I am fully loaded.

But not satisfied, I made a statement in the Community.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60: Anyone who bets on the dragon egg will get fucked over by me.]

[Lee Jun Suk, Floor 90: Wow, you've finally lost it huh. Jung Ah nuna, member of the Militia is blackmailing here. Isn't that a problem?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60: Shut up. And don't you dare think about making a bet for the dragon egg either.]

[Lee Jun Suk, Floor 90: Heh. That's up for me to decide.]

[Park Jung Ah, Floor 90:... Sigh]

[Kim Min Hyuk, Floor 97: Man, he's changed a lot. Back in the days, you couldn't even talk properly with others, trying to set that mood with your chuuninbyou. What happened to you?]

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 60: Pot calling the kettle black huh. You couldn't even look me in the eye back then because you were so scared.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, Floor 97: Oi! Don't say that bullshit. I wasn't scared aight? I wasn't at all.]

I ignored my friend's attempt at maintaining his reputation and closed

the Community.

Unlike what I've said on the Tutorial, I won't be chasing down people who competed for the dragon egg.

I have my place as a member of the militia to worry about.

Besides, I would never lose to anyone in the auction when it comes to points.

First of all, I'm the highest ranking player in Hell Difficulty.

Secondly, I've been here ever since the very first round, and I've been taking all the special benefits including the first to clear the floors 1 to 60 and many more.

I've earned some hefty points through providing information and counseling walkthroughs and helping with raising the stats for others.

There was no one in the Tutorial throughout the world, who had more points than me.

I could probably buy not just an egg but a dragon itself, if it ever came up in the auction house.

And the reality was that I would never be able to beat someone without going back to reality.

Unless the Grand Conference occurred again.

In fact, it's been a while since the last Grand Conference.

It had always been very irregular with its arrangement and the frequency dropped as time went by, but maybe it was time for another one to be arranged soon.

If it does happen, I'll be able to see my friends and most importantly, see Lee Yeon Hee for the first time.

I had been talking with her through the chat this whole time, I wanted to know who she was in real life by seeing her eye to eye.

Maybe it would help me with training plans for her.

I should definitely put a request amongst the Easy difficulty players to gather some information about the next Grand Conference.

Memories of the past Grand Conferences began to pop up.

There's... not many good memories about the first Grand Conference.

There were other memories from different conferences as well.

Some were good, and some weren't so good.

These conferences were arranged quite frequently before the rules within the Community were set in place.

According to Park Jung Ah, it felt like the gods were urging us to solve the situation at hand.

Geez.

They should have planned the system better when they made it.

Since none of them could engage directly to solve it, they had no other choice than to open these conferences until the problems were solved by the people themselves.

After I read the newspaper, I left it at the corner of the table and took out a letter.

It was a letter to Lee Yeon Hee.

Truth was I've been having a 1:1 chat with her everyday, but I occasionally send these letters aswell.

The first letter I sent was through the Auction House which was how I

sent her items, and have continued to do so up until now.

It was okay for me, since all I had was time.

For Lee Yeon Hee, well...

Maybe it felt like being pen pals for her?

Well, it wasn't so bad.

If this could ease her loneliness and boredom then I've got to go along with it as much as I could.

Lee Yeon Hee had been sending all the thoughts and feelings she's been having as if writing a diary.

I noticed most of her conversations have been centred on her current personal state and complaints rather than information and training.

The letters focused more on stories back in the real world or when she was young.

Since the letters were quite long, the replies had to become thorough aswell.

I proofread the letter, looking for mistakes or if I'm missing any points in my answers.

After the proofreading the letter, I pondered on my concerns that I've delayed until now.

It had been going on since the night before.

Should I really put this onto the letter?

I repeatedly wrote it, erased it, and changed it.

Even a teenage boy in love wouldn't worry as much over the last phrase of his letter.

Haah.

Send Kirikiri Turtle's,

I don't think it's the time yet.

Send Kirikiri my regards.

Yes. Let's just keep it this way.

I really do want to send my regards to Kirikiri aswell.

My mind felt refreshed after dealing with the concerns I've had on my mind for the last few days.

Chapter 35

Tutorial 4th Floor

[I thought I was going to die! I was really about to die!]

[Didn't I tell you not to fall off? So why did you go and do the exact opposite?]

[How can you not fall off!]

[I didn't fall off!]

[faipfebsdbs;bsd]

[Enough. The results from the 4th floor will tell us exactly.]

[Tell us what?]

[How far up you can climb in this place]

* * *

[Round 2, Day 29. 8:30]

It was ideal for me to focus these last few days on my growth and training.

Thanks to that, I've become accustomed to using Blink.

It was still difficult to use as an attack, but adequate for the purpose of closing a gap closing or escaping.

Using the Talaria's Wings skill freely however was still troublesome.

At least I was able to fly in the sky by using the Glide skill instead of having to flap those wings constantly to fly.

One more thing to note was that none of my resistance skills have improved.

It seems their levels have become too high for the grinding in the Waiting Room to have an effect.

And, with only a short amount of time left for the 2nd Round to finish, I thought of challenging the 4th Floor to test out the newly skills - Blink and Talaria's Wings.

Clearing the floor would be difficult considering the time, so it would mainly be reconnaissance of the beginning area.

[Will you enter the 4th Floor?]

Yeap.

A bright light surrounded my body, with a familiar echoing of the portal.

[Welcome to Tutorial Stage, Hell Difficulty Floor 4]

I quickly scanned the area as I entered the floor.

It had the usual polished stone corridor.

The only difference was that, the corridor had gotten much wider.

It was about 10m wide.

As for the height... forget it.

It was too dark, and there was not a single object I could use to estimate the height.

Just looking up wasn't enough to give an accurate measure.

I guessed it was probably about the same as the ceiling of Incheon airport.

Anyway, the fact that the corridor had become larger was lucky for me.

Good luck for Ho Jae. Hahaha

(TL note: original is pronounced Ho Jae (which means good luck) for Ho Jae. It's a bad pun)

I begin to take out the equipments from the Inventory that I had bought with Kirikiri's advice.

I wore a new leather chest armour instead of the old one that I'd been using.

It was a shiny, black leather armour; I had no clue as to where that leather had came from.

Afterwards I wore a pair of leather pants, boots, gloves and a belt.

They were all dyed in black making a set.

It had been quite costly to buy all the equipments in black leather as they were uncommon.

If it hadn't been for the Gods and their extra points, making a set would have been difficult.

Of course, there was no bonus for buying them in the same colour.

It just looked cool.

On the belt was a throwing dagger as advised by Kirikiri.

Its effectiveness would drop in midrange, but it would be useful to create an opening...

I could still use it as a sidearm in case I lost my sword.

I could somewhat guess what the theme of 4th Floor was based on Kirikiri's advice to bring a throwing weapon.

It meant that there was probably a target that I must hit out of range.

This time, I may need to fight monsters in combat instead of using the usual machinated traps.

Based on the info from the Community,

On Easy Difficulty mode, the first monster was a walking mushroom man.

In the Normal mode, a goblin.

Information about the type of monster in the Hard mode had yet to come.

[Kuwaaaaaaa]

I heard a sharp warcry from further ahead.

I guess a monster was coming out.

As the tension was building up, I firmly held onto my sword and shield and checked my equipment again.

With everything in place, I marched towards where the warcry had come from.

It was a typical green skinned monster that you'd see in cartoons or novels.

His skin was an unusual green.

His body jam packed with muscle, comparable to that of an Olympic wrestling gold medalist.

Giant fangs.

Red eyes.

Height of 2m.

Why was this guy my first opponent?

Damn, I could actually tell how different Hell was from other modes of difficulty just by looking at the monster instead of the traps.

The goblin from Normal Difficulty was short - around 100cm in height.

He was also unarmed.

The tip was to use the long reach of the weapon and fight from a distance.

But the monster in front of me was fully equipped.

In steel.

He looked less like a monster and more like a medieval knight.

His helmet, chest armour and boots were all made out of solid steel.

Only his arms and thighs were exposed.

In his hand was a giant axe.

I couldn't even imagine how much it would weigh.

It was a vicious axe, one I probably could lift even with two hands, let alone swing.

And he was holding it with one hand.

At least the handle of the axe was short.

It would have been a dire situation if he had a long weapon along with long arms.

Haah, what to do?

The monster stood in the same spot, staring, as if he was taunting me to attack.

Was I supposed to charge into him?

I glimpsed at the gladius in my right hand.

It was too short.

This sword had done its role sufficiently well until now.

Mainly for self harm.

But, at this moment, I wished that I had chosen a long weapon like a spear instead of such a short one.

Even a longsword would have been much better.

What the hell do I do now?

Let's think positively.

Kirikiri had not advised me to switch my weapon.

Instead what she had recommended was to wear armour and have a side-arm.

That meant this weapon was enough for me to beat this monster.

A wooden round shield and a gladius.

To deal with the difference in reach, I would have to jump towards the monster to get in close range like an infighter.

Me?

Against that?

Closing the distance wasn't hard thanks to Blink.

The problem was afterwards.

Hm, let's try blocking his attack for now.

My main weapon was the shield, not the sword.

I blocked and parried the attacks, and I stabbed whenever there was an opening, slowly wounding him to victory.

A perfect game plan, in theory.

I slowly walked forward, encouraging myself with each step.

Then suddenly, the monster charged forward as it shouted.

[Battle Focus]

Instead of retreating, I lunged towards and stabbed at the monster's neck.

Before the sword was able to reach its target, the monster swung its left arm.

[Blink]

I used the Blink skill to move backwards and create distance.

I had previously lunged so aggressively because I have Blink.

The monster didn't even act surprised by my Blink and began closing the distance without any hesitation.

The monster swung its axe, making a menacing sound.

With the momentum it had, a poor block could result in the loss of my arm let alone the shield.

Clash

I had somehow managed to parry the strike.

It sounded as if the shield was going to break, but it still held on quite well.

An ache spread from my wrist to the shoulder.

I held my sword in reverse grip and stabbed into the monster's neck.

Although it was aimed at the neck,

whether it was because of the height or because I had just missed, the strike instead landed between the neck and the shoulder.

And,

The sword wouldn't come out.

Bang!

I managed to block the fist from the monster's left arm, but the shield struck me in the face.

I gave up on the sword and used the Blink skill to go backwards and make a gap again.

Damn, was it possible for a sword to get stuck in pure muscle like that?

The monster didn't seem to be bothered by the sword in his shoulder and continued attacking.

I succeed again on parrying his axe with my shield.

The monster stepped forward and began to swing his axe the same way as he had before.

Then suddenly he changed his motion, lowering his stance and tackling with his shoulder.

Even though I was watching him do so, I wasn't able to respond to his movement.

As I was forming my stance to parry the strike coming above me, someone tackled me from below, flinging me into the air, despite having managed to block it.

I used my Blink skill to move backwards once more.

For someone who had such a reach and height advantage to lunge into the fight like that...

Heavy pain surged up from my stomach, along with its contents and blood.

As I tried to recover, I stared back at the monster,

he snorted and glanced at me with an arrogant look, then he made a gesture with his hand, asking me to attack first.

Ah, is that so.

He had been playing with me the whole time.

I didn't think there would be so much gap in our skill.

Let's think about this.

I was above him in terms of speed.

Even excluding the Blink skill, I was still much faster.

But for it to have ended up like this, it was definitely due to the difference in skill.

Even in terms of strength, there wasn't so much difference.

I could say that with certainty, since I've experienced it myself during the self harm sessions.

It was just the difference in weapons and my lack of proficiency with my weapon.

It seemed he was not actively trying to kill me by making the first move.

He was acting as if he was playing, no, teaching a new recruit as an experienced instructor.

However, he was a guardian who had the role to stop me from going past him.

Should I run?

My left arm which had been blocking until now wasn't normal.

The impact from the tackle was still there as well.

If I used my Blink skill, no, even without it, I would be able to reach the Waiting Room.

I could improve my skill by repeatedly challenging him again and again.

I might have gotten wrecked by him now, but this situation won't last forever. I'm sure.

If I survived and healed in the Waiting Room, I would always try again at another time.

My thoughts were clear, but my legs wouldn't move.

It hurt my pride too much to retreat from this.

No, I'm just angry at this point.

I controlled my breathing and lowered my stance.

I stuck my weakened left arm close to my body and formed a guard.

The monster looked at me with interest at first, before making a stance himself with the axe on the front, realising that I was up to something.

That was not the stance you need.

Weren't you overestimating your long arms there.

I tensed up my body and used Blink.

Forward.

Not in front of the monster, but beyond where he was standing.

This was my special attack - Tackle.

Bang!

With a noise similar to a cannonball hitting a wall, I lost my consciousness.

Auaah.

I think I hit my head again.

Damn, where is this.

I couldn't see at all.

It felt like I was having a hangover.

The world spun around me.

I tried to force my arms and legs to move, but they wouldn't move as I had wished.

Soon, I realised I was on the floor.

Despite my effort, it hadn't easy to even sit up.

Some time had passed until my sights slowly came back to me.

Among the still shaky vision, I could see the monster.

He was also lying on the floor, unable to move his arms and legs.

But, his red eyes were looking directly at me.

It was as if both sides got hit by the KO punch in a match.

Whoever stood first would win.

I clenched my teeth, trying to get myself together, but ended up falling instead.

[Battle Focus]

With the accelerated thought process, I checked the state of my muscles one by one.

None of them seemed okay.

My left arm, which was the centre of the impact, was beyond

salvageable.

Let's not rush here.

That monster can't stand too.

If I fell because of rushing, it would take that much longer to stand again.

Let's be calm and slow.

I pulled my hips back, making the cat stance from yoga.

I supported the weight with my right arm and my knees.

Could I stand from here?

Trying to endure the dizziness while forcing my limbs to move was difficult.

It wasn't so much the pain, but a problem with concentration.

UUh, Uaaaah!

I was standing now. Bastard.

I almost fell over again, but managed to at least get on my feet in a stagger using my right arm.

My head was still spinning, and my vision was shaking.

The body was in a constant seizure.

I could feel an uncomfortable feeling knocking at the roof of my mouth.

Did you know?

I was used to this situation.

I was very experienced with this situation.

"This was the power of pain and stun resistance. You son of a bitch!!"

Shouting needlessly had caused my eyes to roll over again.

Shit.

You are fucked,

the moment my balance recovered so the I can walk.

I put my hand on my knees and stared at the monster who still twitching his arms and legs with the sword stuck in his shoulder.

* * *

I ended up puking over the body of the monster.

Forcing myself to move and trying to swing a sword to kill the monster had made the situation much worse.

Since the skin and muscle of that monster was much thicker than I had thought, I had to stab repeatedly for a long time before I was able to kill him.

There was blood all over the surroundings and on my body.

Normally it would have been my blood, but this time it was someone else's.

Whether I could call a monster someone could wait until later.

I couldn't even kill a rat or an insect back in the day,

but now I was able to kill a living being, even if it was a monster - by

stabbing multiple times like a deranged killer.

But, I didn't feel anything.

Was it because my mind had changed as my body became more and more inhuman?

Or had I lost something inside me?

Had I just become used to death and blood?

I would never find out the reason.

I collapsed onto the floor, just barely sitting.

Using a potion at this stage seemed unnecessary, so I decided to rest and move later.

As I was about to rest, the monster's body became see-through, then eventually disappeared.

In place of the corpse was a stone.

What's this?

A drop?

[Goblin Graktus's birthstone]

Description: A stone gifted to the Blood Eye Tribe's meanest instructor Graktus by the tribe's shaman at birth. You can sell this in the shop.

I'm sorry.

That huge monster just now was a goblin?

Chapter 36

Tutorial 4th Floor (2)

[Round 2, Day 30. 11:30]

"Huah"

I let out a sigh as I watched the goblin instructor's body fade away.

The birthstone had not dropped this time either.

Initially, I had been pushed back hard and had only barely managed to win with my special Blink Tackle. Now, I could beat him easily.

What I lacked in that first fight was combat knowledge and experience.

In terms of physical attributes, I had been leagues ahead of the goblin instructor.

With all the resistances and god's powers that I had, losing would be quite an achievement in itself.

Since the first battle, I had managed to defeat the goblin instructor multiple times, but there was still so many things I could learn from his stance, his movement and his counter attacks.

Therefore, I had been continuously challenging him without moving forward to get experience.

Taking into mind the many factors such as the goblin's height and weapon, simply copying the goblin wouldn't be a good idea.

But, for someone who lacked even the basics, just observing his movements was very informative.

My old memories from practicing Judo and Kendo were slowly coming back as well.

I was starting to realize the importance of education.

The Goblin had not have any insane over the top attacks like in a fantasy book; he simply efficiently moved and attacked based on what he had learned from experience.

Although we couldn't speak to each other and the goblin would just charge at me, even so he had taught me so much.

I could certainly hit exponential growth, if there was someone who could teach me proper fighting techniques.

I should ask Kirikiri if such chances were available.

From challenging the Goblin, there had also been progress on skills.

[You have received Basic Shield Skill Lv.3]

[Cut Lv.1 has been incorporated into Basic Swordsmanship Lv.2]

[You have received Basic Swordsmanship Lv.3]

It was really encouraging to see the swordsmanship and shield skill, which I had been stuck at for so long, finally level up.

Plus, the Cut skill had also been absorbed into the Basic Swordsmanship skill.

I had pondered for quite some time what that meant.

In the end, I came to conclusion that my 'Cut' skill wasn't considered swordsmanship.

Rather than actually cutting something, it had been focused on hitting away arrows.

I'm not certain, but I'm pretty sure that had been the case.

Like so, I had been learning basic combat skills, expanding beyond the swordsmanship and skill with shields.

And in my process of learning, the goblin instructor had been killed a countless number of times.

Well, seeing how he reseted every time I came back from the Waiting Room, I don't think he actually existed.

I wish the goblin instructor was a little stronger. It feels too inefficient to learn from someone weaker than me.

This time, I had managed to beat him with just a sword and no shield.

How should I fight him next time?

Hand to hand and without a weapon?

Or maintaining a distance advantageous to the instructor, yet bring the tempo back?

I walked back to the Waiting Room as I planned out a schedule.

The 2nd Round would finally finish.

Considering that I had been crawling through just the 1st Floor for the entire 1st Round, the 2nd Round had been really eventful.

Just looking at the floor numbers, I had gone from Floor 2 to 4.

Soon, the 2nd Round would finish and the 3rd would begin.

And just like during the 1st and 2nd Round, new people would enter the 1st Floor.

I don't know how many people would enter Hell Difficulty this time, but I hope a lack in communication won't happen again.

[You have entered the Floor 4 Waiting Room]

As soon as I entered the Waiting Room, I opened the shop and bought some potato chips and coke.

I had been taking care of my meals with mostly jerkies and rice balls, excluding the cake I had with Kirikiri.

I may splurge my points to buy a set of equipment, but I would never go beyond reason to buy food.

One reason might be because I don't really care about the taste of my food, but the other reason was to stop myself from losing focus and becoming lazy.

If one day, I felt like I wanted to just rest for today,

if I wanted to skip out on my daily schedule,

if I wanted to delay the Tutorial to next day.

Those feelings may add up and cause me to become slothful, so I'm forcing myself into the corner to prevent it.

Today I will have a small break.

I've already finished my daily routine.

I've been through so much in the 2nd Round.

I've achieved so much in this time.

Maybe, I've already become a little relaxed.

[Round 3 will begin]

Now, the newbies will be coming to the tutorial.

Hmmm...

It seems nobody chose the Hell difficulty in this round.

Well, I guess this was normal.

How many people would actually choose the highest difficulty from a strange, floating hologram they've never seen before.

Actually, saying it like that made me feel like I'm the strange one.

It wasn't too bad anyways.

I didn't have to worry about the meaningless deaths newcomers would have faced in Hell.

One problem in my mind was removed.

I looked through the Community relaxedly.

I rip open the bag of potato chips.

Soon, the comments containing fear and confusion from the newbies came.

I was not watching because I found their misfortune entertaining.

I was curious of the news from the outside world that they would tell after the confusion died down.

The 2nd Round finished, and the 3rd began.

What happened in the outside world during the last month?

Had that secretary in the Blue House been arrested,

Had the president stepped down?

How had the idols who returned last month done with their new album?

There were mountains of questions I wanted to ask.

It seemed that many had the same idea as me, as there are a lot of people logged onto the Community at this time.

[Kim Joo Hyuk, Floor 1: What is this? What is this Community and Tutorial. Actually, where is this place?]

[Lee Chul Min, Floor 1: I guess I've lived too long]

[Lee Gi Chan, Floor 1: I was just drinking until now, what is this...]

It seemed someone came here while being drunk like me.

The people who were here before made detailed explanations to alleviate the newcomers' confusion.

It may have seemed grim, as they could not return home and they may actually die.

But at least they could understand and adjust to this place much faster.

The fear of the unknown was much more dangerous than any observable threat.

I was waiting for them to slowly calm down, until I saw a few strange comments.

[Lee Mi Yeon, Floor 1: Am I dead? Is this like hell?]

[Kim Jin, Floor 1: I'm sure I was about to be eaten by a monster, but even my leg is healed]

[Park Byung Jin, Floor 1: Is this related to those portals the monsters come from?]

What was this crazy talk?

Were they drunk in unison?

Even the pre-existing population who was answering to the questions from before wasn't able answer back.

[Kim Min Hyuk, Floor 3: The newcomers from the 3rd Round, what is this about a monster and portals? What happened before entering the Tutorial?]

The answer to that question was even more shocking.

Apparently a few days after the 2nd Round had started, an abnormality that had never been seen before occurred throughout the world.

Mysterious portals had appeared across the world, and 3 days later, monsters began appearing from those portals.

These monsters easily ignored impacts from small arms such as pistols, forcing military units to use heavy weapons to respond against them.

Nations who were able to mobilise their armies the moment portals appeared didn't suffer too much, but the smaller nations who had not had a proper military were destroyed on the spot.

The nations who initially were able to barely manage with their own portals were now facing monsters from outside their borders, thus damage was beginning to spread.

Plus, undetected portals from caves, underground, jungles or below the lake began to spit out monsters, causing the frontlines to crumble.

In the 2 weeks since the portals had appeared, the number of casualties went beyond the total casualties from the 2nd World War.

The problem was that new portals were still appearing.

There were areas which were so heavily occupied with monsters that the nation had given up;

other nations had had their government abolished.

The people who had faced this apocalyptic event went mad.

Public order was non-existent and people killed each other for food and weapons.

Shady cults began to appear. The rich hid in their private safe houses, while the poor hid within the ruins of the cities.

Korea was no exception.

At least Korea's portal crisis had been late compared to other countries.

The first portal had appeared after monsters began to wage war against other nations.

Therefore, they were able to react quickly when the first portal appeared.

Martial law had been in place even before the first portal had appeared and the armies from the front lines had been deployed south on standby.

As the portals appeared throughout the worlds, the battalions were deployed before the 3rd day had even passed.

But, whether it was because the preparation wasn't sufficient or the monster's attack had been too beyond their expectations, they had failed to defend the Chungcheong Province and the Northern Frontier had been made within the Gyunggi metropolis, while the Southern Frontier had been made south of Chungcheong Province to stop the spread of monsters.

The total casualties had been so many that they weren't able to quote a number, a province had been destroyed to rubble and new portals were still appearing as of now, but it was at least better than the crisis that most of the other countries were facing.

But, no man could find relief in those facts.

Because of the news from the newcomers, those who had figured out what happened were asking for the safety of their loved ones.

So many comments appeared at once that I couldn't even read most of them.

I wasn't an exception.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 4: Suwon. How's Suwon? Is there a portal there too?]

Thankfully, there hadn't been any yet.

I had stayed on the Community to see if any of my friends and families had entered amongst the newcomers or if anyone might have at least known of their safety.

However, none of them were able to give me an answer.

[Round 3, Day 0. 18:20]

...It had been 18 hours since the 3rd Round had started.

18 hours.

A very long time.

The fact that I had been simply watching the Community for 18 hours without training or following my daily routine felt disturbing.

As if it should have never happened.

Thankfully, I had very few contacts.

Most of my friends had been living in Suwon or in the army.

Since they said the army was safest during these times, it lessened my worries.

My family was also in Suwon.

If you had asked how good my relations were with my family, I'd answer it's not good.

But I still wished that they were safe.

And that they didn't run into any accidents.

I realised my mind had begun to sidetrack.

What was I thinking before.

The Community showed me the answer.

[Jung Jin Chul, Floor 2: Maybe we can help?]

I had managed to spot this amongst the flood of comments.

I had finally come back to my senses after reading this and averted my eyes from the Community.

There was information that you could return back to real world after clearing 100 floors.

If I were to clear all 100, how strong would I be.

Perhaps beyond the modern firepower.

This Tutorial world which I had been imprisoned in without an explanation had not told me neither aim of the place nor the method

on how to escape.

Maybe, the Tutorial had appeared to give us the strength to fight back against those monsters.

Just as the name Tutorial said.

I wasn't the only one to think this way.

The high rankers of the Community all agreed to release information and walkthroughs and to join hands to beat the Tutorial.

Soon everyone agreed that, everyone's number one aim was to swiftly clear the Tutorial.

1 month after the Portal crisis and 3 rounds since the Tutorial started...

The Tutorial Speed Run had started.

Chapter 37

Tutorial 4th Floor (3)

Round 3, Day 0, 07:40]

My eyes opened instantly.

At some point, I started to immediately wake up as soon as I've had a specific amount of sleep.

Was it the result of my superhuman growth?

It was convenient that I no longer needed an alarm now.

After setting the quick clear of Tutorial as my goal, I reduced my sleep time to only 2 hours.

Since the Waiting Room could recover my body to perfect condition, it made sleep unnecessary. The act of sleeping was just routine at this point.

The reason I continued to keep that 2 hour sleep was for mental health and in preparation to have a functional lifestyle in an outdoor environment within the Tutorial.

With the extra 2 hours I've gained from reducing my sleeptime, I began to make a walkthrough from floor 1 to 3, remembering all the traps I had to go through.

It was for others who entered Hell Difficulty mode after me.

There may have been no one who entered this Round, but that wouldn't be the case forever.

I've also began to research with others in the Community by sharing

information.

[Lee Ho Jae, Floor 4: So I'm saying, don't just stab your arm, but dig through it while trying to search for nerves. Your resistance skills go up faster that way]

[Kim Sang Shik, Floor 5: I've heard of many retarded things recently, but your method takes the cake]

What was the problem with that?

It was not like I was telling them to heat the arrow in fire as well.

Some information wasn't accepted, but with many people actively participating, the process of gathering and analyzing have gotten much faster.

This was especially the case for those who were worried about their families.

Until now, sharing information was mostly done by the Rankers, as if to tell their stories and brag about the rewards they had gained.

With more information being released, more people became confident enough to advance through the Tutorial.

The greatest benefits went those in the lower floors - Floors 1 and 2.

It was to be expected, as almost all the factors in those floors had already been analysed and noted.

Those who specialised or had occupations in martial arts or sports released their training tips as well.

Those really came in handy.

Especially the tips released by a personal trainer. The exercises that could be done without equipments were like rain in the desert sands.

In the Tutorial world which we were all kidnapped into, we followed its instructions out of necessity, as the system requested it, but those who truly advanced through it were only a few ranker, including me.

But, most of the people have realised the importance of clearing the Tutorial.

They may not put their lives on the line yet, but at least it gave them a reason for doing so.

There were also those who didn't jump to clearing like others, but instead supported others in their cause.

Not everyone had the same determination, but everyone was starting to ride the bandwagon.

And, these new information would help accelerate the growth of those who weren't so dedicated.

The Tutorial Walkthrough started without an issue.

[Round 3, Day 1. 00:00]

I stood on the portal as soon as Round 3 began.

The portal's light surrounded me, as I was immediately moved to the stage.

As soon as I had confirmed that the teleportation finished, I ran.

With the Wind Spirit's Blessing's 2nd effect, acceleration, my speed sped up at an exponential rate.

Had I been too rash?

I began to wonder, as the winds began to screech in my ears.

However, I saw the Goblin Instructor before I even finished that thought.

Kuwaaa!

I had gotten used to that warcry.

I've even become quite fond of him, due to the continuous battles I've had in the last few days against him. Now, it was time to say goodbye.

First, I had to reduce this speed.

The Wind Spirit's Blessing may be effective while on the move, but I was still not used to fighting with such speed.

I closed the distance by blinking into the striking range of the Instructor.

His axe swung immediately.

A quick reaction as always.

Maybe he knew about my Blink skill already.

There was no need to wait for the axe.

In fact, I ran forward and raised my shield to the axe.

Thud!

With the strike hitting much closer than intended by the Instructor, there wasn't much impact on the shield.

And without stopping, I stabbed the sword into his right shoulder.

All in a single motion.

I couldn't take the sword out easily, but at least it would make one of his arms useless.

The Instructor screamed once more and swung with his right arm.

It seemed he would use his size if it came to it.

I use my arm to maintain distance from him while taking a quick step backwards.

And threw out a low kick as well.

Now, with my superhuman body, I would perform the impossible feat of doing a low kick whilst traveling backwards in mid air.

There was a theory about the Strength Stat in the Community - that Strength didn't just improve strength in arms and legs, but in all the muscles in the body.

This included muscles that were usually difficult to train like the waist or joint muscles.

If it was not in the form of Stats, these muscles weren't easy to improve along with stabilizing or improving the movement of the person.

Therefore, improving the Strength Stat was of utmost importance.

In conclusion, strength was best.

That's how the theory went.

There were many who were for it and against it. Due to a lack of evidence, everyone eventually moved on from it.

I was the same, but I did think that some of those facts were in fact correct.

Because of the difference in height, my lowkick landed on the knee joint of the Instructor.

With a sound you shouldn't hear coming from a body, the kneecap poked out the skin.

The match was over at this point.

In fact, the match was over before it had even began.

As the instructor lost his right leg, which was used to support his heavy axe and injured shoulder, his stance broke immediately.

I smacked the instructor's face as he began to collapse.

Then pushed his chest while his head was stretched backwards, knocking him over.

I quickly took a mount position and threw a punch.

The instructor tried to block it by raising his arms.

As he wasn't in a normal state at this point and having still had a sword stuck in his shoulder, he was struck in the head.

My punch went in between his arms and struck cleanly into his face.

His head had hit the floor hard, before bouncing back into the air.

He was completely dazed.

Forget moving, he probably wasn't even conscious at this point.

No need to tire myself out at this point.

I grabbed onto his head and chin and twisted them.

The end.

The difference in speed had created this outcome.

It had not just increased my chances of dodging and accuracy like in games, I could also perform multiple actions during my attack.

Another way to explain was that there was no way I could lose, as long as there wasn't too much of a difference in other factors. However, those situations were extremely rare.

The instructor's body twitched for a moment, then began to fade away completely.

Sadly, his axe disappeared with him

I wish that was a drop that I could get from killing him.

The birthstone did not drop this time either.

I wiped the oil from the instructor's hair onto my armour and took my sword back.

And I marched on forward.

I knew what the next challenge was.

I didn't complete it, but I had scouted it out of curiosity.

The next challenge was also goblin, but this time, not 1 but 5 of them.

1 to 5 goblins.

That sounded about right.

Seemed to be a good increase in difficulty as well.

However, advancing in such a linear way was not how Hell Difficulty did it.

These 5 goblins had made a trench to wait for their enemy.

There was even a wooden roof on top of the trench.

The lineup was 2 spearmen, 2 archers, 1 goblin with a weird staff.

I guess the goblin with a staff was like a wizard or a shaman.

Considering that a trench was used to reduce the amount of exposure from bombardment, I could imagine that staff goblin would fire something in a straight line, similar to a gun.

I could easily pierce through arrows and spears from a trench.

The problem was that the users of the bow and spear were Hell Difficulty special muscle goblins.

I would have to get into the trench as quickly as possible and fight in close quarter combat, surrounded by 5 muscle heads, in an arena called the trench.

I guess there was no need to fight with a disadvantage this time.

They even had the mystery weapon called the staff.

[Blink]

I used the Blink skill 3 times in a row straight up.

Wow, that was quite high.

If I didn't have the memories from the 3rd Boss room, I would have gotten cold feet for a second.

[Talaria's Wings]

The crystal wings spread behind me.

And the gliding effect took place.

I began to glide through the air, as if paragliding.

The winds hitting my face felt refreshing.

Instead of this dark Tutorial Corridor, I would have liked to fly above a field or on the beach in sunlight.

I should try that out in Kirikiri's hills after finishing Floor 4.

[God of Adventures feels satisfied]

...Hm, it had been a while.

He hadn't made much of an appearance after giving me the wings.

To be honest, I thought that was because he was embarrassed by the description for Talaria's Wings.

Just as before when I tested it, there was no noise from flying.

Maybe it was because I was gliding using a skill and not actually flying using wings.

I raised my altitude, sticking close to the ceiling.

The corridor of Tutorial was dark.

Even with night vision, it was still dark.

I wouldn't be detected easily, unless I was closeby, especially since I was not even in their sights.

I could begin to see the trench.

Usually, being on standby in this situation would have meant that the goblins would slack off or play around with each other.

But these goblins were constantly on guard, looking for intruders.

Thankfully these goblins weren't looking to the sky as well.

As long as they didn't look up, I wouldn't be in their field of vision.

Plus the wooden roof on top of the trenches made flying above them even easier.

First, I remained in the air and looked at the position of the goblins.

It wasn't easy because of the roof, but with continued effort, I eventually found out.

[You have received Sneak Lv.1]

Oh. An unexpected reward.

I should try to grind my Sneak skill later.

I managed to bypass the trench in secret.

I began to wonder what would happen if I went on, ignoring the trench.

I let that thought slide for now.

It'd be annoying if I got detected later and got pincerred from the front and the back.

I lowered my attitude towards the back of the trench.

The Glide skill allowed me to take flight in which ever direction I wanted.

Such a convenient skill.

There was an exit at the back of the trench just like the one at the front.

The formation of the goblins was:

2 spear goblins,

2 archers,

and a staff goblin.

The staff goblin was at the very back.

As soon as my feet touched the ground, I immediately folded my wings and jumped into the trench.

The staff goblin quickly turned around, but it had been too late.

"Puek!"

The sword found its mark - his throat.

I think I had talent to be an assassin as well.

I had already managed to take down who I imagined to be the most annoying opponent.

A good start.

The 4 at the front quickly turned around to face me.

The archer goblins ditched their bows and took out their daggers from their pockets.

The spear goblins fell backwards, as their long spears were getting in the way.

While the goblins were busy trying to make a formation, I blinked towards them, only a small distance away.

To be precise, in front of the 2 spear goblins, and in between the 2 archer ones.

[Talaria's Wings]

I summoned my wings again.

The blue, beautiful crystal wings spread wide in both directions.

Stab!

The two archers next to me were stabbed by the ends of the wings and pushed into the walls of the trench.

Since the wings had the density of a metal and their edges were sharp, I could use them in offence like this.

It seemed that both archers didn't die immediately and instead struggled.

I think I've suppressed those 2 for now.

I undid the Talaria's Wings as it restricted my movement in the small trench and threw a throwing knife at one of the spear goblins as I ran towards him.

Chapter 38

Tutorial 4th Floor (4)

The goblin knocked the dagger away without any problem.

But, the action caused him to delay his attacks.

The other goblin thrust his spear at me.

I parried the spear with my shield.

The spear slid across the surface of the shield.

I closed the distance on the goblin by pushing through with my shield.

You shouldn't make such an honest stab.

You're lacking compared to the goblin instructor.

As I quickly approach him, the goblin strengthened his grip on his spear and attempted to push me backwards with the shaft.

That was a mistake.

You should have ditched the spear by now.

You can't use the middle of the shaft in such stance to push me off.

Even if there was a difference in strength between us.

[Battle Focus]

As I approach the goblin, I stepped on his left foot, and drove the sword into his neck.

Immediately, I turned back.

The remaining goblin spearman had given up on his spear and opted for hand-to-hand combat.

Trying to face an opponent who had mingled with your companion in a trench with a spear would be difficult.

Thanks to the accelerated senses from the Battle Focus skill, the goblin's punch seemed to move slowly.

I calmly dodged the punch and threw a counter towards the goblin's face.

While he was dazed from the counter punch, I kicked at the goblin's chest.

The goblin fell to the ground from the strike.

I quickly took a mounting stance and used the throwing dagger nearby to end its life.

The two incapacitated archers were dealt with swiftly afterwards.

The power of the attack from the Wings of Talaria seemed quite significant.

Usually, the strength which moved the wings came from the muscles connected from the wings to the back.

But, these wings weren't connected to my body in the first place.

The strength and speed of these wings were probably due to the increase in its level.

The level of Wings of Talaria was maxed out.

Plus the wings were not made of feathers, but crystals that were more dense than ordinary metals.

It was likely that just flapping the wings would have stronger impact than any attack using my own strength.

All skills gifted by the gods seemed very overpowering, no matter what they were.

That's how the trench was cleared.

None of the goblins dropped a birth stone.

As I thought back to how the fight went, I was once again impressed by how OP the gifted skills were.

I got out of the trench and continued to advance through the Tutorial

* * *

"Good. Very good."

"What's so good, Boss Chang Suk."

"It has nothing to do with you."

With the constant replies flowing in, I closed the Community with a satisfied smile.

The Representatives were growing faster than I had expected.

Already, most of the 1st Floor Waiting Rooms had been overtaken and some of the 2nd Floor Waiting Rooms have been overtaken as well.

It was expected only 1 or 2 Waiting Rooms in Easy Difficulty Floor 1 had no relation with the Representatives.

Good. It was very good.

By the 3rd Round, most of the new comers had adapted quickly and many have shown positive responses to the Representatives.

Perhaps this was already quite common on the outside.

Hahahaha.

There were no words to describe this satisfaction.

Would there be any time like this throughout my entire life?

No.

This. Truly was the best.

I heard a scream from the corner.

It was nothing much.

My minions were showing an example to those slaves.

They can't even die that easy.

Since there was no chance they would become disabled, there was no need to show any mercy.

Ah, but that didn't mean they couldn't die.

Seems like it was actually possible.

Soon, the 24 hours I was allowed to spend in the Waiting Room would finish.

But it didn't matter, as I had already been through this 2 times.

I'll progress until the Boss Room like before, and once the 3rd Round has finished, I'll be back in the Waiting Room.

I would have to remain alone in the Tutorial for 29 days, but there was a sweet reward awaiting at the end.

I could wait all day.

The one consideration were the slaves.

We had already warned them what would happen if they were to progress through the Tutorial without our approval.

That example in the corner was part of it.

Of course, I'm sure they wouldn't listen to my words so easily.

But, there were more of us in the 2nd Floor as well.

We've already told them that we would punish them dearly if we were to find any of them in the 2nd floor.

And it would happen.

Some of them might be sent to the Waiting Rooms without any of the Representatives.

But that didn't matter either.

Those guys couldn't come back to the 1st Floor.

Our greatest clients were the newbies just entering the Tutorial for the first time and the cowards who had no courage to progress through the Tutorial.

We had been put all our efforts into increasing the number of cowards.

We engraved fear into their bodies.

If those bastards stayed in the 1st Floor by the start of the 4th Round,

The Representatives would stabilise at that point.

I could then get an infinite supply of jerkies and water from the weak newbies.

The cowards who have stayed in the Tutorial for more than a Round would also need to get the water and jerkies from us.

Strength and food.

With both weapons at hand, we showed the power of the Representatives.

It was a perfect plan, no matter how I thought about it.

With few more Rounds, there wouldn't be any Waiting Rooms in Floor 1 that weren't associated with the Representatives.

Then, I will expand upwards.

That was how my kingdom would be finished.

It was an unreliable kingdom, made by the loopholes in the system, but at the same time it was protected by it.

Unreliable, but it would never fall.

But I'm sure there was going to be a kink in the plan.

There's always a few arrogant bastards who would rebel against the powerful.

Some would dream of getting revenge by advancing to the boss room and returning back to the Waiting Room.

But they would number at best 2.

They might not be able to post anything on the Community, but they would be able to request help for the higher floors using the 1:1 message.

That was when these messages would pay their worth.

The messages coming from the top floors or from what we called Rankers these days.

* * *

I wiped the blood off the knife by using a towel from the inventory.

All this time, I had just been dodging arrows for most part, but these annoyances were starting to pop up, along with fighting against monsters for the first time.

Now that I look at it, the shield wasn't in such a good state either.

The leather strap was mostly worn out, and the surface of the shield was quite damaged as well.

Of course it would all be repaired the moment I returned to the Waiting Room, but I couldn't just return there every time there was something wrong with my equipment.

I should change my weapons once I cleared the 4th Floor.

I considered using a different weapon like a spear or a blunt weapon, but I decided to use something I was accustomed to.

I had continued with the hunt for goblins.

These goblins had dug not just trenches, but had built walls and formations as well.

Their weapons were more varied too, from the shamans with their staves to archers with their hooks and crossbows.

Of course they still weren't much of a threat.

I had become a master at dodging projectiles from a distance.

Plus there was no need to dodge, I could just block them with Wings of Talaria if need be.

There was no damage to the wings from blocking the projectiles.

As long as I was in the air, the gliding skill would continue to work so I can wrap my body in air , while closing in for an attack.

It had gotten so easy to fight against the goblins, I couldn't believe I had so much trouble fighting against just 1 at the start.

The superior dexterity and skills may have taken a reason, but I think the skills from the gods were just too superior.

I was getting worried that using them too much would hamper my growth, but, thanks to my superior strength, I had gotten used to combat more easily.

[You have received Basic Swordsmanship Lv.4]

[You have received Basic Shield skills Lv.4]

[You have received Basic Hand-to-Hand skills Lv.2]

[You have received Battle Focus Lv.9]

[You have received Sneak Lv.2]

[You have received Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1]

These were my proof.

Despite my reliance on the God's skills, the continued battles had given me multiple new skills and improved others as well.

Among them, the Battle Focus which have been stagnant for a long time had grown exponentially.

Perhaps it was because I've begun to use it in a greater variety of

situations instead of just using it to dodge arrows.

I think the most important part about skill growth was not repetition, but varied experience.

[Kuwaaa!]

I was getting a deja vu here.

I heard a goblin's warcry from a distance.

As I moved forward, I was a goblin wearing similar clothes to the Instructor I had met at the start of the 4th Floor.

His height was slightly smaller.

Around 190cm.

Plus he had no weapons and was unarmed in both hands.

But he looked even more brutish.

And probably stronger.

Otherwise he wouldn't come after the Goblin Instructor.

This was the first one-on-one I had since the Goblin Instructor.

Plus, it was an unarmed opponent.

I stepped forward with a slight feeling of anticipation.

As I approached him, the goblin screamed as he charged in.

It was the same pattern as the Instructor wasn't it?

As I made that thought, I focused on the goblin's arms and legs.

Once the distance had been somewhat closed, the goblin's fist suddenly turned red.

Then,

Bang!

I had taken a blow to the chest and rolled backwards.

What was this!

I lifted myself up only to see that the goblin had already gotten very close.

Once more, the goblin's right hand turned red.

[Battle Focus]

The goblin's red fist was projected forward.

Literally!

He didn't even move his legs, waist or shoulders to make that punch.

It had just came out towards me like a bullet in front of his fist aiming for my face.

I had planned on using Battle Focus to dodge the fist and aim for a counterattack, but there had been no time.

I just raised my shield to try to block the blow.

Thud!

With a blunt echo, I could feel my body flying backwards once more.

[Blink]

I removed all the momentum on my body and landed in front of the Goblin.

And against the goblin who couldn't react immediately, I smacked his face with my hand, sword still in my grips.

The goblin's face turned from the strike, but his eyes were still aimed at me.

It slowly retreated backwards.

I took another step forwards and tried to make a high-kick at the retreating goblin.

Of course, it wouldn't get hit by such an obvious attack.

My kick cut through the air,

and my back was left exposed.

Heng, you thought I had made a mistake right?

[Wings of Talaria]

With a swoosh sound the large wings spread outward.

I thought that it would get pierced by the wings, but the goblin leapt backwards and dodged the attack.

I was more surprised that he was able to dodge this than his bullet-like fists.

It felt like this thing knew all my skills, just like the instructor had before.

I could finally take a breathe with the distance the goblin had made.

I spat the blood that had pooled in my mouth.

Damn, my tooth was broken as well.

No matter how I saw it, I was sure that red bullet fist thing was a skill.

How could you use a skill without any restrictions and in succession like that.

Wasn't that too OP?

I guess I couldn't say much, with my Blink and wings and all.

The goblin slowly closed in once again.

I also joined in and threw my sword as I stepped forward.

Despite having added a throwing skill as well, the goblin parried the attack easily.

I took out my dagger from my waist and gained speed.

Before going into the goblin's strike range, I threw my dagger once again.

It's range was most definitely smaller compared to the instructor.

He didn't have an axe and he was shorter as well.

But whether it didn't think that I'd throw my only weapon or that it just couldn't react at such a close distance, the goblin hesitated.

It had only managed to block the attack, but that had been effective enough.

I was of course superior in speed.

If I could make an opening just before I got into my striking range,

I could use that opportunity in an infinite number of ways.

The goblin raised its guard and tried to defend.

Since it had metal armour, I had to attack it in the face or its arms and legs in order to make a proper hit.

The goblin knew that as well.

So, I pushed the goblin's stomach with my kick.

Both of us had similar strength compared to their height and weight.

In this situation, the one with lower centre of gravity would always have an advantage.

I learnt that from the instructor.

My kick didn't make much of an impact due to the armour, but it had managed to push it backwards.

[Blink]

I blinked a small distance of a step and kicked at the thigh of the goblin that was ever so slightly in the air.

I made a strike that shook a leg horizontally.

It was going to be difficult to land properly.

The goblin attempted to regain its stance after landing on one of his legs, but there was no way I would allow that to happen.

I tackled the goblin with my shield raised in front of me and landed a solid punch in the goblin's face

Bang!

At the same time, the red fist from the goblin struck at my face.

Damn, how would you still have so much power in that position.

What an OP skill.

I took a clean counter without any defence.

I was launched into the air, then rolled several times on the ground.

Damn, I was feeling dizzy.

When I raised my head, it seems the goblin took a hard hit as well and couldn't stand up as a result.

I was feeling another deja vu here.

I pushed on my knees to stand and shouted.

"This is the power of pain and stun resistance! You bastard."

We took blows from each other, but in the end I was the one standing and he wasn't.

It means that I had won.

I kicked at the head of the goblin who still lying on the ground to make it unconscious and used the dagger on the floor to finish the job.

[Goros's Birthstone]

Description: A birthstone given by the tribe's great shaman when the Red Eye Tribe's most Finicky Instructor Goros was born.

Huah, I had managed to win.

This was the first opponent I had faced who used a skill.

That too, it was an OP skill without any cost or delay between consecutive attacks.

...Weren't the goblins just too strong?

[Level up!]

[Your strength went up by 1. Your dexterity went up by 1. Your mana went up by 1. Wind Spirit's blessings leveled up by 1. Your sneak level went up by 1. Your stun resistance leveled up by 1]

I have no problems with that. No sir.

Chapter 39

Tutorial 4th Floor (5)

I decided to stop and think as I took a sip from the Healing Fountain.

The second Instructor that I had faced was the last trial of the 4th Floor before the Boss Room.

The 2 instructors at the start and end of the 4th Floor were much stronger than the rest of the goblins.

Their physique, skill and experience were at a different level.

Of course, an average goblin in Hell difficulty was from a different species compared to one in Normal difficulty.

Hm... What to do now?

My original plan had been to proceed through the Tutorial until I had hit a wall.

It was an obvious plan, since I was aiming to clear the Tutorial quickly.

But, would rushing through really lead to a faster clear?

Just now, the victory against the second Instructor was a hard one.

Although, I would have a much easier time if I fought him a second time.

I thought it would be too reckless to challenge the Boss Room now.

Let's go back to the start.

Grow as much as possible in this floor, just like I always had in the others.

And when I felt that my growth was stagnating, that was when I'd leave.

My clear speed was not slow.

In fact, it was very fast.

There were those who left the 4th Floor and were challenging the 5th and 6th, but they were all in Normal or below difficulties.

In Hard difficulty, someone had finally gotten to the 3rd Floor with the First Clear bonus.

My method wasn't wrong.

Let's not be too impatient and do what I've always done.

I admit, I have gotten quite anxious ever since the shocking news.

To the point that I've been focusing purely on clearing the 4th Floor and ignoring everything else.

There were so many skills I had yet to improve.

Skills such as resistances, swordsmanship, shield skills, hand-to-hand and the newly acquired sneak skill.

Focus.

No matter how much I hurried, there was nothing I could do when I was only at the Floor 4.

If I was worried about the others outside the Tutorial, I should use that as a motivation to improve even more.

Alright, let's go.

Back to the Waiting Room.

Let's try to clear this floor without using the God Skills this time.

My mind was more at ease compared to when I had first started the 4th Floor.

Whether it was because I had finally cleared my thoughts or because I had managed to escape from my anxiousness, I didn't know.

* * *

[Round 3, Day 14. 20:30]

"Good. Very good."

I smiled as I looked at myself in the mirror.

The blue magic circle on my forehead was getting more and more faint.

In one or two more days, and it would be so faint you wouldn't even be able to notice it unless you were actually trying to look for it.

But, the magic circle began to shine again as soon once I had used the Blink skill once, until I've used all 5 charges.

Well, nothing I can do about that.

I just shouldn't use it in a place with others around.

As long as it didn't shine every time, it was fine.

I was just happy I didn't have to live like a power ranger with that magic circle on my face.

I put the mirror away and took out a cup instead.

I checked on my Status as I took a scoop from the Healing Fountain.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv.8

Strength: 20

Dexterity: 38

Vitality: 23

Mana: 28

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.10 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Bright Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Sneak Lv.4 Natural Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.4 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.4 Basic Shield Skill Lv.4 Basic Hand to Hand Skill Lv.2 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.2 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Stun Resistance Lv.3 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison resistance Lv.4 Paralysis Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.6 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max

Extra: The God of Slowness was appeased by your actions.

My growth had been extraordinary.

Not only had my combat skills such as Battle focus improved, but skills such as Pierce Resistance and Toughened Skin had improved as well.

The increase in Wind Spirit's Blessing from my previous Level Up was also motivating.

The God Skills too.

I had gotten more accustomed to using Talaria's Wings, as I was able

to use them in offense and defence more efficiently.

Flying had also become much easier.

Now, it was really time to challenge the Boss Room.

In honesty, I didn't think that I had already hit the wall for my growth in this floor already.

But clearing the floor twice a day, everyday had made it too easy and was become inefficient as there was no tension or danger.

I could defeat the final Instructor without a problem now.

Even his skill's path and speed had seemed very obvious.

I was scared I would lose all tension if I continued like this, even if I could grow potentially more here.

It was time to increase the difficulty again.

Past the thick fogs, I reached the familiar stone doors.

The 4th Floor may have been easy, but the Boss Room would be different.

I had never completed them easily.

The stone doors opened, as I was moved to a mountain.

Where the hell was this.

In the sky, the stars and the moon shined brightly.

I stopped thinking and just stared at the sight of the pitch black sky and the concert of the stars.

This was the first time I had seen a nighttime sky since I had come

into the Tutorial.

Actually, I had never seen such a beautiful night sky in my entire life.

I had been living in the cities my entire life, so the only thing I could see at night was the moon and Polaris.

A message brought me back from admiring the sky in a daze.

[The Final Trial of Floor 4 will begin]

[Defeat the Goblin King]

Goblin King? Where was it?

The message of course didn't give me an answer.

Hm...

I was currently in the middle of the mountain.

To put it simply, I must either go up or down the mountain, in order to find this Goblin King.

Let's go up.

The reason was simple.

Because it seemed harder.

In Hell difficulty, the answer was always the harder option.

Soon enough, I found out that my decision was correct.

After climbing the mountain for 15 minutes, I could see a fort at the peak.

Ha!

My name is Lee Ho Jae and I am the Hell Specialist.

In order to scout the fort, I hid in the trees and took out binoculars from my inventory.

Since I used my Sneak Skill, which acted as a passive skill, noticing me from atop those walls would be difficult.

The fort's walls were 5m tall.

Quite the height.

The gates were shut tightly.

I didn't see another path from here.

The fort was quite big.

I can see 20 goblins manning the walls thanks to the torches that lined the walls.

I wouldn't have a clue as to how many were in the fort.

How was someone without Blink and Talaria's Wings supposed to beat this?

Um... I didn't know.

It seems rather difficult if you didn't have a way to scale the walls in an instant.

As for me, this wasn't much of a trial thanks to Blink and Talaria's Wings.

I could kill those 20 goblins quickly, and take care of the others while I had the high ground on the wall.

If I dropped their numbers that way, then it was an easy clear.

If things went wrong I can just jump down the walls.

Even if they tried to chase after me by opening the gates, they wouldn't be able to chase me once I ran into the forest.

I was starting to get worried because it seems too easy.

Maybe the Goblin King wasn't in that fort.

Was the theme like how Guan Yu passed through the 5 gates?

Let's just focus on this fort for now.

[Blink]

I used the Blink to stick right underneath the wall.

At this position, they didn't have the angle to see me from the wall.

I snuck my way to the wall with the fewest guards and then used blink again.

Up this time.

With my Sneak Lv.4, along with the silent Blink skill, I could scale up the wall without getting detected.

Oh, it felt like I was in a stealth game. It made me excited.

I slowly crept to the back of the closest goblin guard.

The guards had no clue about my presence, either because they weren't paying attention to their job or because my sneak skill was working too well.

With the sword in reverse grip, I wrapped around the goblin to stop him from moving, putting my hand over his mouth as I stabbed into its throat.

Nobody seemed to notice when they do this in the movies.

But the goblin continued to shake around and moan even as he got stabbed, which made every other guard notice and look at my direction.

Kieeeeek!

One of them shouted with a loud voice.

Their shrieks began to echo throughout the mountains.

Haha, I guess that's it for stealth action.

Let's just think I started with 1 kill in the bag.

Time for battle now.

The goblins began to charge at me with a variety of weapons.

I change my sword's grip into a normal one and spread my Talaria's Wings wide open.

* * *

"Wow."

It was a sight which you had to be impressed with.

The sight of the sun rising over the horizon from atop a mountain.

How the dark world had begun to colors to orange as the sun began to expose itself slowly.

"Wow."

Was this really an illusionary world?

I was thinking that this had to be some sort of an illusion or another space created by the Tutorial.

But was it possible to replicate such an awe inspiring scene with just an illusion?

Or had they just dropped me into an existing world within the universe?

That was how I was starting to think.

Maybe it won't be so bad living here and building a small log house as a shelter.

It would be a destitute life, but being able to watch this scene everyday would make me happy enough.

After a few more minutes of watching the sunrise and the sun was finally in the air above the horizon.

Hm.

I think I can go through today feeling more happy and ambitious.

In fact,

[You have watched a beautiful scenery. Luck +5]

I didn't find it strange to see a message like that appear.

Now.

Let's finish my plan.

Last night, I had managed to take over this fort completely.

There were 32 goblins stationed in this fort.

They were your average Hell goblins.

Not at the level of the Instructors.

Their numbers were lower than I had expected, which made clearing it not a problem.

And, as I had feared, the Goblin King had not been in this Fort.

But, I think I've found where he would be - in the inner castle whose tower was at the centre of the giant city with the 4 mountains at its north, south, east and west.

That was where it would be.

It was a city.

Not a tribe, but a city.

With polished roads, and stone buildings - a developed city.

I could see how developed their city was, even by looking at it from the mountain.

...Weren't the goblins' civilization too developed?

I was sure the description of the Goblin's birthstone described tribes and shamans, but that was really just a tribe?

The city seemed big enough for tens of thousands of goblins to live in and there was even an outer wall surrounding the city.

Beyond the wall was a plain wide enough to take at least half a day to traverse across.

Lastly, with the city at its centre, there were 4 forts situated at the peak of the north, south, east and western mountains as its primary line of defense.

The fort I took last night had been just one of the 4 forts.

I guess you could call it the eastern fort.

Hm.

I feel like I was stuck again.

First, fighting them in that wide plain was wrong.

There were more than tens of thousands of residents living in that city.

If all of the residents were goblins, then that city had soldiers numbering tens of thousands.

If I was surrounded by tens of thousands of soldiers, I wouldn't be able to guarantee my survival.

Even if I escaped into the air using Blink and Talaria's Wings, magic and arrows could still chase me down.

I might be able to make an escape, but there was no need to fight them while facing such dangers.

If I excluded the plains then there were still 3 remaining battlefields.

The inner castle, the city itself, and those forts.

I turn my head to look at the signal fire burning brightly.

And on the plains, I could see 20 to 30 horsemen riding at an incredible speed.

Let's delay fighting in the city for now.

My best place for battle were these forts.

The gates were shut, and without siege equipments these goblins would have a hard time scaling the walls.

Lets burn the signal fires myself and whittle down their numbers as they tried to retake the fort.

Even if everyone in the city were goblins, not all of them would be soldiers.

If anything happens, I could just run into the mountains and ambush another fort and repeat my process.

Let's lower the number of their soldiers and when the goblins either gave up on the 4 forts or when their number of soldiers dwindled, only then would I infiltrate into the city.

While hidden in the city, I would perform arson and wreak confusion within the walls and lower their numbers again.

And in the confusion I could go for the king within the inner castle.

Step by step.

Alright, it was the perfect plan.

The horsemen had already crossed the plains and began to climb halfway up the mountain.

Time to welcome them.

I chucked a few more wood to make sure the fire burned and stood up.

Chapter 40

Tutorial 4th Floor (6)

[Round 3, Day 17, 21:20]

"Kieek. Kyaa."

I stared at the goblin who was making those annoying sounds while blood was coming out from his mouth.

What was it trying to say?

Actually, did those shrieks even have any meaning to them?

Putting their appearance, fortress and city into consideration, their civilization's development was quite significant.

It was at least at the level of early medieval period.

And they would most likely had a language.

Well, it didn't matter, since I couldn't understand it.

But, just because I couldn't understand their words, didn't mean that I couldn't figure out what it was trying to say.

This goblin who seemed like the leader of this pack began shouting as soon as it seemed like this was a lost battle.

At that moment, some of the pack left the formation and retreated back to the city.

Most likely it was an order for retreat.

Seeing how only some of them left instead of the entire group, it might have been an attempt to send information about me rather than survival.

Meanwhile, the leader continued fight against me until the end to buy time.

A worthy opponent.

Such sense of responsibility was coming from a monster.

I wish some of the humans would learn from his example.

This leader goblin even had some skill under his belt too.

He could have been a nice match against the instructors.

Not against me though.

[Talaria's Wings]

I leapt off the fortress's walls with my wings spread wide.

The goblin leader tried his best to ensure their survival, but sadly it was all for naught.

It would take at least half a day to reach the city from here.

Plus, some of them were already injured.

Their probability of escaping from me and reaching the city was zero.

Hua.

How refreshing.

I was hoping I could fly through the clear blue sky one day when I had entered the 4th Floor.

And now my wish had come true.

Ah, it was night time right now.

There may not be any sun, but flying under the stars under the illumination of moonlight had its own charm.

Anyways, flying was the best!

Sometimes I got the urge to just fly for the entire day.

Humans since the olden days, dreamt of flying in the air.

With the introduction of airplanes and the improvement of technology, the dream had been reached somewhat.

But, wasn't I be the first HUMAN to fly in the sky with my own wings?

Ah, I pitied the humans who didn't know the magnificence of having wings.

I could see the back of the running goblins from the distance.

I had caught up to them.

These last 3 days, I had continued using my guerrilla tactics against the goblins.

Against the battalions trying to reclaim the fortress to be accurate.

With the signal fire continuing to burn, the goblins sent men after men to recapture the fortress.

First it was 20.

Then 30.

Then 50.

Their numbers had increased each time, along with their strength and equipment.

And when the number had come close to a 100, I gave up on the fortress and ran.

I spread my wings, and glided towards another fortress to take over it.

It only took 3 hours for me to travel from one fortress to another.

But, the men who were sent were mostly cavalry and could not travel in a straight line between the fortresses.

They had to go back to the city and use the roads on the plains to reach the other fortresses.

It took one day for all this to happen.

They couldn't beat me in terms of mobility.

I was thinking of those swordmasters that often appeared in fantasy novels.

Superhumans who had enough strength to be considered a walking strategic weapon.

Their greatest weapon was that they had the power of an entire army in a single body.

I was using that strength to shake up the goblins as much as possible.

As soon as the army sent was larger than 100 men, I left the fortress without hesitation.

The goblins chased after me endlessly in futility.

They ran their horses with extreme fervor, but they couldn't achieve anything.

In the end, they had made the decision to send 200 men each to all 4 fortresses.

All of the men stationed in each fortresses were killed.

They had even sent 800 men to other fortresses just to catch me.

And, now.

One of the 4 armies have been defeated, hunted down to the last man, by me.

Hahahahah.

You thought that sending 200 would be enough since I ran when the numbers were over 100?

That was why you scaled the walls without any siege equipments to attack me.

If their aim was to chase me out and reclaim the fortress, it was a reasonable plan.

But with the walls on my side, I could take on 500 of them if I wanted to.

And to be honest, I could beat 200 even on equal footing.

I would have had trouble at the start of this boss room just fighting against 100 of them.

But repeating the process of goblin hunting and fortress capturing had increased my level by 2.

An unbelievable increase.

It seemed that there was a huge reward associated with the concept of capturing the fortress itself.

A lot of my combat skills had improved, and the experience of fighting against many at the same time was valuable.

It had been only a week since the start of the boss room, but there was a significant difference between me back then and me right now.

I was starting to think if I should stay here to hunt the goblins longer instead of clearing the boss room, just for the growth.

If there were enough goblins, I might have taken that route.

For the last week, the goblins had been losing men left and right, and now they had decided to send 800 men at the same time.

It meant that there weren't many men left in the city.

This expedition was the result of the last week of guerrilla warfare.

Their forces were increasing in number for a time, until it began to drop quickly.

Their equipment and number of horses began to drop as well.

Now, there were many men who hadn't been trained properly among their forces.

They were the same goblin soldiers, but I could see that they were lacking in terms of skill.

It seemed like they had just given a spear to a civilian and sent them out to fight.

And, the number of those weaklings were getting higher and higher.

Their ratio was now 1:5, with 5 being the number of weaklings.

That force of 800 was made by literally scraping the bottom of the barrel.

It was not a bad feeling.

I felt like I had become a great strategist like Zhuge Liang.

[The God of Duel is disappointed by your unfair actions]

What did you want then?

Did you think having a nice lethal brawl out in the open against THAT number is fair?

I had no regrets at my methods nor my results.

[The God of Chaos is satisfied by your actions]

There were other gods who were happy as well.

Although it left a bad taste as he seemed like an evil one.

Now, I should take care of the remainders and fly to the city itself.

Time for a raid.

I'll show you the meaning of terrorism at the main base.

* * *

It was not difficult to scale the walls and infiltrate the city.

I just had to raise my altitude and fly above the clouds.

The problem was what happened afterwards.

After reaching safely inside the city, I landed on one of the roofs and scouted the city.

To see the difference between looking from high above the skies and mountains and looking from down below and decide where I should

start.

Afterwards, I couldn't leave the roof for the next 2 hours.

I had already made a plan in my head.

How to make chaos as effectively as possible.

It was a given.

I had been continuously thinking of these methods in the last week during my battles.

A frontal assault was one way to go.

When the guards come chasing, I could leave and raid another place.

I would be using my superior mobility.

The same tactics I had used before.

Making fires here and there was also good.

Firefighters in the city wouldn't be able to keep up with fires all over the city that were being made by someone.

Their guards would have to leave their posts, and chaos would follow.

Exploding any gunpowder would also be good too.

Creating chaos like that was all I need.

If I repeated it enough times, I could force them into disarray.

It didn't matter if too much time passed and all the men sent out to the fortresses came back.

I could just hide in the alleyways or run back to the fortress.

And then just rinse and repeat.

Their armies would not respawn like in the games.

I had confirmed that with the combat in the last week.

They didn't have many men to spare.

The 800, no 600 men they had sent was all they had.

If I succeeded in shaking down the city enough, I could easily go for the king before the army came back.

But I couldn't do that.

The goblin was laughing

The goblin child was laughing.

Grabbing onto what seemed like its mother with one hand and a bag full of ingredients in another.

It was continuously talking away, full of joy.

That restaurant building was filled with goblins.

Seems like the business was good.

I could see what seemed like a couple sitting by the windows.

They would occasionally stare at each other and snicker away, no idea what was making them laugh so much.

The goblins had feelings.

They had a life in this city.

They were not monsters in this city.

At first it was just curiosity.

I haven't had contact with such a normal life for too long.

In the Tutorial and my room in real life.

So I just watched.

It was a mistake.

Their life held their dreams and their pasts.

Their life was real, a product of their past continuing into the present.

Was this really just an illusion?

An illusion just to show this moment to me?

I remembered one of the theories I had thought of.

Maybe, this place existed within the universe, and I was just being teleported into the world following the instructions from the messages.

Haah.

My head was starting to ache.

I suddenly thought about the Representative Confederation.

They seemed passive, but some of the rankers and I had been continuing our investigation.

We had somewhat of an idea on what they were doing, although there hadn't been any evidence.

Let's compare these goblins with them.

Compared to those assholes, these goblins were much more human.

Actually, was calling them 'human' even the right term?

They were not monsters.

The monster was me.

What else could I be to them?

I suddenly appeared one day, only to assault the fortresses and kill the goblins.

Now I'm trying to cause chaos within the city.

I thought back to the first goblin leader I had met at the eastern fortress.

What had he said, just before he died?

Countless goblins I had met in the fortresses, on the plains, and in the mountains.

Countless goblins I had killed.

None of them had died quietly like monsters in a game.

They had tried their hardest to live, as long as, they could breathe.

The goblin that had held hatred in its eyes at its last moment, the goblin that had charged at me with madness his eyes, the goblin that had shouted in agony, the goblin that had tried to limp away to safety, the goblin that had screamed as he held onto a corpse.

I had just found their appearance amazing.

Like watching a really polished game and getting all the details right.

I feel like I had become the villain of a fairy tale.

These feelings would not settle down, and continued to tangle up inside me.

* * *

[Round 3, Day 21, 23:10]

As the world began to darken, the number of goblins on the streets dwindled.

And deep in the night, there was not a single goblin on the streets.

I guess it was time for bed.

Watching the dark and empty streets showing their everyday life even more clearly to me.

...I couldn't stay on this roof for all my time.

This may sound selfish, actually it was selfish.

Hell, when wasn't I selfish?

But I had a job to do, things I desired.

Shit, maybe I had become too soft.

I hadn't seen other people in so long.

They were just an illusion.

No matter how many I killed, they would reappear once I went back to the Waiting Room.

If I failed to beat this floor, and came back to this boss room, they would be the back same as ever.

Would that really be the case?

I slowly stood up.

My back and hip felt sore.

Just how many hours had I spent sitting on this roof.

The feelings in my head hadn't settled down.

It wouldn't be for very long.

Let's just finish what I was here for.

Not endlessly tackling at an unsolvable issue, I jumped off the roof with my wings spread wide.

Let's just skip creating chaos in the city for now.

I don't think I could do it with my current state of mind, and I think it would get worse if I tried to anyways.

There was still some time until the expedition forces came back.

Actually, they may not come back in order to defend the fortress.

Let's go to the inner castle.

Let's find that goblin king, and leave this place.

As expected, there weren't many guards inside the inner castle.

The only problem was where do I find that king.

I guess I could go for the fanciest building from above.

Flying around the castle, I found out where that was.

The fancy building at the centre of the castle, fulfilled all my conditions.

All the windows of this building were blocked.

It seemed crude, showing how recently it was done.

And just by looking at it felt like there was someone important living in this place.

The design of this building was different from everything else.

All the walls and guard towers were positioned to surround that building in the centre.

I was confident.

It was there.

I lowered the altitude, toward one of the windows that was blocked with wooden boards.

I will just break through that pathetic fortification.

Surrounding myself with Talaria's Wings, I flew into the building like a bullet.

Chapter 41

Tutorial 4th Floor (7)

I broke the window that was blocked by the wooden plates and then entered the building. What I saw as soon as I entered the building was...

There were goblins with shocked eyes staring at me.

Making a guess based on their get-up...

Bingo...

It seemed the runt over there was the king.

The king was wearing extravagant clothes woven from red silk. It had a small crown on its head. It was an old goblin.

There were a total of four goblins in the room.

Two warriors, one shaman, and the king.

It seemed the king was at a bit of distance from combat.

The king was the goal of the boss room. Considering that, I was thinking he would be the strongest of them all. However...

Instead, the king was standing behind the other three goblins.

Appearance wise alone, the two warrior goblins looked pretty powerful.

I thought they might be even more powerful than the instructor goblins.

I wondered if these runts had skills.

If this was any other day, I would have calculated all sorts of things and tried to handle their attacks. However, right now, I just wanted to finish this boss room and go back to the waiting room.

I decided to go with a sure-kill move from the start.

I opened the Talaria's Wings and spread them wide horizontally, and then...

[Blink]

I reached just right in front of the king using Blink.

The warriors and shaman that was in my path were hit by Talaria's Wings and got pushed and thrown off to the back.

With cracking sounds, it sounded like they even broke the furniture around the back and rolled to the wall.

After that, none of them were able to get back up.

The sudden movement from Blink had concussive power.

Also, from a common sense stand point, considering the hardness and weight of the Wings of Talaria, those goblins couldn't possibly get up like nothing happened.

The combination of Blink and Talaria's Wings was my one shot kill move for a reason.

Talaria's Wings was not directly connected to my muscles or nerves. However, it was connected indirectly at about one hand length away from my back, fixated in mid-air.

To put it simply, if the wings were pushed, my body was going to get propelled as well.

Because of this, the method was something that should not be used against an opponent with mass that was able to withstand the impact from the collision.

If the attack were to get blocked then the knockback from it was going to hit me indirectly, immediately leaving me defenseless.

However, against opponents like goblins, which had similar mass as humans, this combination attack was sufficiently effective as a sure-kill move.

With his guards thrown off to the back at an instant, the goblin king showed an unexpected behavior.

I thought it would charge at me out of desperation or run away in fear. However, instead, the king unexpectedly came to me and faced me. It started to say kaek kaek, trying to talk to me.

“Kiiiaaak. Kire Kiruk Kiruk.”

‘I am sorry, but I don’t understand you.’

I quietly raised my sword as the response.

However, the goblin king’s behavior did not change.

Its eyes were calm. They did not shake. I could not find anxiety or fear in its eyes.

‘What is it thinking? What is it trying to tell me? As a reward for not making it bothersome by resisting... No. This is not it.’

To respect the king goblin for keeping its honor and not taking any shameful action, I decided to kill it in a clean, swift way.

I grabbed the king goblin’s shoulder, pressed the tip of my sword at its heart, and pushed it in.

By the sword being thrust in with strength, the edge of the sword

pierced to the heart without much resistance.

...The end.

The old goblin king slowly collapsed to the floor like a leaf falling in the air.

Right at the moment before its last breath, the goblin king's eyes, which had been steadily staring at me straight, turned to somewhere else.

I wondered if he had a hidden triumph card up his sleeve, so I looked at the end of where its gaze was directed.

It was a highly decorated table.

A decorative table cloth was flowing below the table, and there were child goblins wearing ornate clothes.

He was hiding child goblins there.

Maybe the things that the goblin king was talking about before it died included something about those children.

Ah, my eyes met with one of them.

My eyes ended up meeting with one of the child goblins that were hiding under the table.

The child goblin was very surprised and twitched.

It seemed its body hit something on the table. There was a small noise.

Silence was flowing in the air for a moment. Of the children under the table, the one that appeared to be the biggest one walked out of the table by itself.

‘What the... It should stay in hiding. Why is it coming out? Ah, since it

was found out, it must be thinking it is dead now. I don't really have any intention of killing you too.'

The little goblin started to talk to me.

It seemed goblins had a tendency to say their last will to the opponent before dying.

However, there was a difference between this little goblin and the king goblin.

Unlike the king goblin, this little goblin was in tears with bloodshot eyes and screaming as if it was trying to make the room flood in its scream.

'I don't understand what you are saying, but I think I roughly get what you are saying.'

It was a foreign language I heard for the first time, but they said you could understand curses when you hear one. I realized it really was like that.

[You cleared tutorial, Hell difficulty, fourth floor]

[All of your status abnormalities and injuries will be recovered.]

[As a reward for clearing the floor, you obtained 1000 points.]

[As a reward for achieving the best clear, you obtained 1000 points.]

[There are many gods showing positive responses to you. You obtained 6300 points.]

[There are many gods showing negative responses to you. You lose 1700 points.]

[Based on your play records, you are assigned additional reward.]

[Many gods would like to give you a special skill instead of an

additional reward.]

[Vote result: 12 yes, 7 no]

[Would you like to accept it?]

Instead of authority, it seemed they could gift skills as well.

‘They even took votes amongst themselves. How democratic.’

I accepted it.

[You acquired the knowledge of the time before Babel, Lv. 5]

Knowledge of the time before Babel...

I was able to tell the effect of this skill immediately.

I was starting to understand what the child goblin in front of me was screaming on top of its lung.

[The gods will definitely send punishment to you! You monster!]

To my ears, the goblin’s words still only sounded like beastly roar. However, despite that, its meaning was conveyed to me so clearly.

A portal magic circle appeared a few steps in front of me.

However, I couldn’t bring myself to walk.

The child goblin was still screaming at me. It said that I was violent and cruel, and that was the reason why I was born with hideous and pasty face.

To the little goblin, I wanted to say something back for myself. That was the reason.

I wanted to tell it that this was not my fault.

I wanted to tell it that I did not have any intention of killing them in the first place, and I was also a victim.

I wanted to tell it that I was dragged to the Tutorial, and I'm merely forcing myself to overcome this hardship.

I wanted to tell it that the message ordered me to kill them, and...

It is you guys that are ugly, not me.

However, I didn't actually tell them.

I just listened to the little goblin shouting curses of anguish and reflected on the excuses that I thought about.

'That's just an illusion?'

I lifted my head as I thought about the suspicion I had since I entered the fourth floor's boss room.

'All that hatred, anger, and fury... Am I supposed to just believe that those are nothing but illusions?'

Now, the little goblin was strongly defending and saying how great and magnificent king its father was, and it told me what a disgusting monster I was for slaughtering its father and the subjects.

It was as if it was intending to die while screaming. If this little goblin, which was desperately screaming, was not fake...

'If it is not fake? Then I... '

[God of Adventure is blinding your eyes.]

[God of Slowness is furious.]

I felt an invisible something covering my eyes.

At that instant, my vision was completely covered.

When my vision, which was painted black, was brightened again...

I was standing on a green field.

The field looked peaceful and beautiful as always. Along with the scenery, I could see Kiri Kiri.

‘How could this be...’

“Kiri Kiri”

I called her name and took a step forward.

When I did, Kiri Kiri took steps back with a stiff look on her face.

* * *

“Are you pissed off?”

“No. I’m not pissed off.”

“Hing... I’m sorry.”

“I said I’m not pissed off.”

“You are pissed off. I am sorry.”

Not pissed off...

To begin with, it was fault of the one with the blood painted all over the body and wielding a sword with blood and flesh stuck on it. It was the fault of the one who decided to approach in that state.

I wasn’t going to be pissed off for someone taking steps back in that situation.

Although, I was shocked a little at the moment.

“Howujae is angry because of me. What should I do...”

‘It is more unpleasant for me to hear you call my name all stretched out like that.’

My head was feeling complicated with thoughts, but it was not because of Kiri Kiri.

[God of Adventure is blinding your eyes.]

After seeing that message, my sight turned black, and I was transported to this field.

To think a god was capable of demonstrating this kind of physical control...

Anyway...

I remembered how I complained and belittled the God of Adventure, and that made me a little anxious.

‘Let’s set aside the question of how for now. Instead, why? Why did God of Adventure do this? Also, why did the God of Slowness get infuriated? Um... It is not like I could possibly know... ’

“Kiri Kiri, if I also count the questions I saved and did not ask you last time, I should be able to hear quite a lot of information this time, right?”

“Yep! You can.”

“In that case, can you explain to me... about the gods? Make it as much as possible about the gods that are related to me, or give me information that I need.”

It was a vague and none-specific question. Kiri Kiri agonized over what to tell him for a long time.

After a while, as if she organized the thoughts to some extent, she

started to explain little by little.

“The gods are taking interests in you mostly because they are watching you to see if you have the qualification to be their apostle.”

‘Apostle, that’s a new concept that just popped up.’

“It is hard to earn gods’ interests. Becoming their apostle is even harder. You need to satisfy a condition that is not made known.”

Her sentence was getting shorter.

‘Could it be that more detailed the sentence, the allocation amount for the information becomes smaller faster?’

I kept my mouth shut for now and continued to listen.

“You are extraordinary. A decision needs to be made someday.”

It seemed a decision had to be made about something.

‘Is she talking about me becoming their apostle? Of the gods of vengeance that want me to be their apostle, do I need to choose one?’

Kiri Kiri suddenly crunched down and sat there. On the dirt, she started to draw long lines using her hand.

‘Is she counting something?’

“I’ll explain a little about the God of Slowness.”

“God of Slowness.”

“God of Slowness... Her title does not mean simple slow movements of objects or living beings. She is the one who follows the infinitely continuing passage of time for eternity without ever faltering.”

‘I think a bit about the God of Slowness’s front and back were omitted there. With just that explanation... ’

“Like a seeker of truth...”

“Oh my... I should not have said those words.”

‘It seems like she at least got the main point right. God of Slowness... No, just gods in general... I don’t know what kind of being they are or what they are up to, but I think I get a little bit about the concept of the God of Slowness.’

Her title did not mean slowness of movement.

‘Now that I think about it, if the meaning of her title was limited to just the speed of the movement, she could not have the authority over Blink, which is a cheat-like movement skill.’

“In that case, what about the God of Adventure?”

“Can’t do. You used up all of information allowance.”

‘I used all of the allowances, which are two floors worth? Information about Gods are scary expensive.’

“It’s fine. Well then, just help me switch my weapon.”

“Ok!”

* * *

[Punisher’s Handgun]

Attack power: 4~41

Description: It is a handgun that generates powerful explosion by combining gunpowder with magic. It gets destroyed after being used five times.

It was a weapon that looked like a handgun.

One thing different about it was that, instead of firing bullets, it

caused explosion nearby.

Kiri Kiri said it will be needed in beating the fifth floor, so I purchased without giving it much thought.

Sadly, it had the limit of five shots, so it looked like I was not going to be able to try it out for a test.

[Gladius that was blessed by a nameless god]

Attack power: 11

Description: It is a very sturdy short sword that was blessed by a nameless god who is being forgotten by the people.

Additional attribute: As a part of the effect of the god's blessing, unless the user wants it, the handle will not slip from the user's hand.

I have never seen such a small, specific yet practical blessing by a god before. Actually, with increase in strength stat, because my grip got stronger, I probably did not need to worry about the sword shaking from the handle slipping.

Still, additional stability in the grip was definitely a plus.

The fact that it said it won't stay in effect unless the user wants it was also great.

I did not need to worry about the blessing hindering the movement unnecessarily when I want to reverse the grip.

It was a short, double-edged sword that was about two feet in length. It looked just like the one I had been using. I purchased this one because I was used to this kind of weapon from having used it until now.

[A blood-soaked backsword of a savage warrior]

Attack power: 14

Description: The samshir that Warg Rider, the greatest in the history, used to use in his life.

Additional attribute: Magic or shamanic sorcery type reinforcement effect cannot be applied.

I had no idea what a samshir was, but judging from the description, it seemed it was a single-edge sword for use while riding on a horse.

I wondered if a weapon used while riding on a warg counted as such, but I decided not to ask such a question for now.

At the moment, I didn't even know what a warg rider meant.

One noticeable characteristic of this sword was that it was over three times longer than Gladius.

The sword was thick, and it even felt heavy.

Despite that, looking at the handle, it was definitely a one-handed sword.

Usually, a one-handed sword for horseback riding had the special characteristic of being light. However, this one was so heavy that an ordinary person would have struggled to hold even with two hands.

I knew something was up just from the mention of warg or whatever, but it seemed this sword was not meant to be used by a human being.

Of course, with my muscular strength, I could use it without straining myself.

'I have the speed that is superior to my opponents, and I have a cheat-like movement technique called Blink. I'm carrying out my battles with those, so I think a horseback riding type sword, which is mainly for cutting, could be useful.'

Moreover, ever since I entered the fourth floor, I had been disappointed about lack of heavy weaponry all along.

My hands were not yet used to this one, but since this one had special characteristics that were different from Gladius, I figured it would be helpful during the battles.

Also, I had a need for handling different types of swords for the sake of growing my swordsmanship skill.

As for the additional attributes, it seemed it was talking about blessing or enchant effects common in video games.

I didn't know how to use any blessing or enchantment anyway, so it was irrelevant.

[Sturdy round iron shield]

Defensive power: 10

Description: It is sturdy. It has a rich, classy decoration engraved on it. It is an used item.

...I did not have enough points.

I had so much points, but I used it all purchasing two swords and a handgun.

They were worth the expensive price, but...

Compulsive shopping was scary like this.

I ended up just handing over my wallet whenever Kiri Kiri stood next to me and said "That's right! This one is incredibly good! It is a perfect weapon for you!"

'As for the shield, I'll collect points and replace it next time... '

"Well then, thank you for your good work, Kiri Kiri. Let's see each other again next time."

Now that I purchased new equipment, it was time for me to move

again.

I was heading to the portal, and Kiri Kiri waved her hand.

“Um! Cheer up! Good bye! Don’t worry too much!”

‘Is she worrying for me after all?’

I was certain she was going to wave her hand and ask me to buy a cake for her, but to my surprise, she gave me words of encouragement.

“You have to buy me a cake next time!”

‘Haha. I was wondering why she didn’t say that.’

This time, because I used all of my points while purchasing equipment, I was not able to buy a cake for her.

I thought to myself that I would definitely buy a cake for her next time. I waved my hand toward Kiri Kiri back at her.

Chapter 42

Tutorial 5th Floor (1)

TL Changes: Grand conference -> Day of great harmony

[What kind of items did Kirikiri recommend to you?]

[A handgun, some kind of spray type repellent, smoke bomb marbles, and rapid elixir.]

[...That's quite a few. For now, follow her recommendations and purchase them.]

[If I do, I'll end up using all of the points that you sent me.]

[I'll send you more points.]

[All right. By the way, that... Mister... You told me before that I should not rely too much on items, so...]

[The thing is, the boss room on fifth floor is quite tough, so...]

* * *

I was at the fifth floor's waiting room.

I was already at the fifth floor.

It had been a while since I thought about what happened in the waiting room at the first floor.

I was anxious and scared, but it was fun in a way.

‘The four people who were in the waiting room with me... What were

their names?’

Compared to the waiting room at the first floor, the fifth floor’s waiting room was really wide.

If I was to describe the first floor’s waiting room as a large living room size, then the fifth floor’s waiting room was about the size of an indoor basketball court.

Maybe it was because the waiting room got bigger. This space felt even lonelier.

‘Now, what should I do? For now, I’ll definitely be going to the fifth floor. Before I do, I think I should organize my thoughts a little, but...

Perhaps it is not a bad idea to just go on with the Tutorial first without organizing my thoughts.

Um... I think I should organize my thoughts first. It is not good to leave it be when feeling leery.’

I thought about the questions that I had when I was in the fourth floor.

I wondered if the goblins were not illusions.

The goblins I faced were not smelly and savagery monsters usually portrayed in the media.

They had society, and they had family.

Not just that, they had emotions, morals, relationships, technology, and even hierarchy.

The only difference to humans was their hideous appearances.

‘If I think of them as intelligent beings instead of simple subject of hunting... and if they are not just illusions... ’

That meant what I have done at the fourth floor could be defined as murder.

‘What should I do... ’

For now, since this was Tutorial, I decided to set aside things like boss room.

Attacking them and murdering them were my own conscious decisions.

Even if I looked for the reason for my actions in the system, all that would come from trying was the fact that I’m living like someone’s puppet.

‘Let’s try and think about the reason why I hurt them.

Because they attacked me?

That wasn’t it.

Goblins were always primarily focused in defense.

They fought to chase me away.

It was like that starting with the goblin instructor that I met first after entering the Fourth Floor.

They did not attack me unless I got closer than a certain limit.

Even after that, the goblins that appeared had either trenches or raised wooden fences to focus on standing ground and defense.

In in the boss room, they just wanted to protect their city and the fortress.

I was the one that started, continued, and finished the fight.

I hurt them to clear the Tutorial.

They were like gated doors blocking my path.

So, I killed them and moved forward.

I could not afford to stop here, for them.

‘Let’s assume there is a goblin in front of me again.

If there is a path beyond that goblin that I need to go to, would I kill that goblin and move forward?’

The answer was... Yes.

I was not here and doing this grunt work to simply beat the Tutorial and win some prize.

I have heard that, in the outside world of Tutorial, there were countless people dying right at this moment because of monsters that appeared.

Clearing the Tutorial was going to help those people.

I was certain of it.

The hundredth floor of the Tutorial...

By the time I cleared the hundredth floor, I would be possessing the power that rivaled Superman.

I didn’t have some grandiose thoughts about needing to save the humanity. It was just that there were my family and friends in the outside world.

I was just worried about them.

Also, I could return only if I beat the Tutorial.

Both of my reasons were very clear.

As long as I had a reason to not stop and continue moving forward, I was not going to hesitate attacking them.

To start with, goblins and I were enemies.

It was just that I attacked first. There was no way for co-existence and cooperation with them.

This was no different from my days as a professional gamer.

The winner took everything.

It was just that this time, my life was also added and hanging on the balance of victory and defeat.

Whether it was the opponents or myself, whichever side that lost the fight was going to be killed. It was fair.

I could not afford to hesitate.

A moment of hesitation could become danger at a critical moment.

Not just for the sake of moving forward, but also for the sake of growing stronger faster, I could not afford to hesitate in killing them.

‘Talking about it like that sounds like an archetypical psychopath’s monologue. Saying I will not hesitate to attack anyone who gets in my way... ’

I should not forget about them at least.

I should not give up agonizing about this.

I organized my thoughts... No. It did not feel like it was organized. Still...

I have decided.

I should continue to think hard about this.

Although Kirikiri said I should not agonize too much, that was because she was worried I might get buried under it beyond a certain extent.

This was not something that could be solved easily, and it was not a problem with a definite solution either.

It was not a light problem that could just pass by either.

Still, it was not the kind of problem that I should just give up and keep it buried.

It was going to be a task that I was going to shoulder and go on for a very long time.

Just... I was not going to think about it for long or too deeply.

I was going to keep myself from struggling with the thoughts.

I'll think and ponder about it frequently.

I had plenty of time.

‘However, this is it for now.

It is time for me to stop thinking and move.

First, I should check the status window and community.’

“Status Window”

[Lee Ho-jae (human)]

Lv. 10

Strength: 24

Dexterity: 39

Vitality: 28

Mana: 28

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.11 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Bright Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Sneak Lv.4 Natural Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.7 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.6 Basic Shield Skill Lv.4 Basic Hand to Hand Skill Lv.3 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.2 Knowledge of the Time before Babel Lv.5 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.4 Faint Resistance Lv.3 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison resistance Lv.4 Paralysis Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.7 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max

Extra: God of Slowness is watching you with a satisfied look.

After entering the fourth floor's boss room, I gained two levels, which was incredible.

Thinking about how level ups had been going recently, this was an unbelievable growth.

If I intentionally failed to clear the boss room at the fourth floor and challenged it again, I might have been able to increase the level some more.

Besides the level, there were other things that changed in comparison to before I entered the fourth floor's boss room. They were increases in my stats and combat skills.

Sadly, innate skills did not improve at all.

I remembered seeing the message about the God of Slowness being infuriated, but it was not shown here.

'If that is not the case, then is she infuriated at someone else? That is possible.'

“Community.”

While I was looking around to see if there was any new information, a 1:1 invitation message arrived.

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: What is it?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor:... Hey, when did you get all the way to the fifth floor?]

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: I just got here.]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: You are really something. Other people cannot even reach the second floor in Hell difficulty, yet... Even in Hard difficulty, guys are complaining because they cannot break through the third floor.]

[Lee Ho-jae, fifth floor: Well, I was lucky.]

I really was lucky.

Gods have taken interest in me early, so I had plenty of points to spend.

‘Thanks to that, I was able to get past the second floor alive.’

After that, I obtained the authority skills.

Not just one, but two.

‘Without authority skills, I would not have gotten to the fifth floor already. I would have been busy grinding away at the third floor or the beginning of the fourth floor, trying to increase my skill levels.’

I looked at the information circulating in the community, and God’s authority skills were not mentioned at all.

It seemed Gods have taken interest in some of the rankers, but that information was also almost not released.

Of course, I didn't release the information about the authority skills either.

Community was open to all challengers.

I had no competitors, and actually, I was the only one in the Hell difficulty. Still...

It was no good to release information indiscriminately.

'Releasing the information may have no effect on me, but it could have a big effect on someone else.'

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: By the way, why did you contact me?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: I think there is a pawn among the rankers.]

I suddenly had a blank look on my face.

Something happened that I never thought of.

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: A ranker is? Why? For what?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: How should I know? I'm not sure about this anyway. For now, I'll try to go find out more.]

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: All right. Is there anything in particular that I need to do?]

[Kim Min-huk, Fourth Floor: At the moment, we don't know who the pawn is. So, don't tell others information about the day of harmony, although the information about that might have already been handed over to the other side.]

'If someone among the rankers is exchanging messages with the other side, the information about the day of great harmony definitely went over to the other side. The most frequently talked about topic among the rankers recently was the day of the great harmony, so... '

Until now, we have obtained more information about the great harmony from the managers, things like its date, special attributes of the day, matter of forced participation, and more.

I had to assume that the entire information was handed over to the other side.

[Lee Ho-jae, Fifth Floor: I got it. Keep up the good work.]

I closed the message and community windows.

‘Is there a reason why a ranker would join hands with the Representative Union? Is there any?

Damn it.’

Sigh came out of me on its own.

The Representative Union obtained information about the day of great harmony. Also, they turned one of the rankers.

‘What would change due to these facts? I am not sure? Unless the name of the turned ranker is Lee Ho-jae, I don’t think this changes anything.’

Actually, the timing was good.

Thanks to the boss room at the fourth floor, currently, I had my resolve firmed.

I already made up my mind to not hesitate attacking enemies blocking my way.

A monster or human, regardless of which, there probably was not going to be any exception, especially if it was going to be a human who was worse than goblins.

[Kaaaaaaaak-]

I used my shield to smack the smelly mouth of the lizardman and pierced its neck with my sword.

I haphazardly pushed aside the dying lizardman to the side and snatched the trident with my bare hand that was coming at me from beyond.

I tightened my grip on the hand that was holding the trident and confirmed the location of the lizardman that was charging toward me from the back.

[Talaria's Wings]

The wing spread wide open from my back, and the lizardman was pierced by the wing and got thrown to the corner of the corridor wall.

I unhanded the trident I was holding on my right hand and used the Blink to get back.

“Kiiiiiiiiaak!”

These bastards occasionally used their tails as weapons, but they acted like they were in great pain when their tails were stepped on.

Actually, instead of being in pain, the response was more like their pride was stepped on.

The lizardman had a ‘Now I am totally mad!’ look on its face. It turned slowly. Looking at the lizardman, I drew the savage warrior’s single-edged sword.

[Battle Focus]

‘I am still not used to using the sword. Even if it is just to reflect upon the awkwardness in my movements, I think it would be best for me to use the Battle Focus when I use the single-edged sword and fight.’

The lizardman's trident came at me in a thrust motion across from lower left.

It looked like it was going to be hard to approach the lizardman while dodging this.

I took a step back and parried the trident using the sword.

With the tip of the trident shaking, lizardman's defense was open. I used the Blink and approached its chest.

I just let go of the single-edged sword, drew the combat short sword and thrust it into the lizardman's chest.

It seemed it was struck right at the heart. Lizardman struggled for a moment and collapsed. It was not able to get up again.

'I'm still more used to using the short small sword. With a long, heavy weapon at my hand all of sudden, I can't quite get a feel for how to use it.'

I tried to mimic the movements of the goblin instructor that wielded an ax. However, that ax and this sword were different starting from the length.

There was also the difference in height between the goblin instructor and myself.

'I wish I had a teacher that could teach me. Well, it is just how things always had been. I have no choice but to master it myself.'

[Round 3, Day 26, 18:20]

It had been two days since I entered the fifth floor.

It was the lizardman that showed up here as the blockade.

As the name suggested, it was a man lizard.

Over seven feet tall, it was a little taller than goblins. It was muscular as if it was trying to say it should obviously be muscular.

Lizardmen usually showed up with long tridents. They had flexible bodies, and they had large and sturdy tails, which was their most notable characteristic.

One thing different from the goblins was that the lizardmen were very violent.

They came charging at me as soon as they saw me.

They kept coming until their deaths.

They did not rely on defensive structures like trenches or wooden fences. However, they were very offense oriented, and they had superior combat abilities, so it was significantly more difficult to fight them.

With flexibility, quick reflexes, and bravery combined into one, their combat abilities were at a whole another dimension from goblins.

However, I was not feeling threatened much.

I too had substantial growth at the fourth floor.

In particular, while I conquered the fortress repeatedly, my experience points blew up, so I leveled up continuously. The growth from that was too big.

‘I think perhaps that boss room was not the route for conquering the fortress. The difficulty at that place was so high that it would have been impossible without the authority skills.

Could it be that, just like at the third floor’s boss room, I cleared it through an odd route?

Um... Well, nothing bad came of it, so...

Thanks to it, clearing the fifth floor is easier.

Although, if I feel that the difficulty is too easy, then it is not appropriate for long term growth. Still...

If I think of this time period as the training for getting used to properly utilizing the single-edged sword that I bought, it is not bad.

I'll just make that as my goal at the Fifth Floor, and once I accumulate mastery in using single-edged sword, I'll go up straight to the Sixth Floor.

I'll stop the conquest here for the day.

I'm going to go back to the waiting room now.

I need to eat, and I need to look at the community as well.

Soon, it is going to be the time for the Day of Great Harmony to start.'

* * *

[Round 3, Day 27, 00:00]

[The day of great harmony is commencing.]

[The day of great harmony will continue for the next 24 hours.
Remaining time: 23h, 59m]

[Please enter. Time left until forced summoning: 5h]

Chapter 43

The Day of the Great Harmony

Of all the resistance skills, the one that was the easiest to raise was the burn resistance.

As for cold and heat, creating the environment for them itself was hard.

Moreover, cold and heat were most dangerous when they started to affect the nervous system and cause error in brain functions.

It seemed this was the reason why the demand for the resistance skill performance itself was a little high.

I was guessing that this was the reason why leveling it up was limited to four when I was at the second floor and doing repeated grinding.

Things like faint or paralysis resistance were also almost impossible to improve all by myself.

Grinding for resistance skills were done mostly at the waiting room or in front of the waiting room portal. Considering this fact, it really was impossible.

The only things left were pain, burn and frostbite.

My pain resistance level was already very high, so I was not expecting much on its growth.

As for the frostbite resistance, I could grow it easily by applying freezing water on my body. However, with the passage of time, the freezing effect disappeared as the freezing water hardened.

Because of the limit on points, I could not raise the frostbite resistance

any more.

So, in the end, all that was left was the burn resistance.

I could raise it easily with heat stone. Also, before the heat stone's heat withered, I could create fire on fabrics or woods. That way, I could continue the process with the fire.

As of result, my burn resistance became second highest level skill of all my resistance skills, second only to the pain resistance.

Even the burn resistance's growth became slower, so I ended up quitting the grinding for it.

Recently, I had been working on not the resistance skills but the power skills gifted to me by the gods. I had been using power skills by myself to work on getting used to them.

However, when it came to just killing time mindlessly, there was no other grinding that was as efficient as resistance skills.

It had been a while since I raised my burn resistance. Sitting in front of the waiting room's portal, I looked at the Community window as I fiddled with the heat stone.

Actually, I wanted to look at the Community window while I worked, so I decided to raise my resistance skill levels.

There were new messages coming up in almost every 10 seconds. This situation was...

It was pure chaos and destruction.

No, perhaps not exactly?

Regardless, there was a huge commotion.

It was not that something very bad in particular happened.

The Representative Federation, as usual, did not show up on the Community.

[TL: Another change, previously we used Representative Confederation, but Federation would be more accurate.]

None of them did, not the members, not the victims.

In other words, the people causing ruckus in the Community right now were mostly people who were unrelated to the Representative Federation.

A few hours ago, one of the rankers leaked the information about the day of the great harmony on the Community.

[TL: Reminder - Grand conference changed to the day of the great harmony.]

There was not much time left before its commencement anyway.

Also, the opinion was that others should be informed with minimum knowledge about the event at least to minimize chaos. Because of this, the information leak was looked over without much complaints.

The excuse was that this was an accident.

However, from how I saw it, it seemed someone tossed the information to get attention.

Information about tutorial were mostly gathered from the managers.

Also, you could meet the managers after clearing a floor.

Because of these two conditions, knowing sweet information and telling people about it was a form of bragging.

Recently, people in the lower floor started to support rankers. As of result, fandoms and factions were starting to form.

Things like this happened occasionally.

It was similar to overdone fraternization and attention seeking in SNS.

‘Maybe the ranker that got turned to be the pawn of Representative Federation did it for the same reason? I am not sure.’

I could not get any more information about them.

Coming back to the topic of Community, with the information about the day of the great harmony released, the Community was in a state of festivity.

Round 3, Day 27...

There were many who already used up the 24 hour stay allowances at the waiting room.

The sense of security of being able to rest in a safe space, away from the stage and the constant danger...

In addition, with the rounds repeating, people could meet their comrades again at the waiting room, and you could even see the faceless people you had been chatting through the Community for the first time.

Finally, the day of the great harmony was a sort of peaceful event that happened for the first time since the Tutorial started.

While being thrown in the deadly and harsh environment of the Tutorial stages, people were either trying to clear the Tutorial or just survive 30 days and wait for the day they could go back to the waiting room. All of those people were overjoyed about the day of the great harmony.

Of course, I was not sure if the day would progress peacefully.

Regardless, looking at the excited Community, it was no different from kindergarteners causing ruckus the day before a fieldtrip out of anticipation, although they were liking it a little more than that.

I didn't bother with joining them in the excitement.

I just continued my work on improving my skill levels.

However, I kept on reading the Community.

Although they were just texts, I got to see people being swept away and acting happy in the atmosphere of festivities. It somehow made me a little excited and happy.

* * *

[Round 3, Day 27, 00:00]

[The day of the great harmony will now commence.]

[The day of great harmony will continue for the next 24 hours.
Remaining time: 23h, 59m]

[Please enter. Time left until forced summoning: 5h]

‘Oh, it is finally here.’

As the information obtained by some ranker indicated, the message appeared on the Round 3, Day 27, 00:00.

The forced summoning was also there as the information indicated.

‘Is 5 hours just in case someone is in middle of clearing a Tutorial floor and needs to get out of dangerous area or clear it? Um... It must be the case.

The clear condition for the second floor's boss room was surviving it for 3 hours.’

[Round 3, Day 27, 00:00]

The timer did not move from Day 27, 00:00.

‘Is the timer not going to move for the duration of the day of the great harmony?’

It seemed that this was done after considering possible negative effect for losing time that could be spent on fighting.

‘Looks like the system thought things through. Although there are bastards that try to exploit the loopholes despite that.’

Before I realized, there was a new portal near my feet.

I walked around a little, and the portal followed me around.

‘Oh, I didn’t know a portal could move on its own like this. It is like having a puppy follow me around. This is fun.’

Enter.

I felt the floating sensation that I was used to. I closed my eyes for a moment.

When I opened my eyes, I could see a familiar field in front of me.

[Welcome to the place of the great harmony.]

[Remaining time: 23:58]

[In this place, you are restricted from attacking another.]

[All of your injuries will be healed automatically.]

‘Um... This place is Kiri Kiri’s green plain.’

I looked around, and now, there were quite a lot of people. They were mumbling.

I ignored them for now. I kept on looking around.

‘Is Kiri Kiri going to be the MC for the day?’

Thinking like that, I kept looking around to find Kiri Kiri, but I could not find her.

For some reason, I was disappointed.

Many people were happy, saying it had been a while since they got to see a bright, open field like this.

It seemed this was the reason why this place was selected for the day.

I could hear laughter from here and there. I actually felt surprised by such noise.

Many people...

Busy atmosphere...

Bright smiles and occasional faces with tears...

I could smell the scent of humanity here.

I could not recall how long it had been since I was in a place like this.

‘At least, at this very moment, as the title said, which read ‘the day of great harmony,’ people are all in harmony, crying and smiling.’

* * *

“Can I have your autograph?”

While I was looking around the field, I met a ranker who was among the upper group in the normal difficulty.

It was Kim Min-huk, the one I had chatted a few times in Community.

He abruptly grabbed my hand and asked for a hand shake. I panicked

a little.

“When you were a professional gamer, I was totally a fan. Why didn’t you tell me? If you did, you would not have been accused of suffering from being a fool with overactive imagination and a pathological liar.”

“It’s been a while since I retired from being a professional gamer, so...”

In the Community, we had not been using honorary form of language. It was for the sake of convenience back then. He was speaking freely in non-honorary language although we met in person. He was acting friendly, and it was awkward and unpleasant.

“Anyway, what about the other people?”

“To be precise, what about other rankers? That is my question.”

Fortunately, Kim Min-huk understood what I was trying to get at.

“They are getting hold of other people and asking names. They are trying to find and secure them if victims from that side entered here.”

Besides talking to me once in a while, it seemed he introduced himself to people as a part of his work routine.

“Did you find anything?”

“No. That side and victims... Nothing came in from either sides. I think they are going to come over all at once when it is almost time for the end of the limit.”

Um... I could understand that.

For the Round Three, the 24 hour stay duration for the waiting room was long gone before yesterday evening.

Victims were probably in the Tutorial stages, each of them alone

somewhere.

‘Is it possible for the Representative Federation to exercise control of this magnitude to all of the victims, especially when they are all separated from each other?’

“That is... It seems the second floor is pretty wide. If you think about this from those people’s perspective, when the Round Three is over, they only have two choices. They can either go back to the first floor’s waiting room or move up to the second floor.”

Ah...

“Even if they do not go back by clearing the Tutorial, they can run in to the Federation at the second floor, so I think they are just trying to survive through it. We also told them to just do that.”

‘Ugh, oh my... I am at a loss for words.’

I felt leery, so I was clicking my tongue. It was at that moment. A large group came in a swarm. It was the rankers.

“Did you guys find anything?”

“No. There wasn’t anyone. Not even one person.”

There were five rankers in total.

They made simple introduction with six people and started to chat.

They were mostly junks about the old days as professional gamers or hot topics since they entered Tutorial.

Talking about Representative Federation was consciously avoided.

‘I don’t know which one of these guys are the other side’s pawn. This is inconvenient in many ways. Not just among the rankers, but there must be pawns amongst the ordinary challengers as well.’

For now, I let them continue talking about useless things. I stepped away a bit and brought out a knife.

‘The system message clearly said it will be impossible to attack another person in here. In that case, what if I attacked myself?’

I thrust the knife’s edge into my palm.

I did it with enough force to pierce through my palm, but the knife slipped away on the top of the palm as if it was just passing by.

‘I can’t attack myself either.

Um... How does this work?’

I tried placing the knife’s edge on my palm again, and I moved the knife as if I was sawing.

‘It feels like a very fine layer is surrounding my entire body. It is so fine that it is to the point of being difficult to notice. Perhaps I can think of it as an ultra performance super micro full body bullet-proof, sword-proof suit?’

As I continued the sawing motion, eventually, the skin was cut a little, and there was blood.

Also, the injury was healed.

‘It looks like getting injured from a sharp edge is going to be difficult. There is the full recovery effect like the one from the waiting room, and it is like the protective effect is also added to it.’

I put the knife away. Instead, I tried smacking the palm with my fist.

‘...I don’t feel much pain.’

This was separate from my pain resistance.

I really could feel almost no pain from it.

I just felt that something was smashed to my palm with a great force.

Puk!

Again, I smacked my palm with my fist hard.

Despite that, I could only feel slight pain, the kind felt from tightly massaging my hand.

One thing fortunate about this was that the minimum momentum from the impact was still in effect.

Striking something hard resulted in that something being pushed.

‘I think joint-based attacks would still work.’

I slowly raised my hand and tried slowly choking my neck.

My breathing was blocked, and I slowly felt light headed.

After that...

My hand was bounced off from my neck.

It felt like something invisible struck it away by force.

My brain, which was struggling due to lack of oxygen, came back to normal at an instant.

Although choking worked, something restrained me from continuing when it went far enough to endanger my life.

It looked like twisting joints would have the same results.

All of sudden, the move would be bounced off, and twisted muscles and joints would be recovered back to normal.

Tsk...

I was getting frustrated from the reality not quite cooperating with my expectations. At that moment, someone came to me.

“Let’s talk for a bit.”

“Who are you again?”

“Kim Min-huk! We just talked.”

One thing special about Kim Min-huk was that he had an ordinary looking face that did not look special or stand out.

Along with a few other rankers, he was one of the rankers who were actively standing up against the Representative Federation.

I personally had been thinking highly of them for being good people.

What they were doing was not going to benefit them or hurt them in any way.

They were working hard for the sake of the others. People like that were rare.

So, although I didn’t remember his name, it was not because I didn’t care about him or thought little of him.

It was just that he looked too ordinary, to the point of making me unable to recall his name when I saw his face.

There was also the fact that I was introduced to many people at once, so I was confused.

“What did you say your name was again just now?”

“I said it is Kim Min-huk!”

* * *

“If I knew this was going to happen, I would have spread the word on

the Community and made it an issue.”

The idea was considering that, among the victims, the people who reported would be in danger. Also, this idea was something that Kim Min-huk, the one who just said the above, strongly objected before.

Obtaining information about the day of the great harmony ended up being a poison. A sense of complacency, thinking things could be simply handled when the day came, occurred as of result.

Actually, I was thinking the same.

“So, a dirty conflict among certain factions are packaged as fight about pride.”

‘They sure do all sorts of things.’

“Clearing the Tutorial will continue. While some people continue to move up, it could not be helped that some people will be lagging behind. There are talks about social system that connects waiting rooms on the lower floors for the people like that.”

“Does that make any sense? That? That side is doing stuff right now.”

“Of course not. It is just a cover story that those bastards are putting up. They are trying to make it so that a third party would have a hard time butting in to this. Also...”

“Also what?”

“There are too many people who are connected to that side. There are more of them than I thought. I was determined and worked hard on digging around... I think there are over ten people among the challengers at the third floor. I’m talking about just in the normal difficulty. I don’t know much about the hard difficulty, but there probably are some.”

...This was slowly making my head ache.

“At the moment, anyone at even third or fourth floor are called upper

group challengers or rankers. However, if you consider the entire 100 floors, these are lower floors. Those bastards' plan is to expand their organization to tenth floor at least. That guy named Lee Chang-suk... He must have a way with words. There are too many people who had been turned."

"...To summarize, the work got fucking tangled up."

"Yeah. I'm asking because of that. You... How strong are you?"

"Me?"

The first thing I had been checking since entering this place was other people's equipment and abilities.

It was easy to observe their equipment.

If they didn't have much of the clothing or items from the real world and had many of the weapons and armors purchased from the Tutorial, I could assume that they were relatively strong.

As for the abilities, there was not much to see.

'I can't tell how strong that person is, but I can certainly tell how weak that person is.'

Things like the way a person walk, body pose, distance maintained from other people...

I never knew things like these could be used to judge people's strength, but it did work.

Also, the information about other difficulties that I obtained from the Community...

As the last thing, I based it off by listening in to their conversations.

'It won't be possible to determine everyone's strength precisely. It is not like I'm the Terminator.'

However, looking at the people who were usually called rankers, I could see the overall standard of the challengers inside the Tutorial.

So, my conclusion was...

“Me? I am not sure. I don’t know what I should compare myself to.”

“If you compared yourself to rankers in the normal difficulty or the ones at the third floor in the hard difficulty? How strong are you then?”

‘If I compared myself to those runts?’

“I’m fucking strong.”

Chapter 44

The Day of the Great Harmony

(2)

I found it surprising that there were such differences among people based on what difficulty group they belonged to.

Overall, the ones from the Easy difficulty looked rather relaxed.

They could move up as long as they put their mind to it and worked hard. They didn't need to muster any courage. With a little bit of effort, they could survive without danger and not go to higher floors.

It meant earning points was that much easier for them.

In other words, the difficulty of the traps was lower for them.

The ones in Normal difficulty were completely divided in two kinds of groups.

There were people who had been just holding out in the first floor while buying meat jerkies and water.

If they continued that lifestyle, it was obvious that their health would be negatively affected by it. Those people had been repeating entering and leaving the waiting room throughout the round and keeping their health.

Quite literally, they were fully focused only on holding out.

The other kind was a group composed of the people usually called rankers, the upper group of challengers in the normal difficulty.

Currently, they were the people who lead in the Tutorial... no...

within the Community.

With clearing the Tutorial as the goal, they had been gathering and spreading information, and they had been garnering the people's support from doing so.

And lastly, the people from Hard difficulty had a unique atmosphere about them.

While the Third Round was repeating, the challengers of the Hard difficulty dwelled mostly in first and second floors.

After the First Round, with the spread of the information, the death rate declined significantly. However, the number of people who succeeded in clearing the first and second floor was extremely small.

The people in the waiting room got switched every time the Round repeated, so naturally, they knew each other very well.

Although they met each other again in this grassy plain,

“Oh... Yeah.”

“Well, it has been a while. Has it been almost a month?”

Those were the extents of their conversations.

Also, there was an air of a club-like feel that was unique to them.

Perhaps it was the result of combining the high probability of survival and low clear rate.

Of them all, the really unique ones were the people who were the minority on the third floor.

In the Community, posts complaining about how they were clueless about how to clear the third floor in Hard difficulty came up often.

In fact, even the first challenger of the third floor in the Hard

difficulty, who got there during Round Two, did not manage to move past the third floor when it was nearing the end of the Round Three.

The people from the Hard difficulty were, overall, frustrated.

Even I, who was watching them, was also frustrated.

The Hard difficulty's third floor was similar to Hell difficulty's second floor in many ways, especially the area where the heat continued.

That was the issue.

“So build up resistance!”

“How am I supposed to raise that? To raise the resistance, I need to be half way to death, and the waiting room is super far away. What if I died while trying?”

‘You just need to tough it out right up to just before your death and go back.’

“Also, burn resistance! The burn resistance! How am I supposed to raise that one?”

“By the way, honestly, what's the point of the burn resistance? The corridor doesn't even have any sunlight coming in, so what burn? Do you get burn from going to a steam room?”

‘You can get burned here, you dumbass.’

“Why don't you just use a heat stone and make fire to raise the burn resistance?”

When I said that, people stared at me with an odd look in their eyes.

It was not ‘oh that makes sense’ kind of response. It was ‘what the hell are you talking about?’ kind of response.

Ugh...

Because it was such a bother to explain it through words, I decided to just demonstrate it with my body.

I brought out a heat stone and a fabric from my inventory.

I wrapped the heat stone with the fabric and rubbed it quickly.

Shortly after, the fabric caught fire.

I dropped the fabric to the floor, gathered dry grass from the surroundings, and tossed them in.

“You can make a fire like this.”

However, these runts were focused on something else.

“Hey! Is your hand all right? Wasn’t that hot to hold?”

“Does anyone have water left in the inventory? Bring a cold one! Cool it for now!”

“...It’s fine. It is not hot. Actually, it is hot, but it will get healed automatically in this place, so why are you all up in arms about it? You can increase your resistance skill this way. Got it?”

Kim Min-huk, who was watching from the side, said as if he was just throwing it out there.

“So, what levels are your resistance skills?”

“Level 4 for the heat and cold. I think it is level 7 for the burn.”

Having heard what I just said, the people had similar responses.

“...Your resistance skill level is 7? Are you even human?”

“It doesn’t seem to be the case here.”

“Um. Definitely not. You. You don’t have problems with your nervous system somewhere, right?”

“If I was born with a body like that guy, a body that cannot feel anything, I wonder if I could clear the third floor?”

‘I think I better not tell them what level I am with the pain resistance.’

At that moment, sound of commotion could be heard from a distance.

Having heard it, people’s heads turned to the direction, and some of the rankers’ faces darkened.

The Representative Federation made an entrance.

* * *

An uncomfortable stand-off continued.

It had been going for 30 minutes already.

“So, that’s why I am telling you to show us that proof of yours, little bro.”

Having heard Lee Chang-suk’s words, Kim Min-huk promptly closed his mouth.

Most of the information we obtained about the Representative Federation was from the people that spied and reported to us about them.

Unless we obliterated the Representative Federation now, the people who reported us the information could be retaliated against after Round Four began.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that Kim Min-huk was a good guy.

The way he treated others, his moral, his way of thinking, his

behaviors... All of them showed that he was an earnest young man.

However, he was too soft, which was his biggest drawback.

If he was just a little selfish, he could have brought forward the people as the proof. If he did, he would not be suffering humiliation like he was at the moment, and he would not be shaking in fury either.

Of course, if he did bring the people forward, I would have been disappointed in him a little.

“I know that we do not exactly get along well with rankers, but acting like this is not right, little bro.”

Lee Chang-suk kept on saying similar things. I ignored him and looked around.

People were slowly backing away from the scene.

The mood was turning violent. Fearing they might get engulfed into a fight, they were pulling out, distancing themselves.

There were some who were watching with excitement and anticipation for a possible fight.

Shortly after, a group from the Representative Federation showed up and a few rankers walked out in response.

The two groups greeted each other with a smile, as if they were already familiar with one another.

From that point and on, the balance of the forces was completely handed over to the Representative Federation.

In the end, our side's forces were made of few rankers from Normal difficulty, and I was eventually added to the group soon after.

The other side was made of a large number of Easy difficulty challengers.

Their floor levels were low. They were the people who intentionally gave up on clearing the Tutorial since the Round One.

There were a few from the Normal difficulty rankers and Hard difficulty challengers in the mix.

Moreover, I couldn't know for certain if there were any among the rankers on our side that were actually connected to the other side.

Also, their associates could be among the spectators who were watching from a far.

As for our side...

Our side was mad from the top of the head.

It seemed Kim Min-huk was completely infuriated from watching Lee Chang-suk spitting out lies after lies with a casual look on his face.

'If a real fight broke out, I wonder how many of the people here would try to fight seriously? Especially when they are at a disadvantage...

There probably won't be many. There will be just Kim Min-huk and a few.

Including myself, perhaps four or five?'

This was the reason why Kim Min-huk was not thinking about just charging in and solving this by force.

Behind the Representative Federation...

The members of the Representative Federation were standing in a row, in a long line.

It was as if they were trying to block the view so we could not see the people behind them.

I could tell immediately the difference in floor levels between the members of the Federation and the people standing behind them.

Their attitude, posture, and facial expression.

The situation was more serious than I thought.

The people were choking in fear. Their fear stricken faces were far more serious than I thought.

While I was looking at the people behind the Federation members, my eyes met with a girl.

She was a student wearing a worn-out and torn uniform.

‘She is still wearing something like that. That means she does not have the points for purchasing equipment.’

The problem was the look on the girl’s face.

‘How could I describe that... ’

She had a serious, determined look on her face. It was like the look of an independence activist during World War II against the Axis powers.

No matter how I looked at her face, it was certain she was hell bent on doing something soon.

‘What is she trying to do?’

When her eyes met mine, she maintained the eye contact and nodded her head slowly.

It was like someone signaling to say I should get ready, and the moment was now.

‘Hey, just what are you going to do? I have not heard anything about any plans.’

It was awkward.

At that moment, the girl made a sudden, large movement.

[Battle Focus]

In the world that was slowed down, the girl ran forward.

Moving past the people who were blocking her front, in a straight line, she made a dash toward me, still with the same determined look on her face.

Behind her, a hand which was trying to grab hold of her shoulder was slowly approaching.

Based on the muscle movement on the top side of the hand, vertically raised angle of the finger, and dark red light surrounding the surface of the finger...

‘It is some kind of skill.’

* * *

‘Lee Ho-jae. That man must be him.’

There were people who looked frustrated, unable to sit still or were just looking around, but he was calmly standing among those people.

‘Of the people who are called the rankers, that man is the only one who might be able to help.’

That man was calmly looking around the area.

He was not even thinking about talking to the pigs around him.

He was like that from the start.

As soon as he faced the pigs, he moved his belt with the sword attached. He moved it a little to the side and hid a small sword

behind.

After that, with one of his arm behind him and standing a little apart from the people, he had been cautiously watching the place.

He was completely different.

He was completely different from the pigs around me and the bastards over there who were nothing but talk.

He was different through his appearance alone.

As if they were purposely matched, he wore black equipment on the top and bottom, and had belt, boots, gloves, three long and short swords, and even a heavy looking shield.

There was almost no realism to it.

He had so many items. It meant he purchased them all with points.

‘When this day of great harmony ends, the Tutorial will continue again.

Soon, Round Three will end, and Round Four will start.

After that, there will be three days of standby.’

I didn’t have much time left.

This day of the great harmony was my last chance.

To be precise, that man was probably my last chance.

Lee Ho-jae...

On the day when my big sister died, she handed me the meat jerky that she kept hidden in her sleeves and hugged me. After that, she came next to my ears and slowly told me the information she had found from the Community.

They were not very useful in particular.

They were information I could find on my own readily by opening the Community after three days of standby and 24 hours of residency, when I ended up in the Tutorial stage by myself.

Really, they were not the kind that would need someone to risk life to obtain.

However, I remembered the information she whispered to my ear clearly, as if they were engraved in me letter by letter.

Of the information she gave me, there was one about a man named Lee Ho-jae.

He was the only survivor of the Hell difficulty.

In the Community, he was treated as a fool with overactive imagination. However, to give information to the newbies, he had been explaining about the traps all this time.

Also, he was with the Normal difficulty rankers now.

Most of the people who thought he was a fool were the Normal difficulty rankers. Considering this fact, I found it to be quite surprising.

I did not know the details, but regardless, this meant the people no longer thought of him as a fool.

All of this information told me one thing. The man named Lee Ho-jae was strong.

Not just that, he even tries to help others.

As I thought, he was the only one.

...Our gazes met.

Ah, it looked like that man also knew that I am the person who reported about the Federation and handed over the information.

I had no plan.

‘For now, I’m just going to go to him.

This is not the kind of problem that could be solved by a conversation anyway.

I have to make him take action and beat the crap out of these pigs.’

With that in mind, with resolve, I charged forward.

As I ran, my gaze was fixated at the man named Lee Ho-jae only.

He sighed with a cryptic look on his face, and then...

He disappeared.

It was as if he never existed.

It was unbelievable, so I looked around. However, I realized that he was standing behind me.

He dusted off his hands.

He had an annoyed look on his face, and had some sort of a scribble on his forehead that shined in blue light.

* * *

There was a school girl who was just running toward me without any plan, and there was a man’s hand that was trying to catch her. Looking at the situation, I felt weary.

Perhaps I was making a late confession, but I was born with a strange fate.

My fate was the kind where I was not supposed to step up and stand in front of others.

When I confessed my first love...

When I found corruption in the student council president election...

When I went straight to the team's owner when I could not stand the incompetency of the director...

When I visited the association because of the problems about how the new players were being treated...

Whenever I stepped up and stood in front of others to help them and solve problems, in the end, everyone was met with despair and unhappiness.

Strangely, I only made the problem bigger.

Regardless of my intent, people I tried to help ended up suffering, and this cycle continued.

I didn't become a professional gamer for 1:1 RTS game for nothing.

I was unstoppable in WOW arena, but I couldn't even properly act as the captain in the raid.

So, I wanted to avoid stepping up as much as possible.

However, this world did not leave me be.

Looking at the girl who was trying to run towards me and the man trying to catch her, I realized I had no choice.

[Blink]

As soon as I got behind the school girl, I planted my fist on the stomach of the man who was trying to catch her.

With a ‘puk!’ sound, the man was thrown to the back, rolling and rolling.

I could see the people’s faces beyond the guy.

The state the people were in, and the look on their faces... I could clearly see them.

Lee Chang-suk, no, the pig, screamed.

“What the, fuck! What the hell are you doing! Even if we are not in good terms! Fuck! Why are you beating up someone out of the blue!? What’s this for?”

The captain pig lead the way, and the other pigs around him also started to yell.

They said it was unprovoked, the young one has gone insane, and even brought up bad upbringing from parents.

‘However... ’

“What.”

“What, what did you expect me to do?”

The pigs started to yell louder.

“If you don’t like it, then bring it on, you chicken shits.”

‘This is the exact showcase of the strong preying on the weak, the thing you guys love the most. So come on.’

From the start, I had no intention of trying to talking to those runts like Kim Min-huk tried.

This was not something that could be solved by a conversation.

Those people were not going to admit their own wrong doings.

Even if what they have done was to be brought up, and even if evidences were brought up right on their faces, they probably would have said it was just a misunderstanding.

Also, there was a chance I may never see them again when this day of great harmony ended.

I had to solve this now.

[Talaria's Wings]

Wings spread wide from my back and separated the school girl from the pigs.

When a strange gigantic blue crystal wings appeared out of nowhere and opened wide, the look of panic settled on the pigs' faces.

I took a step forward.

"Don't be so surprised. This is nothing. As you guys have said, let's resolve this misunderstanding. That's all I'm trying to do here."

"Wait a minute, little bro. I understand that the situation is frustrating right now, but I can explain everything, you see? Little bro, it won't be a bad story for you either. Just ten minutes... No. Just give me five minutes, and..."

I ignored the pig who was making noise.

"I think the process of resolving this misunderstanding could be a bit rough, but well... It is not like anybody can get seriously hurt in here."

Of all the pigs, a few started to move in hurriedly and awkwardly.

'Now that it looks like a fight is about to break out, you want to get out? I memorized all of your faces.'

Little by little, the pigs were taking steps back.

I still had a lot of time.

‘Um... I still have about 18 hours.’

It was enough for me to figure out a way to break through the system’s defense.

Fortunately, I had plenty of pigs for the experiments.

“Just think of it as raising your pain resistance, so just put your mind at ease. I’m an expert in that field.”

Chapter 45

The Day of the Great Harmony

(3)

“Hey you bastards! What are you all doing just sitting around! Stop that bastard!”

‘That’s if they can stop me. From how I see it, if they charge in towards me instead of running away, I would actually be thankful. It’ll be less work for me.’

I disengaged Talaria’s Wing and took a stance.

“Iaaaaaaaak!”

Along with that shout, there was a man who was trying to swing his arm after having it pulled all the way back. I clicked my tongue and watched him.

‘If you attack someone like that, I bet the opponent would really get hit for sure. Right?’

His fist was coming at me along an easily predictable trajectory. With one hand I caught his fist and used my other hand to push in the elbow joint in the wrong way.

A blunt sound could be heard. Bone from the elbow’s joint tore out of the skin.

Right at that moment, through an invisible force, my hands were pushed away.

‘As I thought, it was just for a moment but it works.’

Just as expected, the man's elbow was healed immediately.

However, the man was struggling on the floor, lying on his stomach while grabbing his elbow.

'Feigning pain, are you?'

The system's healing effect completely erased the pain as well.

In other words, that man was struggling because he was either shocked from the pain that he felt at the moment or suffering from a phantom pain.

Tsk.

The man was still crawling on the ground. I stomped on the man's head and looked at my next target.

There was a giant man who charged towards me from the front.

He was wielding a large sword.

'He is about the size of a goblin.'

However, he wasn't as skilled as one.

'His stance is all wrong. He can't bring about the maximum reach like that. Actually, is he so bad at this that he can't even figure out the possible attack distance?'

I raised my foot and kicked him right on the pit of the stomach.

The impact was going to be dulled because of the system, but it was not like the system was going to completely eliminate the shock from the impact.

There was also the momentum from him charging towards me.

Combining them all, the impact was going to be enough to kill a pig.

The giant gasped for air and got pushed back.

Dealing trauma to the lung or other internal organs worked as well.

To be precise, this was about immobilizing the opponent by hitting the respiratory track.

The shock to the respiratory track and internal organs was going to be recovered quickly, but it was going to be enough for the fight.

The giant was pushed back. He took steps to stay standing up. I charged in to follow him and smacked him on the jaw.

The jaw, which was supposed to aim toward the ground, was turned 180 degrees and spun up toward the sky.

‘I wonder what would happen with this?’

The man fell on the spot like a gigantic log.

After a moment, his neck came back to its proper position on its own.

‘It’s like a scene from a horror movie.’

Along with a hard breathing sound, the giant started to breathe again.

However, he was still unconscious.

The giant got beat up in a one-sided fight and collapsed. Having watched this, other runts who were charging at me stopped immediately in their tracks.

As I thought, the protection by the system was not perfect.

Damage could be dealt to arm joint, internal organs and even the neck bone.

The system was almost completely nullifying blade attacks, and shock from impacts were dulled.

On top of that, rapid healing effect was added, and there was a limitation that made it impossible to continue using joint-based attack or choking for long.

However, aiming for the critical areas and instantly pressing down or bending worked.

Of course, the wounds were healed quickly, but that just meant more time for those bastards to experience pain.

Before I realized, Kim Min-huk and a few rankers had circled the Representative Federation.

‘Are they trying to prevent the Federation from running? He made a quick decision.’

As soon as he saw my strength, he concluded that they will win. He then made a move to surround the enemies and destroy them all at once.

‘Actually, even if the pigs ran away, I am confident that I can catch them all in ten minutes.’

“Nice move. What kind of skill is that?”

‘He is a ranker. What was his name again? I don’t remember.’

I was not good at remembering names from looking at faces.

‘Well, trying to remember the face of a runt like that would be just a waste of brain space.’

Some people around me murmured the name, Myoung Jin-chan.

‘Ah, the sixth floor on the normal difficulty.’

He was one of the top challengers among the normal difficulty rankers.

“By the way, did you know that you aren’t the only one with skills?”

After saying that, Myoung Jin-chan mumbled something for a moment.

After a moment, blue light lingered around the tip of the spear that he was holding.

It could have strengthening and sudden acceleration effect like the one from the second instructor goblin at second floor.

It could be something that enhanced his physical abilities as well.

The bastard was smiling with full of confidence. I said,

“If you are done, hurry up and fight. Mr. Nobody.”

‘It’s not like that’s a skill worth making a fuss about. Why is he wasting my time dragging along like this?’

Although I told him to come at me, I actually charged in first for the strike.

His spear tip with blue light quickly came at me. However, I dodged it and drew Gladius.

‘It would be no good to thrust a spear so hurriedly like that.’

Regardless, thrust attacks showed gap in defense when it failed. This guy did not prepare for this at all. Instead, he made a full, deep thrust motion. He was also awkward at taking back steps to gain distance.

A spear had a long reach, which was a great advantage. However, the spearman didn’t even know how to control the distance. Calling him Mr. Nobody suited him perfectly.

I cut Myoung Jin-chan’s hand that was holding the spear. To be precise, I struck it.

Although I swung at his hand like I was going to cut off his fingers, the impact was dull like the strike was made with a wooden sword.

‘Thought so. Because of the meddling from the system, this won’t work.’

Pain was inflicted on his hand at an instant, and Myoung Jin-chan ended up letting go of the spear because of the pain. He tumbled and picked up the spear again. I looked at him as if he was a fool, and then I put away Gladius.

‘He dropped his spear in middle of that? To think that he is one of the top rankers. Looks like there will be no need for me to use Blink or Talaria’s Wing.’

Instead of the short sword, I brought out the Savage warrior’s backsword, which had the advantage in terms of length and weight.

Since blade attacks did not work in this space, it was pointless to swing sharp weapons. It was the same as swinging something else that was blunt.

I had no complaints.

A club was best for giving a good beating.

I thought about the stick that my middle school teacher used to carry around to give students beatings as punishment.

[TL: Back in about 20 years ago or so, it was perfectly fine for teachers in Korea to beat the crap out of students for punishment.]

If I compared a short sword to a two feet long ruler, Gladius is about as long as a broom stick that’s broken in half, and this backsword is like a billiard stick.

‘Teacher, I, your unworthy student, will follow your teachings.’

It was not like these pigs were going to be corrected even if the teacher came in person. However, it was not like the beatings I was

about to deliver were for the sake of teaching them anything, so it did not matter.

* * *

I lied down on the grassy field and closed my eyes. The grassy field felt gentle.

As I thought, this place was Kirikiri's mound.

I thought that there was no other place better suited for taking a nap during the day time.

There was the gentle grassy field, and there was a cool breeze.

The sunlight was not too bright.

It was perfect.

I could hear sounds of what could be described as screams of dying pigs. If it wasn't for it, it would have been even more perfect.

I had a good reason why I was leisurely lying on the grass.

First, I felt so refreshed that I could fly right now.

To think that beating up people made me feel this refreshed...

It was odd, but it was true.

The onslaught of beating continued for a few hours, and that completely cleared the stress I had accumulated lately.

Moreover, in this space, you could not get tired, so I didn't even feel exhausted from the hard labor of giving the pigs the beatings.

It felt like I just got out of a bath on a hot spring. I felt like I was sitting on a bench while drinking a banana milk. It felt that relaxing and refreshing.

‘It is perfect for just stretching out, is it not?’

The second reason was to check the status window.

[Basic swordsmanship (Lv. 7)]

Wow...

My swordsmanship skill was up.

I did not think it would go up from fighting those pathetic pigs.

I thought about it for a moment, and I realized that I have never fought opponents that were weaker than me.

Even when I was fighting against goblins by the hundreds, it was made possible only because I had the power skills from the gods.

Even a grunt goblin soldier was far stronger than those pigs. It was beyond comparison.

The difference in physical attributes were big. The difference in combat strength was at a whole another dimension.

Naturally, my swordsmanship was developed toward passive methods that allowed me to dodge the enemy attacks.

I used shield to block or dodge the attacks, and then I used my quick speed to aim for the gap in the enemy's defense and hit the critical points.

It was effective. However, it was thrust oriented, and lacked in variety.

However, when I was beating the crap out of those pigs, I used the backsword like a club.

Since I obviously had the protection from the system, I didn't bother to think about dodging or blocking attacks either.

Thanks to that, I got to try new attack patterns. As of result, my swordsmanship skill's level went up.

‘Um... If it is possible, I would like to beat them some more... ’

I gave a quick glance to the direction where the pigs were screaming.

Unfortunately, it did not look like my turn would come.

The third and the last reason why I was just killing time while lying on the field...

I didn't exactly have anything left to do at the moment.

When I really started to beat the crap out of the pigs, Kim Min-huk stepped in.

It was not like we were going to fight along with each other.

The fight was already over.

Kim Min-huk went to the pigs that I beat to pulp and tied them in ropes.

I had no idea when he had such things ready.

It seemed even Kim Min-huk was thinking he should neutralize them by force if there was an opportunity.

Like that, all pigs related to the Representative Federation were tied up in ropes like fishes on ropes on an old school fish market. I was now talking to Kim Min-huk about what to do about the pigs.

The school girl, who had been keeping quiet until now, stepped forward.

The girls said her name was Park Jung-ah. She told us what she thought should be done.

We judged that her opinion was the most appropriate one and left the rest to her.

Her opinion was as the following.

The most important thing for neutralizing the Representative Federation's power was sending the challengers on the first floor to the second floor and beyond. This was the most effective measure.

Also, we had to prepare for retaliation that could come after the day of the great harmony ended.

Finally, to make sure these bastards do not even think about committing the same immoral acts toward the new challengers, the bastards had to be punished severely and break their spirit.

So, Park Jung-ah proposed that the Representative Federation's pigs should be used as sandbags for combat training.

It was to eliminate the victims' fear and to get them used to the combat even if it was for just a little bit. Also, she said this will bring the people together from having directly fought against the pigs of the Representative Federations.

To begin with, there were more victims than the Representative Federation members. If all of the victims charged in and fought them instead of choking in fear, there was no way that the side with superior number was going to lose inside the waiting room where the injuries healed automatically.

Of course, it would have been a different story if there was a strong one that could ignore the difference in number or the protection by the system. However, the Representative Federation didn't have such a person.

First, she gathered everyone standing on the field to a place and explained the evil acts perpetrated by the Representative Federation and the suffering of the victims.

Like that, she even garnered understanding from the people who were not related to the Representative Federation. She garnered support

from them toward the victims, and she requested punishment against the Representative Federation.

Also, she rallied the victims together.

She gathered the people and raised their fighting spirit for resistance. She talked about what needed to be done in the future.

Along with the possibilities of the future, she also talked about the danger. However, her overall message contained hope.

Kim Min-huk and other rankers took a step back. Their roles were limited to just supporting her.

They said that it was the right thing to do to have Park Jung-ah, one of the victims, lead the process and resolve it.

As soon as the situation was organized like that, Park Jung-ah executed the idea that she told me and Kim Min-huk.

So, at the moment, on the green plain over there, the rankers were using the pigs as sandbags and teaching the victims of the Representative Federation the basic moves for boxing and swordsmanship.

Occasionally, there were victims that refused to participate in the training. However, we did not accept their refusal.

Even if they cried and refused, we forced them to attack the pigs.

No matter how I thought about it, it was unethical. However, I could not think of anything else that was better.

Like that, the situation was concluded.

So, now that I have finished my part in the matter, I was just sitting around.

‘There is still about 13 hours left before the day of the great harmony

is over.

Should I really just take a nap, or should I go join the victims and practice swordsmanship together?’

I was thinking about what to do, but I could hear a light footsteps coming toward me.

It was Park Jung-ah.

“It must’ve been hard for you too.”

I greeted her with that. Park Jung-ah lightly lowered her head and plummeted next to me, and then she got on her knees.

‘...This kid has a talent for making a person panic.’

I got up awkwardly.

“Thank you so much. On behalf of my older sister and other victims, thank you.”

‘Older sister?’

Was there an older girl next to her?

I didn’t see anyone who was talking to her as if they were close?’

“Also... I know I am intruding, but I have one more favor to ask of you.”

Like that, Park Jung-ah’s story started. It was a pretty long story, longer than I thought it would be.

She started with her story before she entered the Tutorial. Shen then told the stories about what happened to her after entering the Tutorial and how her older sister died.

After that, she told the stories about what happened there after.

Her stories ended with her asking me to lend her my strength.

“I know I am intruding. I’ll pay for this debt for the rest of my life. I’ll never forget it.”

‘...Out of the blue... you are asking me to lend you my strength?

Should I train her or something?

Should I get her something like the Devil’s Fruit from ‘One-Piece’?’

I suddenly thought about the handgun that I purchased earlier.

It had no restriction on who could use it. Also, it was probably incredibly powerful.

Kirikiri said it was necessary for clearing the Fifth Floor.

I needed it too.

“How are you going to pay back the debt?”

“I’ll live the rest of my life for the sake of the others. I’ll fight to protect the others.”

She said it with such determination and resolve that I was at a loss for words. It was ridiculous.

‘Hey. How is that considered repaying the debt to me? It seems like this girl is misunderstanding me about something. Still, if I told her she needs to return the favor back to me directly, I would look undignified.

God damn it, she got me on a checkmate.

I cannot refuse to help her after hearing something like that.

Wait, did this runt give me that speech just now on purpose while aiming for this?’

I didn't say anything back to her. Instead, I just opened my inventory and gave her the handgun while hoping I would look cool and chic.

"It is a magical tool that will cause explosion from a distance. Here is the barrel, and this is the trigger. It does not have a safety lock, so be careful. Also, it only has five shots, so use it sparingly."

"How powerful is it?"

"Honestly, I do not know. I have never shot it before myself."

"I think I'll have to shoot it once as a test."

Park Jung-ah said that and started to walk toward somewhere.

I was actually curious about the handgun's power, so I followed her.

Park Jung-ah approached a pig that was working hard getting beat the crap out of.

"Was his name Lee Chang-suk?"

She walked toward Lee Chang-suk.

Standing in front of Lee Chang-suk, who was working hard at receiving beatings, she brought out a potion bottle from the inventory.

"Where did she get that? Wasn't she a challenger in the First Floor?"

She calmly opened the lid and applied its content on one of her hand.

The liquid appeared to be some kind of lubricant.

"Or is it oil?"

Lee Chang-suk received more beating than anyone. He received more painful beating than anyone. However, thanks to the healing effect by the system, appearance wise, he looked fresh.

His face was a mess with blood and tears. He was not able to talk properly and having difficulty catching his breath. From that perspective, he did not look all right. Still...

Regardless, I just meant that he did not appear to be seriously hurt anywhere on his body.

Park Jung-ah had a calm look on her face. She slowly pushed in her fingers, which had lubricant applied, in the gap just below Lee Chang-suk's eye.

Slowly, little by little, her fingers went in deeper.

Lee Chang-suk's eyeball looked like it could pop out... No. Actually, it really was slowly coming out.

Regardless, his eyeball was not pulled out or destroyed, so system did not do anything.

'There was a method like that.'

Lee Chang-suk was foaming on his mouth like a rabid dog and struggled. However, Park Jung-ah remained resolute.

Using the gap that she made with her finger, instead of the finger, she shoved in the narrow barrel of the handgun. Having realized this, Lee Chang-suk's desperate struggle reached its peak.

His screaming was so loud that it was making me go deaf.

I shall omit the desperate swears, curses and pleas for life that Lee Chang-suk poured out in the process.

BOOM!!

The explosive sound was closer to the sound of a lightning bolt striking down instead of a gunfire.

Lee Chang-suk's head became just a lump of blood. Its shape could no

longer be identified. Actually, to be precise, it became so grotesque to look at that it was hard to stare at to identify it.

At an instant, Lee Chang-suk became a corpse with its head exploded. The system did not provide him with healing.

Due to the explosion, blood and pieces of flesh were thrown up into the air. When they fell back down, Park Jung-ah felt them as if they were spring rain shower. Fiddling with the handgun, Park Jung-ah quietly mumbled,

“It is not bad.”

‘...Oh my... This bastard is crazier than me. No, this bitch is crazier than me. To think someone like that would be out there...’

The way she looked at the moment made it hard to believe that she just killed her tormentor.

There was no madness, sadness, bliss or emptiness.

It looked like she just wanted to test the handgun’s power, and she looked calm as if she only did what she was supposed to have done. I felt shocked, and I felt fear.

I thought that, if there ever was a person with the heart of iron then it must be her.

I thought I got used to blood and death from being in the Tutorial. However, it was scary even for me to look.

Park Jung-ah raised the hand that was holding the handgun. She raised her voice and garnered everyone’s attention toward her.

She did not look like a priestess who received people’s admiration and respect. Instead, she looked like a devil who used force and fear to oppress and rule over the people.

In the area, the sounds of people screaming and puking never stopped. However, ironically, sounds of cheer and applause also exploded.

Also, she stepped up over the headless corpse of Lee Chang-suk and started another speech.

Just like that, the watchmen who protect the law and order of the Tutorial's Korean server, the Order of Vigilance was born.

Chapter 46

Tutorial 5th Floor (2)

[Round Three, Day 28, 10:30]

It had been two days since the day of the great harmony ended.

Back then, my plan was to resume my conquest of the Fifth Floor as soon as the day of the great harmony ended.

However, I had been busy minding the cleanup of the Representative Federation and the establishment of the Order of Vigilance. As of result, I ended up wasting another day.

During the day of the great harmony, in middle of the green plain, Park Jung-ah executed Lee Chang-suk with her own hands. After that, she established the Order of Vigilance.

A significant number of the victims became the member of the Order.

It seemed that some of them already had made up their minds to join her even before the day of the great harmony.

Her actions made many panic and also found it to be repulsive.

However, there were some who were inspired by her boldness.

There were many from Normal and Hard difficulty who joined the Order of Vigilance.

During that day, with her torn school uniform's skirt waving in the air and her body painted in blood, Park Jung-ah gave a heartfelt speech toward everyone and the people gathered around her.

They followed her like a messiah.

Park Jung-ah had people gathered in one place and told her plans and actions for the future. She looked like the Joan of Arc from the history book.

‘No. Actually, I wonder if it would be all right to say she looked like the Joan of Arc when she was painted in blood like a devil?’

On second thought...

Perhaps even Joan of Arc would have looked that fearsome to her enemies.

Kim Min-huk and the rankers joined the Order. I, the one who was responsible for defeating Lee Chang-suk and the Representative Federation, also joined the Order of Vigilance.

The motto of the Order was simple.

The goal was to establish and maintain the order and rule that provided essential minimum safety and rights to the challengers inside the Tutorial.

While the rankers and top challengers, also known as conquerors, tried their best and headed to the higher floors, the Order of Vigilance stepped up to look after the challengers at the lower floors who have not yet obtained the power to continue.

During that day, at that spot on the green plain, Park Jung-ah proposed the internal rules for the Order of Vigilance and universal laws for all challengers inside Tutorials should be made.

At that place, people brought their heads together and made essential rules.

You shall not commit act of violence toward another.

You shall not rape.

You shall not steal.

You shall not violate the freedom of another.

As the basis for the laws that were to be established, these four rules were made.

They also let it be known to all that anyone who violated the four rules will be punished by the Order of Vigilance, and the trial and punishment procedures will be strictly decided by the Order through the internal rules of the Order.

Of course, the Order's internal rules were virtually blank at the moment, but regardless...

Many people found the idea repulsive. Many were concerned that the Order of Vigilance might head in the bad direction in the future and get corrupted, turning into the second Representative Federation. However, we marched on with the idea despite the negative reactions from the people.

Like that, the talks of the rules and laws were concluded.

The executions resumed again.

Park Jung-ah selected the worst of all members of the Representative Federation and executed them. The rest of the Federation members were put on surveillance list.

The members of the Representative Federation were mentally collapsed completely from the terror of handgun executions and from being subjected to violence for almost 15 hours.

They were in shambles. Let alone thinking about more wicked things, it seemed they may not even be able to walk properly.

However, Park Jung-ah, as if she was thinking they should not let their guard down, declared that a part of the Order's members, including herself, will remain in the First Floor's waiting room while giving up clearing the floor so they can prepare for unexpected turmoil in the next round.

As the last thing, she said there was a need for accurate and courteous instruction for the new challengers who will enter the Tutorial during the next round.

It was so the people who were suddenly kidnapped by the Tutorial could understand the situation and better prepare them for what was to come. It was also to inform new challengers of rules that must be followed.

Kim Min-huk chose to handle this and made notifications about information and cautions on the Community. The form was similar to an introductory or instruction manual.

Like that, everything was concluded early in the morning yesterday.

It took another day after the day of the great harmony ended.

The whole ordeal gave me a serious headache.

‘As I thought, I am not fit for the kind of business that involve people giving out their opinions, finding answers that satisfy everyone when they are in disagreement, and planning for the future.

I am better off struggling by myself.’

Perhaps that was the reason why, but I was a little glad to see a gigantic stone gate in front of me. It felt like I was back to where I belonged, the path I should walk on.

This was the Fifth Floor’s boss room.

I was already used to the use of the backsword, and it was time for me to clear the Fifth Floor.

Boss rooms were always extremely difficult no matter how easy the floor itself was, so that was making me feel a little uneasy.

However, I was confident in my abilities now.

I even believed that I'll be able to get through this safely.

The stone gate was large and heavy. I listened to the sound it made as it dragged along the floor. Like that, I entered the boss room.

When I entered the room, the opponent that entered by view was...

It was just a lizardman.

* * *

[Your trial will start after 30 seconds.]

It meant the glass wall separating me from the lizardman was going to disappear in next 30 seconds.

‘Hm... Is this really all of them?’

The boss rooms at the Third and Fourth Floors were not inside a marble stone room like this. Instead, they were on large open spaces. Considering that, this close quarter inside the stone room felt strange.

‘Are they asking me to have a one-on-one battle against that lizard?’

The goblins inside the boss room on the Fourth Floor had a city-size organization.

Of course, it was not like I needed to fight them all at once. It was hard to think this lizard had the combined power of the city-sized goblin group.

‘What is this? Is there a hidden trick somewhere?’

Before I was able to find an answer to my question, 30 seconds had passed.

[Defeat Idaltaru, a lizardman, the stealthy shadow warrior.]

It seemed that defeating that lizardman really was the trial for

clearing the Fifth Floor.

‘A stealthy shadow warrior, huh... ’

The name did not fit at all with the characteristic of lizardman, which were aggressive and violent.

Still, befitting the title, this lizardman did not charge at me.

It put forth its trident and maintained cautious distance as it observed me.

I suddenly thought about the lancer that I met during the day of the great harmony.

This lizardman was also a lancer, but the mood it exuded from just holding the trident was enough to tell me that this one was completely different.

‘I think this one is definitely strong.’

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I was anxious and nervous. My lips went completely dry.

‘I think this is my first time engaging an opponent so carefully.’

It had been quite a while since we both aimed weapons at each other, maintained distance and circled around.

‘Is it going to stand guard like this indefinitely? Regardless, I don’t want to charge in first.’

It was certain that the lizardman was waiting for me to charge in first, so the duel could end at an instant after me getting struck by its counterattack if I charged in first.

I was at a great disadvantage.

The difference in reach was too great.

The difference in height, arm length, and weapon’s length... I was at a disadvantage in all of them.

When the fighters’ skills were on par with each other, the differences in reach made a critical difference, giving the one with the longer reach an absolute advantage.

‘Still, it is not like the trident is always more deadly than a sword.

So, this one is called the stealthy shadow warrior...

Is this one the type that blocks or dodges the opponent’s attack and aims for the counter? If that’s the case, then it is similar to me.

God damn it. Let’s not be so anxious.

If that side is going to lead this into a battle of mental focus and attrition, it has nothing on me.

That lizardman’s face is also stiff like stone because it is nervous.

Compared to me, it is not overwhelmingly strong.

The fact that the state of being on guard is continuing like this means that we are both thinking our skills are about evenly matched.

That stiff face...

Huh?

Its facial expression... I can see its facial expression.'

Actually, that was a ridiculous idea.

I was a human. There was no way for me to tell if a lizard was nervous based on its facial expression.

'That means... '

It had the title that contained the word, 'stealthy.' It was displaying nervous attitude. It was not aggressive, and it was being defensive.

Its stance showed it was focusing on defense.

This lizardman was seriously not like a lizardman.

'However, it must be a lizardman.

I should test it.'

Lizardmen were the kind of race with extreme obsession toward their pride and strength.

Lizardmen hated being stepped on their prized tails, which they considered as beautiful and magnificent. They hated being stepped on their tails more than death itself. They could let their guard down because of this when the situation lead to it.

If the opponent's strength was overwhelming, lizardmen did not show any signs of feeling wronged in its eyes. Still, they regretted dying before demonstrating all of their true capabilities.

These were what I have learned about the lizardmen from having fought them through the process of clearing the Fifth Floor and listening to words they spat out.

Kumkum.

‘I have to calm my voice. I need to make it sound as cool and powerful as I can. It needs to sound heavy and dignified like a powerful warrior from a Murim fantasy novel.’

“You are a superb warrior. I have never seen a lancer as magnificent as you in my life.”

Having heard what I said, the lizardman opened its eyes big and panicked with a shocked look on its face.

It was extremely surprised. If there was [!!!] emoticon on top of its head, it would not have looked odd at this point.

It was the effect of the knowledge of the time before Babel.

The effect of this skill was not limited to just allowing me to understand other beings’ languages.

After all, it was a skill gifted to me by a god.

Moreover, many gods recommended that I should be gifted with this skill.

It was possible that those gods just wanted to see me being destroyed mentally. However, I decided to use this skill to my advantage.

“The grace and fighting spirit that you exude are enough for me to sense your strength. It is an honor that I got to have this duel with you. Even if I get defeated, I will have no regrets if I died by the hands of a powerful warrior like you.”

Although I was the one who said it, I thought it could not sound more insane.

I made it up as I thought about what a battle maniac character from a fiction would say just before a duel.

It was not like I thought the line was cool or thought that was how I was feeling.

The look on the lizardman's face showed it was stunned. Having heard what I just said, I could see it was happy to hear that. It was tickling the lizardman's face.

Its mouth was wiggling. It kept on using its tongue to lick. Its eyes narrowed because its cheekbones raised up. Its rear teeth were firmly biting on the cheek. Its eyes were made sharp and narrow.

It looked like it was trying to pretend to act casual and hide that it was actually happy.

‘As I thought, this lizardman is proud of its strength.’

Surprisingly, my ability to read the lizardman's facial expression was also coming from the knowledge before the time of Babel.

Without this skill, I would not have noticed anything other than bizarre wiggling on its face.

With the skill, not only could I have a conversation with it, I could I also read its facial expressions.

I was able to communicate it with as if I belonged to the same race as the lizardman.

The knowledge before the time of Barbel was not just a simple translation skill.

[Keeruk. I am surprised to see a human speaking our tongue.]

[You are also definitely strong. It is a shame that you were born a human.]

[As my way of paying respect to having met a strong warrior in a long while, I will allow three attacks.]

It was going to allow three attacks!

‘You... are you a lizard that jumped right out of some Murim fantasy

novel?

Thank you. I'll take them.'

It looked like this lizard usually fought by defending first and then countering, so this did not seem like a great advantage.

However, it was a great progress since I managed to make a gap and some allowances.

'I'll show you the end of your leisurely attitude!'

[Talaria's Wing]

I spread my wings. As soon as I took a stance,

[Blink]

As soon as the battle begun, I started with my certain kill move, body charge!

'Die!'

I thought the combo move would have swept away the lizardman just like that.

However, the Talaria's Wing didn't hit the lizardman. Instead, it went through empty air made of black smoke.

Just before colliding with the Talaria's Wing, the lizardman turned a part of its body to gaseous form.

Talaria's Wing went straight through the part of lizardman's body that was turned to gaseous form.

'What the... How is this possible?'

I was so surprised that I doubted what I just saw.

‘It turned just a part of its body into smoke. Are you made of smoke?’

On top of that, you dodged my attack by responding to it when the attack was done using the sudden leap through the space with the Blink. Does this runt also have battle focus skill that accelerates its focus?’

I had so many things I was curious about. However, I could not afford to keep on thinking about them.

There was a trident that was coming at me from the back. I barely managed to parry it with my shield. I increased the distance from the lizardman.

Fortunately, the lizardman did not charge in to close the distance.

It seemed the lizardman was serious about allowing three attacks.

I was stunned.

I never thought I would meet an opponent who the Talaria’s Wing and Blink combo would not work.

If it was not going to work, I thought that it would be against an opponent with gigantic body and mass that overwhelmed the impact from the attack.

To think that it was possible to dodge it by looking at it...

It seemed I was not the only one who was stunned. In a little excited voice, the lizardman said,

[You are truly incredible. Keruuuk. If you were the same race as me, I would have had you as my husband.]

‘...Pardon??

Husband?

What?

Is the word you just said what I think it is?

On top of that, you were female?

In that case, you are not a lizardman! Shouldn't you be called a lizardwoman?'

The lizardwoman was looking down toward me. It looked satisfied. Because of the lizardwoman's... no... the lizard's gaze...

Along with the chill sensation, my entire body felt creeped out.

I did not know why, but I threw the Gladius that I was wielding. I brought out the backsword and charged forward.

Again, the lizard turned a part of its body into gaseous form and dodged the Gladius that was coming at it.

I was expecting as much up to this point.

I swung the backsword and struck the tip of the trident.

Usually, when I did this against past enemies, the spear was move out of the way to give me an opening. However, the lizard bounced its wrist and easily absorbed the impact by spinning the tip of the spear as if it was drawing a circle.

I already had charged in. I already had thrown my body forward.

I kicked the ground, threw my body forward and charged inside the distance between me and the lizard.

Throwing oneself into the air carelessly was equal to committing suicide. However, I had the Talaria's Wing and Blink.

The lizard swung its tail to block me. I used the Talaria's Wing to block its tail. I used the shield on my left hand to strike the lizard's

face.

Having managed to deal shock to the lizard, I wanted to maintain the upper hand and pressure in. However, while I was at it, the lizard's trident came at me to pierce me, so I had to increase the distance again.

The lizard was struck by the iron shield earlier on the head. Despite that, the lizard still thrust the spear precisely toward me when I was well inside the reach distance.

It grabbed on to the spear's upper portion to make its reach shorter and thrust it.

As I thought, as far as the skill was concerned, this lizard was superior to every opponent I had faced so far.

I was looking at the lizard with nervous eyes. On the other hand...

This god damn lizard was patting the top of its nose, the part that was smacked by my shield. It looked very satisfied. It was looking at me with merciful eyes.

This was driving me nuts. It was creeping me out.

I never thought that being able to read the expression on that scale-covered face was going to be this disgusting.

'Is there a way to temporarily disable the knowledge before the time of Babel?'

Idaltaru, the lizard, disengaged its combat stance. It extended its hand and said in a polite manner,

[For a long time, I have longed to meet a strong male.]

[Keruk. Keruk. If it is with you, I think I might be able to overcome the wall of difference in species.]

[I do not know if it would be possible to conceive from mating with a human, but would you like to at least try?]

‘Pardon?’

What did you just say?

Could it be that the knowledge before the time of Babel is broken?

I don’t understand what that lunatic lizard was trying to say?

So... Right now, what you are saying is... ’

Slowly, and calmly... I went over what the wacko lizard said earlier.

[Battle Focus]

‘Fuck, that reptile is trying to take my virginity!’

Chapter 47

Tutorial 5th Floor (3)

[Keruk. My name is Idaltaru. You can call me Idy if you would like. Human, please tell me your name.]

Her face was full of excitement.

I could sense shyness and fluttering heart from her.

Since a while ago, her tail had been wagging left and right.

I absolutely did not want to know what that gesture meant, but unfortunately, the knowledge before the time of Babel was kindly explaining that her movement was a mating ritual by a female lizard right before mating.

This female lizard's mind was full of thoughts about wanting to take me. I had no name that I wanted to give out to someone like that.

[Battle Focus]

In the slowed world, my thought processing was accelerated.

Thanks to that lunatic's ridiculous words, my head was still in complete disarray.

‘However, to make sure her rambling does not become reality, I need to focus on this battle right now.

I need to fight and win if I want to avoid the horrible incident later.

First thing first, that lizard named Idaltaru is definitely different from ordinary lizards.

She is different starting with her specs.

Her muscular strength, speed, and the skill in her way of handling the trident...

However, the biggest difference is that her combat style is the exact opposite of the ordinary lizards.

Maybe it is a style she developed to fight her own kind which are aggressive and violent. Her style is very calm and stable.

She sees the opponent's attack and dodges it. Also, she counters in that moment where there is a gap in the opponent's defense.'

Her tail attacks were mostly used just for blocking me from getting closer or buying herself time until she could counter with her trident.

Her moves were not instinctive. They were all very well calculated.

Of course, her combat style definitely had a limit, but it was stable.

She even possessed the skill to turn her body into gaseous form and which allowed her opponent's attack to just pass through. She was even more fearsome because of this.

Moreover, she was even able to respond to my sudden leap through space using Blink, which was incredibly fast.

Her response speed was definitely an exception to the norm.

It could be that she possessed a skill that improved her reflex and cognitive process.

It could be that her gaseous form skill had auto evasion function built in.

It was a special attribute that was common in evasion skill in video games.

However, even that cheat-like gaseous form transformation skill had a weakness.

It could be maintained only for the brief moment of impact.

When Idaltaru dodged the Gladius that I threw at her using the gaseous form transformation, she was not able to dodge the next attack that followed. Instead, she got hit.

Just like my Blink, it seemed that continuous use was not possible.

I have found the answer.

I could get around her gaseous form transformation evasion by starting with an ordinary attack to force her to use it. Immediately after that, I could use the Talaria's Wing and Blink charge attack combination to finish the duel.

I raised the backsword and looked for an opening on Idaltaru's defense.

Having noticed that I took a combat stance again, Idaltaru was distraught.

[Human! Why do you refuse me!]

I wanted to quit this ridiculous battle of words right at this instant and just focus on the battle.

However, I could not just let this go without talking back.

“Is there any reason at all why I should not refuse you, you hideous lizard!”

On her face, Idaltaru had the look of a fragile woman who was hurt from a careless, harsh insult. It was really, really disgusting to look at.

‘Oh my... I think I'll go insane.’

[Y... You didn't have to say something so harsh! Keruk.]

[You shouldn't judge someone purely based on appearance! Keruk.]

Judging from what she was saying, and how she was saying it, it seemed she was not among the prettiest in her own kind.

[If you are going to act this way, I'll make you stay even if it is by force!]

“Don't say such ridiculous things!”

‘Do you have multiple personalities? Just how many different characters’ personalities do you have to stuff in yourself to be satisfied?’

[Kiaaaaaoooo!]

Idaltaru raised her head high toward the sky and screamed in her beastly roar.

When she faced her front again, her eyes were saturated in red.

She roared again and charged toward me.

‘When angry, even this one charges in just like ordinary lizardmen. If she loses her cool and charges in, I can only be thankful about that.’

Along with her charging speed, a deadly thrust using her entire body's strength came at me.

It seemed she was not thinking that I could dodge it or block it. It was a thrust attack that looked like she was just throwing her body.

‘I don't think I can simply deflect this.

The location of the spear's tip is... If I tried to haphazardly parry this, the trident will pierce my body instead.’

[Battle Focus]

Because of a useless battle of words, my focus was diminished, so the Battle Focus was canceled earlier. I used the skill again.

‘Damn it. I activated it too late.’

I used the left arm that was holding the shield.

I moved it toward the spear.

‘That spear is definitely coming at me with enough force to pierce even an iron shield.

In that case, just you try to pierce through an arm too.’

Kagang!

As I thought, the trident pierced right through my shield, and it even went through my left arm.

Also, it penetrated further toward my left waist.

I ignored the pain.

As of now, I was able to do that.

My right arm was swung, and the Savage warrior’s backsword cleanly cut off Idaltaru’s left arm.

A lizard’s mouth, which had saw-like teeth, was coming right at me in front of my eyes.

Actually, I was going to make her use up her gaseous form transformation skill with this and finish the fight with the Talaria’s Wing and Blink. However, Idaltaru did not use the skill to the very end.

[Blink]

I used Blink to fall back and gained a big distance between myself and her.

[Kuuuaaaaak!]

‘Does it hurt? It hurts for me as well.’

I cut off Idaltaru’s left arm along the shoulder. Similarly, my left arm was pierced by the trident and had holes.

It was obvious this situation was an advantage to myself.

If the opponent was in pain like me, then I was at an advantage no matter what.

On top of that, Idaltaru’s spear was still stuck on my arm.

I even took her weapon, so my attack, which was attempted with the intention of giving up an arm for it, could be considered as a definite success.

[Krrururu. You are too mean.]

Idaltaru held her left shoulder with her hand. Blood was gushing out of her left shoulder. She mumbled as she looked at her arm on the floor.

‘Mean, who is mean?’

You are the one with wacko brain who is taking things too far.’

[You just tried to kill me. If I was just a little bit slower, your sword would have been headed to my neck instead of my arm.]

She was right, so I didn’t say anything back to deny it.

[In that case, instead of seeing you as a mate, I’ll consider you as a foe that I should kill!]

Along with her shouting, the muscle on her entire body swelled up. Her body size grew almost twice her original size.

‘Is this the start of the phase two?’

[Kiaaaaaoooo!]

Kwang!!

Idaltaro stepped hard with her feet, and the entire floor cracked with spider-web like cracks.

‘...This is too strong?’

* * *

Kwang!!

I barely managed to dodge Idaltaru’s feet falling on me. I rolled and rolled to move away.

‘Oh my...

Does that make common sense?

This marble stone room is on the brink of completely collapsing.

Idaltaru lost her cool and she is going berserk. She is charging at me without any thoughts.’

She lost an arm and her trident. She was attacking out of instinct without any calculated thoughts, so it was not hard to dodge her.

However, every time I dodged her, the wall and the floor were destroyed.

It had not been ten minutes yet, but in that short duration, the boss room was turned to shambles. I wondered if the ceiling was going to collapse at any minute.

‘In a video game, a boss monster’s physical abilities suddenly getting boosted from going berserk is pretty common.’

So, when Idaltaru started to go mad and run amok, I didn’t think much of it other than that she really looked like a boss monster from a video game.

However...

Kwang!

[Kuwaaaaaaooooo!]

“Ugh... Ugh...”

I barely managed to dodge her punch.

My legs were starting to shiver, so my body ended up leaning on a wall nearby.

‘Hey, this is too much!’

I merely had been running around to dodge her attacks, but I am getting exhausted and it is hard to even catch my breath.

Just how long is that going to last?

At this rate, I’ll be exhausted first.’

My speed was diminished quite a bit already, so I used Blink to dodge several times.

I only had two more chances for using Blink.

I had to make these two chances count somehow.

A fist was coming right at my face. I lowered my head quickly and dodged it.

Kwang!!!

Along with a sound of a cannon-like explosion, going past where my head was just now, Idaltaru's fist was planted on the wall.

As soon as I dodged her fist, I drew Gladius and aimed for her heart.

It was close, but Idaltaru's tail was swung at that moment.

I used the Talaria's Wing to counter it, but her tail threw my entire body up into the air.

'Fuck, I'll really die like this.'

"Idy!"

While I was flying in the air, my will to survive spoke out without going through my brain's filter.

'Idy?'

Thanks to the Talaria's Wing's flight effect, I didn't plummet to the floor. Instead, I was able to land safely.

Actually, I was able to land safely because Idaltaru stopped her attacks and just stared at me with a vacant look on her face.

'Why is she like that?'

[Keruk. What is it, human? Did you finally change your mind or something?]

'Idy... '

That was right. A while ago, she told me I could call her Idy.

It seemed I called her name unconsciously because I wanted to live.

I got to recognize the strong will to survive in me that tried to live through this no matter what.

“...You... You are truly strong!”

‘So what now...

Damn it.

I have to think of the next line quickly.’

“Regardless of how you look outside, your inside is truly magnificent!”

‘You dumbass, what you just said to her ultimately means you are trying to say she is ugly outside!’

[...So what is it that you want to say, human!]

‘Damn it... I don’t have a watch, but I feel like I can actually hear the sound of a watch ticking. It is making me anxious about time.

Battle Focus!

Actually, I already have used it.

So why is the time passing so fast!

I had to think about what to say next.

I don’t know when that lunatic lizard was going to lose her cool and charge at me again.

I really don’t have time anymore.’

“Give me time! Please give me time!”

‘That’s not a bad line.

It is the perfect line to use if it is difficult to refuse the confession at the spot. It is the best one to just wing it and escape the scene.

It's a line I have heard twice from girls I confessed to when I was in college.'

[Time? What for?]

"Because of your sudden declaration of interest in me as your mate, my mind is in too much of disarray. I need time to reflect on myself!"

'If I ever go back to the reality, I think I should go and personally thank the girls from college who rejected me. They told me such useful lines.'

[How long... do you need?]

Idaltaru's voice quickly became calm.

I was surprised to see this. Only a moment ago, she was a hulk lizard who was running amok while having lost her mind. Now, she was so calm when I only said I will think about it for a moment.

'I wonder just how much does this lizard likes me?

Could it be that my face's shape is considered ultra-gorgeous among the lizard's standard?

Anyway, I did it.'

"Just a moment... I just need a moment."

After saying that, I pulled out the long spear that was stuck on my arm.

'God damn it. It was excruciating having had to run around with this stuck on my arm.'

Blood gushed out like fountain every time I made a quick movement.

Thanks to that, my bleeding resistance went up by one. However, that was not making me feel better at this moment.

I used inventory, brought out the stamina potion and healing potion and drank them.

While I was drinking the potions, I fixated my eyes at Idaltaru.

That lizard was not attacking me right now because she was insane.

Also, she should not be trusting me for having made a promise to an insane lizard.

Having drank all of the potions, I haphazardly put away the empty bottles to the inventory. I grabbed hold of the backsword.

[Are you done now? Have you finished thinking about it?]

“Wait a minute. I need to perform a human ritual to focus my mind.”

I just made that up for now.

I aimed the backsword to the front and took a neutral stance.

It was a stance that was supposed to be done with both hands on the sword, so it was a little uncomfortable with the backsword which was meant to be used with just one hand.

Also, the sword had quite a curvature, so the stance was hard to maintain.

Huup.

I took a deep breath in and then focused.

This was a difficult technique. Even when I practiced it at the waiting room, my chance of failure was over 90%.

Moreover, if I failed, there was going to be an immediate counter.

From the neutral stance, I slowly raised my sword and took a raised sword stance.

Figuring out ways to use Blink in offensive measures had always been a big homework for me.

I have tried a body charge attack with Blink once, and it resulted in too severe of shock to my body.

In the end, only way to utilize Blink offensively was with Talaria's Wing.

However, I did have one more way to use it offensively.

It was using a weapon.

'Just making the weapon collide with the opponent with Blink is not going to be enough. If I am going to do that, I might as well use Talaria's Wing. That would be better.

However, if I managed to combine Blink with a chest cut, the speed of the sword swing and Blink's movement power...

At the moment just before Blink arrives at the target location, literally just before that critical moment, just before the momentum from Blink's movement disappears, if I could swing the sword while carrying all that momentum and cut the target...

I thought about the distance between me and Idaltaru and Blink's timing as I struck down the sword.

After that...

[Blink]

Boooooong...

Along with that wind sound, the backsword chopped off Idaltaru's body.

However, Idaltaru did not incur any injury from my attack.

She transformed her body into black smoke and dodged my sword.

However, her face was filled with a perplexed look. As for my face, it was filled with a sense of relief.

This technique had one thing that was superior to the Talaria's Wing and Blink combination.

It was the fact that I did not have to charge in with my body.

When I arrived at the destination of my Blink, as soon as the movement was completed, all momentum disappeared with it, which was a characteristic of the Blink skill.

After this, I was able to leisurely prepare for the next attack.

[Talaria's Wing]

After waiting for a moment, Idaltaru's body, which was turned to black smoke earlier, had turned back to normal.

[Blink]

Kwang!!

As soon as her body returned to normal, I used Blink and charged in with the Talaria's Wing.

However, just before the moment I used Blink, she grabbed on to my ankle with her tail. So I ended up rolling with her instead.

The shock from the Blink was absorbed by the Talaria's Wing. However, while I was rolling with my ankle grabbed by Idaltaru's tail, I ended up hitting my head on the floor a few times.

Like that...

I lost my consciousness.

* * *

“Kuuuuk.”

‘Is it this pattern again?’

I turned my head and looked at Idaltaru.

Her body was not showing any movement, even a small one.

Her body was in middle of a pool of blood.

‘Actually, since she had been running around like that with her arm cut off, she must have bleed a lot.’

I ended up in a beat up state again, but still, I survived somehow, and I felt relieved from that.

‘I think it has been a while since I gone on a swimming in the Styx and returned.’

Um... My body was still not moving as I wanted.

‘For now, I think I should wait until my body can move as I want. I should drink another potion from the inventory.

Actually, I just need to ride the portal.

Since my body won’t move... I should use Blink and get to the portal.

I already have used all five allowances for Blink, so I should wait a bit.

I am not in a good condition, but it is not so critical that I would die from bleeding while I wait for the cooling time for the Blink to pass.

I should just sit tight, relax and wait...?

Wait a minute...

...My body is supposed to be recovered automatically after beating a boss room.

There was no clear message either.'

[Kurururururu]

I felt creeped out. My hair spiked up from the chill. I slowly turned my head and looked at Idaltaru again.

Idaltaru's face was painted in blood. She raised her head up and was glaring at me.

[Human, you are so cruel.]

[You are too cruel. You really have gone too far... You are atrocious.]

Chapter 48

Tutorial 5th Floor (4)

[Kurururu... Human, you cannot move anymore. Now I can do as I wish.]

I felt my heart sink. I was terrified.

That lizard was dying while gushing out blood like that. Still, it seemed her head was filled with thoughts of wanting to do something to me.

“Just kill me! You lunatic lizard!”

[Kuk. Kuk. I won’t kill you. I will take you as my husband.]

Oh my...

That lizard’s sex drive was... No, her obsession with having a spare husband was just out there.

Idaltaru slowly crawled her way across the floor towards me.

It seemed that it was difficult for her to move as well. She was crawling on the floor using her remaining arm.

When I was in middle school, I was absolutely shocked and terrified from watching a scene from a horror movie where a girl with long hair that covered her face had crawled out of a well.

With that scene stuck in my head, I was scared to sleep every night for the week after.

However, the terrifying sight in front of me at this very moment was... It felt like the memory could never fade even after decades.

Idaltaru was slow, but she didn't stop. She continued to crawl towards me.

‘What should I do now?

Should I bite my tongue and die to protect my virginity?

No. It was not time to worry about keeping my virginity yet.

I needed to get a grip.

Let's think about what I can do at this moment.

My head could still think.

My hand... My right hand could still move.

I wasn't certain about my shoulder, but I definitely can feel up to the elbow at least.

Ways I could attack...

I used all of my Blink allowances.

I still needed to wait until it can be used again.

I still had Talaria's Wing.

God's power skills did not require my stamina or mana.

I could use it just fine.

Are there any weapons left...

Damn it... I could almost see the handgun that I had handed over to Park Jung-ah.

I opened the inventory and checked to see if there were any weapons

that I could bring out and use immediately.

I had a hook and a heat stone.

Could I use... the hook?

I think the heat stone would be better.

This hook was to be used with a rope, so its tip was too dull.

Lizardman was basically a type of reptile.

It had to be.

Reptiles were cold blooded, so they are weak against changes in temperature.

That's right. The heat stone was the one.

Just you try to come and touch me.

I'm going to shove this lump of flame into your neck.'

I brought out the heat stone from the inventory and held it in my right hand to hide in.

It was exuding high temperatures of heat, so I felt pain in my palm. However, I could manage to not bat an eye from the pain caused by a burn like this.

After getting a hold of myself and making a plan, it felt like even my eyesight was clear and focused again.

Idaltaru was still crawling towards me...

[Kururu...]

I realized something that I didn't know until just a moment ago.

Idaltaru was, even while she was crawling, mumbling something endlessly on her own.

[Kururu... I'm going to make you my husband.]

'That's what you were mumbling about!'

I tightly held onto the heat stone and watched Idaltaru crawl towards me.

Before long, she came near where I was.

While feeling the heat from the heat stone on my right hand, I focused on Idaltaru's movements.

Idaltaru was crawling toward me at a constant speed. However, all of sudden, her speed decreased, and then she stopped, unable to move her arm.

It seemed she also had reached her limit.

Considering the damage she sustained from my attacks and the stamina she exhausted from running amok until now, it was a miracle that she was still alive and moving like that in the first place.

However, it seemed this was the end.

It was fortunate for me.

[Keruk. Keruk. You said you think I am strong and magnificent.]

[You didn't speak badly of me. You didn't call me a coward. You didn't say my combat style is underhanded. You didn't curse me or called me a servant of the devil. You acknowledged me.]

[I have waited a very long time. I finally met a partner. Although you are a human of short stature, you are a strong male. I most definitely will...]

[I am going to have you as my husband...]

To the very end's end, she mumbled things that was making my backbone overcome with spookiness and chill. In the end, in that crawling pose, her breathing stopped.

She was so close that she could reach my body if she extended her arm towards me.

‘That runt... Could it be that she had been shunned by her own kind?

She possessed a special ability. She had a defensive tendency that was not typical of lizardmen. Also, she had the title that contained the word, ‘stealthy.’

I somehow felt that it must have been the case for her.

It must have been the reason why she showed such a big response to my praises and was overjoyed.

I felt bitter. I felt sorry.

Of course, if she was still alive, I would have tried to kill her in any way I could.

Even if she had her circumstances, I didn't want to mate with her.

I dropped the heat stone that I had been holding in my right hand. I clapped my palm on the floor and dusted it off.

I wiggled my body to crawl a little towards her and then extended my right hand.

She still had her yellow eyes wide open and was looking at me. I closed her eyes for her.

‘I am sorry.

If I knew about this, I would not have tried to talk to you at all.

Actually, this sense of guilt was meaningless.

I knew that, but I still felt sorry.

Her way was wrong to begin with, and it was a relationship that could never be.

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty, Fifth Floor.]

[You are healed of all injuries and status effects.]

[You have received 1000 points for clearing the Floor.]

[You have received 1000 points for being the first to clear the Floor.]

[You cleared more than one floor during a round. You received 1000 points as an extra reward.]

[Many gods are pleased with your actions. You have received 4700 points.]

[Many gods are displeased with your actions. 3200 points are deducted.]

[An additional reward is given according to your performance.]

[Many gods would like to gift you with a skill instead of an additional reward.]

[Votes: 74 yes, 3 no]

[Would you like to accept?]

‘Something feels off. There was definitely a trick hidden here.

A gift from many gods was different from the power skill from a god.

Last time, the gift I got through this was the knowledge of the time before Babel.

It certainly was a useful skill, but the intent of the gods that gifted me with the skill must have been...

It is obvious that it was to test the skill.

Could it be they were just curious about about I would respond to it? Perhaps they did it just for fun of watching me use it?

I could not figure out their true intent. However, it seemed the skill was not given to me with intention of wanting to help me.

Moreover, because of the gods who were displeased with me, the deduction in my points was 3200, which was staggering.

Also, 74 gods voted yes for this skill gift.

When I received the knowledge before the time of Babel, 12 gods voted yes. Considering that, this means many gods wanted to give me this exact skill.

I didn't feel safe about this.

Still, it would be awkward to refuse the gift as well.

Refusing the gift feels like it will lead to more gods being displeased with me. Also, what if it was a good skill?

Let's just get it for now.

"Yes."

[You acquired Dead Summoning Lv.???]

I was both anxious and excited with anticipation. Both sensations

were rising up.

‘Let’s check what it is first.’

“Status Window.’

[Lee Ho-jae (human)]

Lv. 10

Strength: 24

Dexterity: 39

Vitality: 28

Mana: 28

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.11 Willpower Lv.5 Awakening Lv.1 Night Vision Lv.2 Bright Vision Lv.1 Charge Lv.2 Sneak Lv.4 Natural Regeneration Lv.2 Improved Senses Lv.7 Increased Field of Vision Lv.1 Toughened Skin Lv.3 Basic Swordsmanship Lv.7 Basic Shield Skill Lv.4 Basic Hand to Hand Skill Lv.3 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.1 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.2 Knowledge of the Time before Babel Lv.5 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.1 Pain Resistance Lv.11 Bleed Resistance Lv.5 Faint Resistance Lv.3 Pierce Resistance Lv.2 Poison resistance Lv.4 Paralysis Resistance Lv.6 Heat Resistance Lv.4 Burn Resistance Lv.7 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max, Dead Summoning Lv.???

Extra: God of Slowness has concerned look.

[Dead Summoning (Lv.???)]

Description: This is a power of a nameless god. This god refused to reveal the name to the challengers.

Using an item that contains a part of the dead’s soul as the medium, you can summon the dead for a fixed duration.

This power has a limit imposed by the god.

Number of times it can be done (5/5)

An incredible skill came up.

‘To think I can summon a dead being back to life...

This goes beyond being a skill that was similar to one from a video game. This belonged in the realm of miracles.

Was it alright to have a ridiculous skill like this show up in this place?

Also, this skill had nothing to do with the Fifth Floor.

Just what were they thinking...

Before long I realized and I looked at Idaltaru’s corpse.

Her corpse was fading and disappearing, and there was a green stone that appeared above her corpse.

[Lizardman Idaltaru’s Soul Stone]

Description: Of all lizardmen living in the Iden swamp, she is the strongest and unluckiest warrior. This is her spirit stone.

You can sell this at the store.

‘It’s not that they gifted me this skill to revive Idaltaru, right? If I revive her, she will charge at me and say she will want to make me her husband.

As long as I am in the right mind, that’s never going to happen again.’

[God of Slowness is relieved.]

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

[God of Philanthropy is resenting you.]

[God of Destruction is bored.]

[God of Duel is strongly criticizing you.]

‘...Let’s just ignore them.

As I thought, even these gods are not normal.’

I forced myself to ignore the messages and put my hand on the portal, and before long, I was teleported.

I arrived at the green plains that made my heart feel at ease as always. As soon as I got there, I could hear Kiri Kiri’s voice.

“Hmp! This time, you were so mean! Howjae!”

‘Give it a break, will you guys.’

“Hey! What else could I have done? Should I have mated with the lizard there then?”

“Hmp!”

* * *

Kiri Kiri was refusing to talk to me. To ease her anger, I needed to use a piece of cake.

I handed her a piece of cake. Although Kiri Kiri looked pissed, now she started to smile big again.

“The gods suddenly showed interest because it was a very rare event in the Tutorial.”

Kiri Kiri said as if it was obvious. She said it with cake creams around her mouth.

‘Event? You guys consider that an event?’

Putting my virginity in danger is an event for you guys?’

“Heng. You are probably the first one ever to be proposed by the gate keeper of the Fifth Floor.”

‘Sure. It probably is rare for a warm blooded to be proposed by a cold blooded.

Damn it all.’

...Anyway, I had something I was curious about.

I had been curious about this for sometime, but I was more sure about this after having fought Idaltaru and other lizardmen.

“No.”

‘You... You are reading my mind now?’

“Uum. That is something I am not supposed to let you know.”

Having said that, Kiri Kiri pressed down her large ears and then tightly closed her eyes.

‘It is not like you are not going to be able to hear things by doing that.’

“There probably are other dimensions or planets besides Earth. Both goblins and lizardmen had their own civilizations and societies. They actually exist in the real world or used to exist. Their entire regions have been brought to the Tutorial, or their worlds have been copied into Tutorial. Also, there are other Tutorials in other dimensions. That’s probably why a comment like ‘this is the first time’ or whatever came up. Attitudes that you managers and gods have clearly show that Earth is not where the very first Tutorials showed up. Also, the monsters that have appeared on Earth are also...”

Kiri Kiri wasn't moving at all. She was completely petrified.

She was like a stone statue. She was like a drawing on a painting canvas.

She was not showing any response.

It was enough to make me wonder if it was possible for a living being to stay absolutely still like that.

“...Tsk. Nevermind. I'm sorry.”

Kiri Kiri moved immediately.

“Heng. You merely told me your guesses, so it does not matter. However, you must not seriously try to gain information from me based on my responses. If you try it repeatedly, my attitude towards you will change.”

“All right. I won't anymore.”

There was an incident like this before.

I asked her what happens to the people who died in the Tutorial. Back then, she gave me the answer with the same look on her face.

That response was not because Kiri Kiri was not good at hiding her emotions or expressions.

As always, it was a bonus out of consideration for me.

Kiri Kiri had always been trying her best to give me useful information and help me.

I felt like I threw away her good will.

“I am sorry.”

‘I am sorry towards many today.’

“Still, think about it again.”

“Are you being serious?”

“I am not saying you should do as she wants. You can talk to her. If you are successful in convincing her, she might become a good ally for you.”

‘Honestly, I am not confident about convincing Idaltaru. Let alone convincing her, just calming her down would be impossible.’

“I’ll get going now. As for the items, I’ll buy them next time after collecting points.”

I wanted to change the shield into something a little better.

However, because of negative responses from the gods, I lost a lot of the points.

I could purchase a little better shield only if I collected more points by clearing the Sixth Floor.

I was about to head to the portal, but Kiri Kiri grabbed me.

“Buy some potions at least.”

“Potions? I still have plenty of them?”

“Ah... You may not have enough?”

I opened the inventory and checked the number of potions I had.

I had plenty.

So far, I have never ended up regretting buying things that Kiri Kiri recommended.

I was sure it would be the same this time.

‘She said I’ll need a lot more potions... I wonder what the theme is for the next floor.’

I was going to learn about it when I got there.

As Kiri Kiri asked, I purchased potions using all of the points I had.

“Be careful! Come back soon! No, you won’t be able to come back soon, but still, come back soon!”

Her words felt ominous somehow. Listening to her escort me on my way out of the green plains, I got onto the portal.

* * *

[Before you enter the Sixth Stage, please select the party members.]

[Your current party members (1/5)]

1. Lee Ho-jae

Chapter 49

Tutorial 6th Floor (1)

[Really? Are you serious?]

[That's right. I really don't know what to do about the Sixth Floor. Just relax and think.]

[...Really?]

* * *

[Round Three, Day 28, 03:10]

I arrived at the waiting room at the Sixth Floor. As a test, I tried putting my hand inside the portal for the Sixth Floor's Stage.

After that, I realized why Kiri Kiri said I won't be able to come back soon.

I also realized why she told me to buy more potions.

[Before you enter the Stage, select your party members.]

[Current party members (1/5)]

- Lee Ho-jae

This stage involved team play.

Usually, in a game, it took at least two people. Sometimes, it took as many as several dozens of people.

It seemed I needed up to five people.

But it wasn't like there was anyone that could team up with me at this moment.

[People that could join (1/1)]

- Lee Ho-jae

Of course, it was not possible to form the party with people from other difficulties or floors.

It had to be challengers from the Sixth Floor.

Currently, at this Sixth Floor in the Hell Difficulty, and in the Hell Difficulty itself, I was the only one in it.

'This is thoughtless. Why would anyone think five or more people can make it to the Six Floor in Hell Difficulty alive?'

As I cleared the Tutorial floors, I have heard many times that the whole thing was flawed from the design.

One thing that got brought up the most by the people was the clear condition.

Also, the theme for this floor was clearly a design flaw.

Seriously, if they were going to design something, they should have put some thoughts into it.

I did not know who designed this Tutorial. However, I figured the gods probably did.

'In hiding, they watch what other people are doing whole day. Their heads must be full of expectation of watching someone mating. These gods must be very ill mentally.

How could they... Damn it.'

[God of Adventure feels wronged.]

‘You have nothing to feel wronged.

As soon as I thought that I would never bring Idaltaru back to live, the God of Adventure sent me that message.

That one is the worst.

I think that one is watching me whole day.

Does this god have anything better to do?

If the Gods of the Tutorial have human forms like the gods from Rome, I bet this one looks like one of jobless, perverted, old middle-aged man.

I bet he has gigantic thighs the size of a wine barrel and his legs are hairy.'

[God of Adventure is shocked about your comments. God of Adventure is panicking.]

Ugh...

I sighed big.

‘Well, what can I do.

All I can say is that the situation cannot be helped.

I am the one who committed the greatest sin of selecting the Hell Difficulty when I saw the invitation message into the Tutorial.’

I have heard before that the Sixth Floor on the Normal difficulty has cooperative play.

The news caused quite a stir in the Community.

There was merit in the fact that people could challenge the floor with others.

There were challengers who were determined to get there at least.

There were others who promised with each other to meet again in the Sixth Floor instead of the day of the great harmony. This was back in the days when there were not much information about the day of the great harmony.

With the party play introduced to the Tutorial, the discussion about the weapons and each individual's direction of development became big topics of discussion again.

The introduction of party play was a huge issue. As big of an issue it was, I was well aware of it.

However, I didn't think that party play would get introduced in the Hell Difficulty.

In the Hell Difficulty, let alone anyone in the Sixth Floor, there wasn't any challengers even in the First Floor. The idea of party play in Hell Difficulty was ridiculous.

[Would you like to enter?]

Fortunately, it was possible to continue by myself.

If it was made to be impossible to continue at all without five party members, I would have had to wait here until four more challengers made it to the Sixth Floor without knowing when that would happen.

'Damn it. I guess this means I need to clear the stage by myself. I need to do five people's worth of work.'

I thought about an AOS game where doing five people's worth of work was the condition of the victory.

Doing five people's worth... It was easy to say it out loud. However...

This time, it was not about picking up the slacks for some nobodies.

I had to do five people's worth for the Sixth Floor in the Hell Difficulty.

'Is this going to be possible to do at all?'

I was the only challenger here.

'If there were many challengers here at the Sixth Floor in the Hell Difficulty, I wonder how I would rank among them?'

I am probably above average. I am certain.

I am confident about that at least.'

According to Kiri Kiri, I was able to obtain the power skill because of a special characteristic that the God of Slowness possessed. She said I would not have been able to obtain it if it was not for that.

I personally thought that the God of Adventure panicked and also gave me a power skill just because the God of Slowness gave me one.

Also, as for my combat skills, I had gotten used to battles from clearing previous floors. Regardless of my stats, I never felt I was lacking in combat skills.

My decisiveness, ability to make good judgments, creativity, focus, will to fight, adaptability, reflex, and determination...

I was definitely superior when it came to the characteristics necessary for combat.

I was confident that I would be on the top group even if they lined up six billion people, the entire population of Earth.

I had confidence in myself. This remained unchanged since my professional gamer days.

'Still, am I strong enough to handle five challengers at the Sixth Floor in Hell Difficulty?'

Hm...

Let's find out.'

[Welcome to the Sixth Floor's Stage.]

It was a stone room. It was narrow and confined.

Inside the room, there were just a small bonfire and two portals.

One led to the waiting room.

The other one led to...

[Would you like to challenge the trial?]

In the Community, I have heard of a floor that had this kind of setting.

The entire floor was probably made of just this one trial.

This stone room, which I'll refer as the bonfire room from now on for convenience, gave the time and space for the people to check each other and make plans for the trial before entering the stage.

The place was sealed off and safe. Also, because there was a magical bonfire here, this place garnered special interest in the Community on its own, aside from the fact that this place was related to the party play.

The magic bonfire never withered. There was no danger of the fire spreading either. It didn't generate smokes.

It was possible to make simple meals using this bonfire. People just needed to purchase uncooked meat or vegetables.

When the information about this spread, many challengers said they just want to get to the Sixth Floor and settle there.

Even I thought for a moment about trying making a meal here.

‘Um... Let’s try later. Later...

Besides, I’m good at making fire with the heat stone. I don’t need that bonfire.’

[Would you like to challenge the trial?]

I used the portal again and teleported.

It was a dark, narrow corridor.

It reminded me of the corridor from the First Floor.

As I went further up to the higher floors, the corridors became wider and taller.

However, the corridor at the Sixth Floor was as narrow as the First Floor.

One notable thing about the place was that there was a gigantic stone door on the opposite end.

Usually, at the opposite end of the corridor’s entrance, there were just a dead end and a portal for the waiting room. Instead, at the Sixth Floor, there was a stone door.

‘What is this?

Does it lead to the back?’

A message appeared when I touched the stone door.

[You cannot exit.]

‘Exit?

Is it supposed to be a door that leads to outside?’

While I diligently rolled my brain about it, a message appeared to resolve my curiosity.

Just like when entering a boss room, the message appeared to explain the trial.

It seemed the entire floor was made of just this one trial.

‘Let’s just read it first.’

[Sixth Floor Trial is starting now.]

Explanation: It already has been over 50 years since the cursed priests of the Bahare Sect had been pursued by the Pantheon. As you already know, The Bahare Sect is an evil organization that seeks to reap more death by reviving the dead people and turning their souls into evil spirits.

Including Khezas, their leader, there are 16 priests. They managed to lose the Pantheon’s pursuit and successfully arrive at the heart of the white mountain range.

The place is also called the land of the god, a place where a god resided in the past.

The Bahare Sect priests are trying to cover the world in nightmare using the remains of holy artifacts.

Brave warriors, stop them until the holy knights of the Pantheon arrives. You are our only hope.

[Condition of success.]

1. Stop the death army from entering the white mountain range until the holy knights arrive.

2. Destroy the death army and 16 priests.

‘Brave warriors my ass...

I guess the difficulty for this floor will depend on the number and strength of the death army.

It won't be easy.'

This was Hell Difficulty, so it was obvious.

'Now, let's get this straight.

That stone door behind me... I need to stop the death army from reaching there. I can either stop the death army or just destroy the army and the priests all together. These are the conditions of success for this trial.

Death army.

It looks like they are going to fight to the death and until I get sick of them.

Still, fortunately, the corridor is narrow.

The ceiling is low, so I have to give up aerial combat using the Talaria's Wings. Still, a narrow corridor is advantageous for fighting many enemies.

It looks like it will be hard to clear this within the time left in Round Three.

One of the conditions of success is holding out until the holy knights arrived.

The description did not specify when the holy knights are going to arrive. Still, they probably won't arrive in just a day.

I don't know. It could be two days or even a week.

Let's just go meet this death army then?'

From the stone door, I walked for about four hours. I was finally able to see what the enemies looked like.

Step, step, step...

They were just marching, but it was generating incredibly loud noise.

It was unbelievable.

‘There are several thousand, several tens of thousand skulls marching in order.

What do I do... ’

The description said the Bahare Sect revived the dead. As expected, the army was made of skeletons.

They were rotting skeletons wearing rotting armors.

Honestly, they didn’t look all that strong.

Their weapons were mostly some kind of sharp objects. However, I couldn’t see any that could really work well.

Their weapons were dull and were missing edges here and there.

The skeletons were made of just thin bones. I didn’t feel any robustness or power in their movement.

The corridor was narrow.

‘Regardless of the death army’s number, I just need to fight about six of them in front of me at once.

I don’t feel so threatened about fighting six of them at a time.

Still... there are...

I cannot see the end of them.'

I jumped to the top of the corridor to see the end of the marching army. However, even from above, I couldn't see the tail end.

'It looks like they could be over several tens of thousands.

The priests might be like necromancers. It is possible that those skeletons are being made continuously right now.

What if the land of the god's power is giving something like an unlimited magic power to them?

...I can't even fathom. That would be horrible.

If that is the case, that means I have to destroy the skeletons a lot faster than the rate which they are being generated.

I get why Kiri Kiri said I wouldn't be able to come back soon.

This difficulty was definitely beyond my abilities.

It's a matter of my endurance and speed.

It would be definitely impossible to clear it within the Round Three, which has less than two days left. I may not be able to clear it within Round Four or Five.'

I organized my thoughts and brought out the savage warrior's backsword.

'I don't think using a sword with sharp edge would mean anything. These bastards don't have flesh or muscles. They are nothing but bones.

Instead of Gladius, it would be better to use a blunt weapon like the backsword.'

[Talaria's Wings]

When the gigantic wings opened, the narrow corridor was completely blocked.

‘Fortunately, the corridor is narrow, so the skulls won’t be able to sneak past me and get to the stone door.

I’m fighting many enemies.

Judging from their numbers, it does not look like individual skeletons are very strong.

Let’s just try fighting them.’

* * *

Bam!

Using the backsword, I cross-cut a skeleton soldier in front of me.

No, I shattered the skeleton.

Along with a crushing sound, the skeleton soldier’s head was shattered.

These bastards’ weakpoint was the head.

‘Actually, maybe I shouldn’t call it their weak point?’

These bastards kept on moving when I broke other parts of their body.

When one was left with just the head, it came to bit me while clicking its teeth.

‘I need to shatter their head, one by one.’

I shattered one of the skeleton soldier’s head. I grabbed the body by the ribs and threw it to the front.

Other skeleton soldiers charged in immediately.

I swung my shield and haphazardly pushed them off. I charged toward a skeleton soldier that had a helmet with a feather attached.

Occasionally, there were ones with armors in relatively better condition.

These bastards were not foot soldiers. They were commanding officers.

[Gyaaaaaaaaa!]

‘Damn it.

I was too late.’

[Gyaaaaaaaaa!]

[Gyaaaaaaaaa!]

When the commander skeleton screamed, several thousands of skeleton soldiers also screamed in beastly roar.

Their eyes showed steady glow. The weapons on their hands showed dark energy surrounding them.

‘Damn it. I don’t have any more room to fall back.’

When I first encountered the skeleton army, it happened far away from the stone door, about four hours of walk from there.

After that, with two days of continuous battle, I ended up being pushed back all the way here.

Instead of destroying 16 priests, I couldn’t even handle the skeleton soldiers. Their numbers never seemed to end even though I smashed and smashed countless number of them all this time.

‘I’m already pushed all the way to the stone door. The skeleton soldiers now even have some kind of boosts. I can't stop them anymore.’

In the end, few skeleton soldiers got past me and reached the stone door.

[You failed clearing the trial.]

[Round Three is ending.]

Chapter 50

Tutorial 60th Floor (5)

I mumbled a song as I cleaned the incubator's glass window.

I didn't really have to clean the glass, but I wanted to observe the egg beyond the glass a little clearly.

I forgot about the content of the letter for a moment since the letter gave me a headache. Focusing on cleaning the incubator refreshed how I felt.

The incubator was larger than a king sized bed. At the center of the circular shaped incubator, there was a dragon egg.

It was the egg that I purchased through the auction.

It was going to take a little more time before it hatched. Also, there were a few more conditions that needed to be met.

Still, I had been staring at the egg whole day, wondering if the egg was going to move or not, wondering if there was anything odd.

The last owner of the egg didn't know how to make the egg hatch, so the owner placed it on the auction. However, I was different.

I also didn't know how to make it hatch.

However, I gave points to the easy difficulty challengers to inquire the managers.

'Ha!

There's nothing you cannot do if you have a lot of points.

Points are the best.'

I fully prepared all items I was going to need after the dragon hatched.

I was going to bathe the dragon in elixir as soon as it hatched.

I was going to provide it with various passive skills. I was also going to give it a blessing so it won't have health problems.

Its drinking water also had to be diluted elixir. I was going to make the food for it by crushing great earthworm with spirit's byproduct.

I even prepared a gigantic mixing machine for making the baby food.

The fairy lavas, which were to be fed to the dragon once it grew up a little, were hard to obtain because fairies were so rare.

I made a place at a corner of the residential area. I had been diligently increasing the number of the lavas there.

I even prepared a huge, lavish nest and toys for intellectual development.

There was a chance the baby dragon would not follow me as its parent. So, just in case, I even learned polymorph magic.

I was going to take care of the baby dragon while in the state of being morphed into a dragon.

I was concerned the baby dragon might feel awkward about the fact that I don't have a dragon heart. So, I made a dragon heart and installed it inside my body.

I even practiced and perfected natural movements while being morphed into a dragon.

Fortunately, I was pretty used to reptiles and other similar beings.

I never knew that the time I spent with her and the knowledge learned

from her would be used this way.

Preparations were perfect.

I just needed to wait until that baby dragon to wake up.

Hm...

Everything was going too perfectly. A sensation of pure bliss was rushing at me.

It felt like everything was going to work out just fine if I just relaxed and waited like this.

It felt like I no longer needed to agonize over things or suffer.

Of course, the world never work that smoothly, especially in this Hell Difficulty.

Still, I tried hard to be positive and be happy.

I finished cleaning the incubator. While I was resting and drinking a cup of coffee, a message alarm rang.

It had a familiar name.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: What is it?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: What else? I'm contacting you before I get going. The Round is about to start soon.]

I thought this guy was going to stay at the 30th Floor in Normal Difficulty forever.

I wondered if he was going to grow old there, but in the end, he was about to get out of the Tutorial.

'Now that I think about it, it must be quite surreal to him.

He swore that he was going to spend the rest of his life in Tutorial, but he is about to leave.'

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: It's a little hard for me to believe it, but it is not to the point of being anxious. I am going to live a quiet life outside anyway.]

'I am sure you would.

That guy isn't going to run around to kill monsters.

Instead, he probably will show up on the news.

...Along with politicians.

Korea was the top country that produced greatest Awakened warriors in the world, and he was the man who led the Korean Server since its initial establishment.

Other countries were trying to figure out the reason behind the Korean Awakeneds' strength by examining the atmosphere, rules and system inside Korean Tutorial.

Kim Min-huk also had plenty of great connections.

Many people were going to call for him.

If he stayed in Korea, he was going to be treated like a royalty. He would be offered huge sums of contract. He would also be offered all sorts of special entitlements. Moreover, he could take the world of politics by storm.

Many famous Awakeneds were slowly moving into the politics.

Kim Min-huk said he was going to live a quiet life. I doubted the world was going to let him be.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It's too bad. If there was going to be a day of the great harmony, I could at least see you before you go.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: It's fine. It's not like the day of the great harmony happens for a good reason. I would rest easier with it not happening.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Really? I thought they were not so bad after the first one?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: That's because you didn't do any work, you rascal. While you were sitting around doing nothing, we solved things by working our butts off.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That's not true. I worked too.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Sitting on a corner, you had been inflicting injuries on your body to increase passive skills. You are not referring to that as work, are you? Well... Back then, you were helpful even when you just stood there yawning with your hands to the back.]

‘...I cannot beat him on this topic no matter how long we continue.

I should move on to the next topic.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Still, it is too bad. I heard another day of great harmony is going to happen soon.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Really? When?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You don't know?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Of course I don't, you rascal. It's been a while since I quit the Order of Vigilance.]

[TL: The Militia in past chapters is now called the Order of Vigilance.]

‘That makes sense. He is like a soldier on the last days before the retirement. I guess it is possible that information related to work would not get delivered to him.’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Does Jung-ah know?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Probably.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: In that case, it probably won't happen, as usual.]

The day of the great harmony, unlike its peaceful name, happened only when there was a serious problem in the Tutorial.

So, the information about the day of the great harmony happening soon served as an alarm that something problematic was happening inside Tutorial.

As soon as the information about the day of the great harmony happening was spread, the Order of Vigilance made the move, and the problem was solved.

When the problem was solved, the day of the great harmony did not happen.

It was unfortunate.

It was not like they could just let the problem be so the day of the great harmony could happen.

Actually, many people wanted the Order to just let the problem be so the day of the great harmony could happen.

They were mostly the people who wanted to meet families or friends who got scattered inside the Tutorial.

However, the Order of Vigilance, Park Jung-ah to be precise, did not listen.

‘Another day of the great harmony probably won't come until the day Park Jung-Ah clear the Tutorial and leave.’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Hey, since the topic came up, I got to ask. Are you guys still the same as always?]

‘The same as always?’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That’s right.]

‘Of course it is.’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I thought there was plenty of time to think about things. Isn’t it about time you guys joined up again?]

‘Um...

This is not something that an answer would just come up because I had the time to think.

Besides...

Even if we made up, what is going to change?

Nothing.

As long as I’m stuck here...

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Once I leave Tutorial, who else is left that can talk to her with ease? It is hard now as it is, so why don’t you help out?]

[Lee Hojae, 60th Floor: What are you babbling about? Are you the matchmaker? Moreover, are you in position to do that?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: You rascal... I’m trying to help, yet you can’t just sit quietly and accept it. Tsk. Still, think about it again. It looks like Jung-ah is interested.]

‘Jung-ah is?’

Something is off.

I bet this rascal said the same thing to Jung-ah before he contacted me.

I bet he did only with a different name.

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: That's not it, you rascal.]

I sent a message to Park Jung-ah to satisfy my curiosity.

I couldn't stand it if I had something I was curious about.

There was no message back from her.

Instead, Kim Min-huk responded.

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Hey! You poked at it right away? Jung-ah sent me shit load of insults.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Ki ki ki ki ki...]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: What's so funny? You thoughtless rascal. Is it past the time for your medicine?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: My resistance skills are so high that I can't take things like medicines. Ki ki ki.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I really need to do something about this rascal...]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'll try talking to Jung-ah later. By any chance, if the day of the great harmony does not get canceled, I'll talk to her face to face.]

'It means I am not going to talk to her.'

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: If the day of the great harmony really happens, I guess you can see that newbie too. Many have high hopes for her. Just who is she? She is breaking through the Hell Difficulty.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: There were a few that made that far. She is still only at the Sixth Floor. Don't get her all worked up with false sense of confidence.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I won't of course. Still, she knows how to handle it. Unlike others...]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yeah. Although she is not as good as me.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: You were just a special case. She got to the Sixth Floor in ten rounds. That's quite fast. How long did it take you to get to the Sixth Floor?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Was it around Round Three?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: You are a fiend. Seriously. Although it would be hard to compare to you, this newbie has plenty of talent. Don't be so anxious.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I know, but I don't know how long it will take from the Sixth Floor. Also, of all things, she is an archer.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Do you think she can get through?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Probably. If it looks like she will never be able to get through the floor, I'm thinking about giving her items so she can.]

'Honestly, if I sensed that Lee Youn-hye didn't stand a good chance since the First Floor, I would have helped her move up by showering her with items.

Even if someone is terrible at this, getting to the Tenth Floor is possible with items.

With some incredible luck, getting to even the 30th Floor is possible with items.

Just like how they do it in some of other countries.'

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: So, well... I'm sure you are on top of things on that.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Ah, I was going to ask you about this. I totally forgot.]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: How strong are you?]

‘What?’

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: When I leave the Tutorial, there will be many that will ask me about you. Whenever they do, I need to give a rough answer at least. So, how strong are you now?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I am not sure. What should I use as the frame of reference to compare my strength?]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: How about G-rank monsters? Although none of us have seen it in real life.]

In the outside world, the monsters were rated based on their strength and threat level. Initially, the ranks were made of A to F. One day, suddenly, the S rank was also introduced. After a while, even G-rank was added.

I wondered what they would call it if a new monster beyond the G-rank monsters showed up.

Anyway, the G-rank monsters were beyond just being a dangerous organism. They were national level threats.

I heard that there were just four of them on Earth.

Also, all four of them, after claiming their territories, stayed inside the area and never left. So, the humans choose to give up the areas instead of trying to reclaim them.

However, a G-rank monster named Oclrera claimed its territory near Manhattan, New York.

U.S. could not give up that area. They brought in Earth’s greatest Awakened warriors and poured in all of their air power to destroy Oclrera.

In that battle, about half of S and A-rank Awakened warriors, the greatest warriors in existence on Earth, were killed.

I didn't know exactly what kind of power that Oclrera had.

As Kim Min-huk said, we never saw it in person. We only heard about G-rank monsters from newbies who ended up in Tutorial.

'If I analyze it based on what the newbies said and the information on the normal news...

No, there is no need '

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm probably super strong even if you compared to those bastards. Well...]

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: Thank you for the thoughtless answer that I think I've heard before.]

As we talked like that, we started to talk about old days.

From how we met, during the times of hardship, when things were going well...

The memories of them were like short stories.

It was because I was always alone in Hell Difficulty.

I got to meet Kim Min-huk in person only for a few times besides the day of the great harmony.

Besides that, all I remembered was communicating with him through the Community.

Still, that was not all there was to my friendship with Kim Min-huk.

He was one of my very few friends. He was my family.

'Not being able to meet him in person is going to be the same even

when he leaves the Tutorial.'

To split the hair here, it was just the conversation through the Community that I was going to lose.

However, losing that felt like a good bye.

[Kim Min-huk, 99th Floor: I'll be going first. I'll see you outside.]

'...It's as it should be.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: All right. Say hello to others who are outside.]

'That's right. I should also get out. I should.

It is obvious.'

I wonder what was troubling me back then.

Among the papers in disarray laying on the table, I found the letter I was going to send to Lee Youn-hye.

The letter was tightly packed with written words. The very last row was empty.

In that only remaining space, I filled it with a sentence.

Please tell Kiri Kiri about Zara.

Chapter 51

Tutorial 6th Floor (2)

[Round Four, Day 2, 07:10]

Two days passed since Round Four started.

I wanted to challenge the Sixth Floor again as soon as the round started.

Actually, I wanted to try it again as soon as I was forcibly teleported to the waiting room after failing the floor.

I knew I only stood very little chance of clearing the floor. However, I still wanted to challenge it again.

This was my first defeat.

I struggled and then some since the First Floor. I overcame many dangers that almost cost my life. Despite all that, I had never felt a sense of defeat like this.

I was always growing stronger.

By repeating the challenge several times, I quickly overcame the difficulty of the trials.

However, it was a little different this time.

I felt doubt. I wondered if I could actually do it. I felt like the wall in front of me.

When I decided to quit my professional gamer career, I did it after suffering a huge defeat from a nameless newbie player. It was the same hopelessness like I felt before.

My response time was getting slower. I had deep injuries on my back, shoulder and wrists. I suffered from pain in those locations. My eyes got tired easily, my brain was not able to think of creative ideas quickly as I used to either.

I longed for my abilities from my prime. However, I became certain that I was never going to be able to get my abilities back. When I was certain of it, that was when I decided to retire.

From that perspective, the Tutorial was a blessing.

As soon as I entered the First Floor's waiting room, my bent back, arthritis-ridden wrist, and dull response speed were all recovered back to how I was in my prime.

I was literally becoming a super human now. I was overwhelmingly superior to what I was in my prime.

'If I could leave Tutorial right now and go back to the real world to return to professional gaming, I'm certain I can beat anyone and achieve flawless victory every time.

Of course, there is no way I'll be able to leave this place right this instant.'

Inside the Tutorial's Sixth Floor, I felt the sense of hopelessness that I felt back then.

One thing was different. Inside the Tutorial, I had plenty of chances to grow.

There was also the fact that aging stopped.

'I can overcome even the hopelessness I'm feeling right now.'

Having thought that, I felt an itch in my heart.

'I want to go smash those skeleton soldiers' heads right now.

I think I can do better now.'

Like that, eager to rush out there and fight again, I had to wait for three days at the waiting room.

A lot had happened while I waited like that.

More newbies entered the Tutorial.

Numerous challengers inside the Tutorial were thirsty for information about what was happening in the outside world. To them, the news about the reality outside was like a sweet rain after a draught.

The situation in Korea was actually better than I thought.

Chuung-chung area was destroyed. However, all other areas were safe.

The human forces set up perimeters to the north and south of the Chuung-chung area to guard against the monsters from spreading to the rest of the country.

The newbies said the situation in Korea was on the pretty good side.

Actually, it was not like the people in Korea were happy about what was happening.

However, the people could say that the situation in Korea, where several thousands of people were dying from the attack, was better than other countries because the situation in other countries were significantly worse.

Besides what was happening in the outside world, there were many things that happened inside the Tutorial.

As soon as the Round Four started, Park Jung-ah started a war against all members of the Representative Federation.

Her reason was that the Federation showed signs that they were going to make moves again.

Regardless of what she claimed as the reason for the war, I wondered if it was even possible for those members of the Federation, who suffered so horribly during the day of the great harmony, to even fathom scheming anything.

Moreover, she declared the war when many of the members of the Federation were scattered around the First Floor's waiting room.

The Federation's forces were at a disadvantage in every possible way.

However, Park Jung-ah concluded that the Representative Federation was showing signs of rebellion.

Like that, she started a war.

After that, the war ended as soon as it begun.

Only thing left to do in the aftermath was the purge.

From what was announced, eight additional members of the Federation were executed.

They were all of the members of the Federation who chose to remain in the First Floor.

Of them all, the story was that Park Jung-Ah personally blew up the head of one with the handgun.

There was a heated debate inside the Order of the Vigilance about if they should keep Park Jung-ah in charge or not.

Honestly, I was not sure.

She could become a murderous devil who was only interested in taking cruel revenge against the people she resented.

She could also become a judge who insists severe punishment to the evil doers.

She could be both. She could be neither.

This matter was already out of my hands. So, I decided not to trouble my mind with this matter anymore as long as she does not seriously cross the line.

‘If the problem with the Order of Vigilance becomes serious, then another day of great harmony will happen. Thinking about all the information gathered so far by the rankers, I am certain about this.’

The question was if the problem about Park Jung-ah required an immediate response. I decided to use the occurrence of the day of the great harmony as the basis for answering this question.

If the day of the great harmony happened because of her, then I was going to do the same thing I have done before.

I was going to do it even if she was a victim in the past and I could understand why she did.

For a few days, I agonized about it like that.

While I was at it, Kim Min-huk was also pretty busy.

He made Tutorial guide and posted it on the Community for the newbies.

Also, using the auction site, he created gifting and trading system.

The items on the auction that had 7 or 77 points as the price meant they were for a specific person, so others were advised not to bid on them.

It was a simple rule, but it was a great rule.

With this simple rule, physical trade among the people became active through the Community.

Until now, the auction site was used by the rankers to get rid of items

they didn't need anymore.

Needless to say, but there were not much trading activities back then.

The challengers had not gathered enough points back then, so the auction prices were lower than the prices on the stores.

Through blood and death, Park Jung-ah petrified the atmosphere inside the Tutorial to install fear among the people from committing crimes.

Meanwhile, Kim Min-huk was creating an environment for people to communicate more easily.

He told me that he wanted to create a society inside the Tutorial.

Tutorial was a strange place, and it was definitely not an ideal place for creating a society. However, he said he wanted to make this place habitable for people.

Kim Min-huk was pessimistic about clearing the 100th Floor.

Instead of thinking about reaching the floor in the distant future where only few would ever get to, he said that focusing on creating an environment for people to reside in the lower floors was more important.

He was right.

I was not in complete agreement with his idea, but number of people who fell behind was going to continue to grow.

There were plenty of such people in First and Second Floors in all difficulties.

For the sake of many weak people, perhaps Kim Min-huk's way was the best way. That's what I thought.

Also, a stable environment created from his efforts could be useful in

clearing the Tutorial.

It was not like I was just playing around in the past few days.

I had things for me to do.

They were about the newbies who entered the Hell Difficulty at the Round Four.

They were two men named Lee Gyoung-whan and Kim Jong-in.

I asked what they were thinking when they choose Hell Difficulty. One said he was drunk. The other said he thought he was seeing things so he waved his hand in the air to check and accidentally pressed it.

They really had rotten lucks. They fell to the Hell Difficulty from moments of carelessness. I really felt for them.

Now that I think about it, the comrades I met during the Round One were really unique.

They all chose Hell Difficulty willingly.

Although I was the only one who survived.

For these unfortunate newbies, I explained about the Hell Difficulty while being as polite as possible.

During the Round Two, I simply told the newbies about the trap's patterns and didn't explain anything else. This time, I did a lot more. I explained how to dodge the traps and made something similar to a development guide.

Even with all those, I was not certain if the new challengers would survive. So, I asked them to try out the first trap and contact me after returning to the waiting room.

After that...

[Kim Jong-in, First Floor: Big Bro, I can't do it. How am I supposed to get past this? From the first arrow to the very last one, I couldn't hear any of them. I was not even aware that arrows were coming at me. I was just walking, twisted my ankle, and fell on the spot. I barely managed to live because of that. How am I supposed to dodge and block these by looking at them?]

One of them died, and the other lost the mental strength to continue.

Unfortunately, it went as I thought.

Despite the hard work I put in during past three days, no, actually four days, they didn't lead to any good results.

'How could I save the unfortunate people who fell to the Hell Difficulty...

Ugh... '

[Lee Ho-jae, Sixth Floor: Just wait at the waiting room. When the waiting period ends, wait in front of the portal. During the next round, I'll send you food through the auction site. Try to hold out with meat jerkies until then.]

I had no choice but to make him give up on challenging the floor.

'Is this the right answer?'

Humans were feeble minded creatures.

I was asking him to hold out for 30 days in front of the portal while eating just meat jerkies and water.

After that, he had to stay at the waiting room for three to four days. After that, he had to repeat the process in front of the portal for another 30 days.

‘He might have to do this for the rest of his life.

Could he hold out without losing his mind?

He cannot.

Actually, there are others in Easy and Normal Difficulties who are holding out like that. They are mentally suffering a lot.

Kim Min-huk is trying to support these people and move them up to the higher floors. At the same time, he is trying to create a society for these people who are stuck.

On the other hand, in the Hell Difficulty... I am not sure.

I don’t know.’

I realized that there was nothing else I could do for the newbies.

In the end, I started to walk my own path again.

* * *

I baked a bread on the magic bonfire that was making cracking sound as the fire burned. I decided to organize my thoughts as I ate the bread.

During the past few days, I thought hard about what to do with Park Jung-ah and the Order of Vigilance. I also worked hard to help newbies. While I was doing all that, I never stopped thinking about the Sixth Floor either.

‘Just how am I supposed to clear this one?’

[Goblin Graktus’ Birth Stone]

Description: Instructor Graktus is the meanest of all red eyed goblins. When he was born, the tribe’s Sharman gifted this Birth Stone.

[Goblin Goros' Birth Stone]

Description: Instructor Goros is the most intolerant of all red eyed goblins. When he was born, the tribe's Sharman gifted this Birth Stone.

[Lizardman Idaltaru's Spirit Stone]

Description: Of all lizardmen living in the Iden swamp, she is the strongest and most unlucky warrior. This is her spirit stone.

[Dead Summon (Lv.???)]

Description: This is a power of a nameless god. This god refused to reveal the name to the challengers.

Using an item that contains a part of the dead's soul as the medium, you can summon the dead for a fixed duration.

This power has a limit imposed by the god.

Number of times it can be done (5/5)

If I used the dead summoning, I could have three comrades.

I was not certain if they would be my comrades, but I thought it might be possible if I used the knowledge before the time of babel and convinced them.

‘What if they joined me as comrades?’

Myself, Graktus, and Goros, and Idaltaru...

I could make three teams like that. We could take turns and stop the skull soldiers.

We could preserve our endurance that way. Also, a member in standby could jump in to help when the active team is in danger.

When the skeleton commander shows up, the team in standby could go and assassinate the commander and run back.

If it was just myself, I was not going to be able to stop the skeleton soldiers running toward the stone door while I tried to pick off the skeleton commander.

Otherwise, we could form a scrum and try to break through the skeleton soldiers.

The Sixth Floor's corridor was narrow, so it was wide enough for only four to five large adults to stand in a row. So, forming a scrum and trying to break through was a potentially viable strategy.

It was obvious that the dead summoning skill could be very useful in clearing the Sixth Floor.

I could believe it if the gods claimed they gifted me with this skill to help me clear the Sixth Floor.

However, it bothered me to know that the description also said there is a time limit on the summoned beings.

I factored in the idea that the summoned beings will disappear after a fixed duration passed.

The dead summoning skill was limited to just five tries.

Also, there was going to be more floors from now that require party play like now.

In that case, even if I used the dead summoning to break through this floor, one day, I was going to run into another wall.

The situation was that I didn't have any challenger who could cooperate with me. Getting past the Sixth Floor by bringing in temporary mercenaries was not the answer.

I thought about the long term. The right answer was developing myself so I could handle five people's worth of fighting.

The conclusion that I arrived after agonizing about this over and over was simple.

‘I need to go back to the beginning.

For now, let’s just make sure I don’t die.

With near-death as the boundary line, I need to fight on hard and then some more.

I must not give up. I need to keep on colliding against them and grow from it.’

Because of how the Tutorial’s system worked, my level was bound to go up continuously from repeating the challenges, and my skills were also going to grow further.

I could even obtain new skills.

In the outside world, putting oneself through hardships and working hard only lead to wounds and injuries to the body. However, it was different inside the Tutorial.

As long as the waiting rooms existed, exhaustion and pain do not accumulate inside the body.

I just needed to focus on developments.

For now, I should postpone clearing the floor.

I shouldn’t be impatient.

If I use a trick to clear the floor while postponing the development, I will just get stuck on the next floor.

It would be better to not even consider that as an option.

Continuing to put in efforts and developing further is the shortest path for clearing the Tutorial.

Instead of foolish thoughts, I just need to focus on developing myself.

If I fail at clearing the trial, I'll just get sent back to the waiting room.

I just need to challenge again if that happens.

I just need to make sure I don't die.

Until I become strong enough...

Until I can handle the hordes of skeleton soldiers...

Instead of being satisfied with not being pushed back, I need to become stronger until I can push them back and march forward myself. Until then...

The conditions for the growth were perfect inside the Tutorial. Along with increase in my masteries, my level and skills increased. The waiting room provided complete recovery.

‘As long as my determination remains solid, I can overcome anything no matter how tall the wall is. Someday...’

This was the conclusion I reached.

Long story short, I meant that I was going to work my ass off until it worked out.

It was as expected of the Hell Difficulty.

It was not going to let me become complacent.

This Tutorial world was similar to RPG games.

Also, one of the main thing in RPG games was level grinding.

Nothing was impossible with level grinding.

‘Starting with today, I’m just going to shut up and hunt. I’ll show them the resolve of a Korean gamer.’

As the first goal, I chose level 20.

* * *

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

[Round Four is ending.]

Chapter 52

Tutorial 6th Floor (Sidestory)

[Lee Ho-jae, Third Floor:... I wonder why there is no response. Hey you bastards. You are all going to die at this rate, don't you get it?]

'I bet they died like that.

Why won't they listen?

Honestly, I knew those guys were going to die.'

I brought out a chocolate bar from the inventory. I held it in my mouth and read the Community.

This posting was from eight years ago.

'I feel like an archeologist who is excavating ancient ruins.'

I started reading the Community just to pass the time.

The life in the waiting room at Hell Difficulty was too boring because I was always alone.

I felt I would rather be out in the stage. I wished the waiting would come to end sooner.

I learned I should work on passive skills or other skills. However, honestly, I didn't want to do it.

Moreover, skill levels simply refused to rise.

It rose even slower in the waiting room.

Honestly, I didn't want to work on passive skills grinding even if they increased faster than other skills.

I would have done it reluctantly if I was supposed to do it no matter what.

However, now that I gave up on increasing skill levels, I suddenly had nothing to do.

I realized why mister didn't force me to do skill grinding.

He probably knew that there was nothing to do in the waiting room besides skill grinding.

I read all postings and comments on the Community.

I had read all new posts as they came up, so there was nothing left to do.

In the end, unable to beat the boredom, I looked for old posts.

I managed to get a rough idea about the history of the Korean server just from checking out old posts in the Community board.

Before I entered the Tutorial, I watched a documentary about it, so I had a rough idea about what the Tutorial was about. However, reading the past conversations by the actual past participants of the Tutorial was fun in a different way.

Like that, I found texts from the past and slowly worked my way back. Before long, I was able to find writings from the days when the Tutorial was first created.

As I thought, mister was active since the start of the Tutorial.

At first, people treated him as a liar. However, he soon became the strongest among the rankers, the people who represented the Tutorial.

Mister's work continued even after that. Just reading about it was

incredibly interesting.

Actually, I knew about him even before I entered the Tutorial.

It was not surprising because he was very famous.

He was the challenger at the highest floor in the Hell Difficulty. He was the only survivor in the Hell Difficulty in Korea.

As soon as his existence was made known, the media never stopped yapping about him.

The media found his childhood friends and interviewed them. The media also analyzed his school records.

The media pasted his professional gamer experiences on the front and again yapped away that the knowledge on the games he played might help clearing the Hell Difficulty.

As an actual challenger of the Hell Difficulty, I could say that they were not helping at all.

Documentary about him poured out in bucket loads. Also, there were all sorts of petty gossips about his personal life from the past.

However, I actually got to know about him before all those.

One time, my little sibling was watching television. I glanced at it, and I noticed a handsome face.

I asked who that was. My big brother said he was a professional gamer.

Back then, I thought he was pretty good looking for a professional gamer. I wondered why he was doing professional gaming instead of being an actor. I glanced over the face as I thought those.

He was a man I noticed a few times on the television like that. Now, that man was like my Daddy Long Legs. It felt strange just thinking

about it.

He really was like Daddy Long Legs.

When I entered the Hell Difficulty by a mistake and was confused and scared, he gave me hope and faith.

The hope I had back then turned mostly into pain and screams now.

However, I was still carrying the hope for survival.

He became my support. He became my sponsor.

Without him, let alone getting all the way to this floor, I would have had difficulty just surviving in the First Floor.

My life in the Tutorial was harsh and painful. I was suffering a lot. Like in here continued like that. However, I was able to endure my life in here thanks to him.

I suddenly thought perhaps I want to be a similar existence to him.

He was my Daddy Long Leg. In that case, perhaps I was a prince riding on a white horse?

A prince who is going on a thousand mile journey through hardship and danger to save a princess trapped in a witch's castle...

I thought that I switched the positions somehow.

Still, that made me laugh in some way...

My eyes narrowed from smiling. A smile formed on my lips as well.

Nobody was watching, but I was embarrassed.

‘What am I thinking?

Well, actually...

Why not?

“Puhup. I think I must have gone insane. Aaaaaak.”

I screamed by myself and rolled around on the bed.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Are you all ready?]

I felt so light. I was flying. However, a heavy weight came crashing down on me.

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Yes. What is it?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Big Bro told me to check up on you. He went up to the 61st Floor.]

‘Now she called him Big Bro. Huh!

How ridiculous.’

I looked all of the chats and posts in the Community from the start of the very first round but I have never saw any record of her ever calling him by that.

Not even once.

Usually, they called each other as commander, captain, or etc. Later, they addressed each other casually.

Sometimes, they went beyond and even cursed at each other.

‘So why is she doing that now?’

I could sense the weariness clearly.

At first, I wondered why she was so rude to me. I wondered if she was

always like that to everyone.

However, I knew the reason very well.

Besides this, there was one other thing that felt off.

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Why did he go to the 61st Floor?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: He went there to earn points. He used quite a bit this time, so...]

‘It looks like he is not looking for a way to clear the floor. I guess I don’t need to talk to her for long then.

I just don’t like every word coming from her.’

I haphazardly responded to her and ended the conversation.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Did you memorize what you need to tell the manager?]

‘Hey, seriously... ’

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Yes.]

‘I don’t want to talk to you any longer.

Now you are treating me like a kid.

What. Are you trying to tell me that a kid should not butt in? Is it something like that?’

[Round 95 is starting.]

[Lee Yeon-hye, Sixth Floor: Well then, I’ll be heading to the stage now.]

I gave a simple good bye and then stepped on to the portal.

Another message came from her. However, I ignored it and turned off the messenger.

It was the time for me to get rid of unnecessary thoughts and focus on clearing the stage.

[Welcome to the Sixth Floor's stage.]

As soon as I entered the bonfire room, I opened the inventory and checked the items to use.

After that, I checked my skill list.

As the last thing, I verified the information about the stage and the strategy for clearing it.

Mister never told me every fine details about each trials. He didn't this time as well.

Other than the information about growth, skill utilization and development, he was very stingy about information on the trials.

He only told me about the kind that would definitely get me killed if I walked past it without knowing about it.

For the First and the Second Floors, he told me everything in fine detail, all patterns and strategies. However, he said it was time for me to learn to gather information myself and utilize them on my own.

He was right.

Honestly, I wish he just told me everything. Still...

The core of the Sixth Stage's trial was the 16 priests.

They pumped out skeleton soldiers as if they were making canned foods from a factory.

All skeleton soldiers appearing on the stage were going to be

generated by the priests. I had to do something before they make too many of the skeleton soldiers for me to handle.

The description said I could just hold out until the holy knights came. However, that was a trap.

If I just held out and waited, I could never be able to handle the ever growing number of skeleton soldiers, which was growing like crazy.

I ran a simulation of my plan in my brain.

‘All right. Let’s try it.’

[Would you like to challenge the trial?]

Through the portal next to the bonfire, I teleported to the Stage.

[The Sixth Floor’s trial is starting.]

Explanation: It already has been over 50 years since the cursed priests of the Bahare Sect had been pursued by the Pantheon. As you already know, The Bahare Sect is an evil organization that seeks to reap more death by reviving the dead people and turning their souls into evil spirits.

Including Khezas, their leader, there are 16 priests. They managed to lose the Pantheon’s pursuit and successfully arrive at the heart of the white mountain range.

The place is also called the land of the god, a place where a god resided in the past.

The Bahare Sect priests are trying to cover the world in nightmare using the remains of holy artifacts.

Brave warriors, stop them until the holy knights of the Pantheon arrives. You are our only hope.

[Condition of success.]

1. Stop the death army from entering the white mountain range until the holy knights arrive.

2. Destroy the death army and 16 priests.

I had seen the message many times already. I just turned it off and opened the inventory.

The most critical thing in this battle was the speed.

I brought out high level magic stone and concentrated mana potion.

I put some of the concentrated mana potion on my hand and drew a magic circle with my hand on the floor.

I placed the magic stone on the center of the magic circle and recited the activation word.

“Panto.”

As soon as those words left my mouth, I directed my gaze away from the magic circle that was generating steady light. I charged forward.

Before long, the acceleration from the wind spirit’s blessing was activated.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

‘I guess this place will do.’

While I was running, I opened the inventory and brought out an alarm trap. I tossed it to the ground.

I really started to accelerate.

“Sylphleah.”

This spirit magic had the low altitude flight ability. A shouted out the activation word, and my body floated up in the air.

I still had far to go.

Instead of losing the stamina from running, it was going to be more comfortable to use a bit of mana to get there.

Thanks to the magic's effects, I was going to be able to maintain current speed. Also, the corridor was going to be a straight path for a while, so I had no need to worry about colliding with anything.

Even while I was carrying myself through the flight magic, occasionally, I brought out magic traps from the inventory and tossed them on the corridor.

Like that, I flew through the corridor for a while, and the straight path came to an end.

There were two pathways, left and right.

I canceled the flight magic. This time, I used the detection magic.

‘Good, the skeleton soldiers are not nearby yet.’

I drew a magic circle in middle of the fork.

It was an explosive magic circle.

It was like an explosive mine.

‘Ordinary skeleton soldiers on the front probably won’t notice this explosive magic circle. They will just step on it and activate it.’

Considering the huge number of skeleton soldiers, this was not going to do much damage to the overall force. However, I was going to be able to tell their location based on the explosion sound.

I completed the magic circle and entered the left pathway.

There were going to be 13 more forks ahead. I learned the pathways prior to this.

Left, left, left, right, left, right, left, left, left, right, left, right, right, right.

I went through a lot just to figure that out.

I walked quietly.

From the distance, I could hear the steps of the skeleton soldiers.

To confirm it again, I used the detection skill. As I thought, I could detect many skeleton soldiers.

“Amataru Deta Spilkeon.”

I recited the spell, and the wind curtain spirit appeared.

It was a useful spirit that possessed both flight and invisibility abilities.

It looked like a curtain flapping in the air.

It was said that the spirit had the head somewhere in the body. However, no matter how I looked at it, I could not see anything that resembled a head.

“Let’s stick to the ceiling and move.”

The wind spirit wrapped my body and rose up to the ceiling.

The corridor’s ceiling was very low. If I was to avoid colliding with the skeleton soldiers, I had to stick close to the ceiling and fly through.

I didn’t have to worry about being found out.

Considering the wind curtain spirit’s invisibility effect and my stealth skill’s level, there was no way I was going to be detected by the skeleton soldiers.

“The skeleton commanders probably will look up the ceiling once in a while, but that would be it.

The seven death knights are the only ones that might be able to detect me. Also, as long as I follow the path I have, I won't run into the death knights.”

* * *

Like that, sticking close to the ceiling, I flew for a while. I was able to reach a gigantic cave.

In the cave, there were the 16 priests. They were making skeleton soldiers by several dozens at a time.

I hid behind a pillar and unsummoned the wind curtain spirit.

It would have been bad if it got hit blind by a magic and destroyed.

‘I don't have very long for attacking those priests. They will stop the summoning and attack me as soon as they notice me. Even if I manage to stop their attacks, the death knights will be summoned to this place immediately afterwards. I cannot handle them all at once.’

I had the edge on the pre-emptive strike. With that in mind, I had about six seconds. That was all.

‘I shouldn't attack Khezas, their leader. That one turns into a bizarre looking squid when attacked. The magic attacks it shoots out in that form is incredibly deadly. Also, the production rate of the skeleton soldiers will increase significantly.

I need to keep it from using its power. Since the enemies' boss is saving its strength at the moment, I should be courteous and let it be.’

I quietly picked up the bow I had on my back. I placed an arrow on it and drew the string.

“Light.”

The arrow was launched as I said the activation word. The arrow struck right on a priest's neck and exploded immediately.

For now, one of them died at an instant.

The explosion caused a powerful flash of light.

'I am not sure about skeleton soldiers that do not have eyes. However, the priests appear to be human. They probably have no choice but to close their eyes for a moment.'

It would have been nice if they got blinded temporarily. However, these guys were not that shabby.

While the priests were stunned from the flash, I shot another arrow and killed another priest.

[Kuuuuuuuuuu! Come! Knights of death!]

'They are summoning the death knights sooner than I expected.'

I dodged the fire magic attack that was coming at me while I placed another arrow on the bow.

[Maiden who are blessed by the spirits! Maiden who had been swindled by the false gods! You shall experience death!]

I shot the arrow as I activated the battle focus skill.

The world was slowing down. I calmly organized the situation.

The arrow was shot toward the third priest. Judging from the path, it was going to hit right on.

I killed total of three priests.

It was not bad.

As for my side...

I saw two fire magic attacks coming at me.

There was a death knight that came close to where I was.

The priests were reciting curse spells.

Considering their experience, I figured their spells were almost complete.

‘This is the limit.’

“Phanto Raka!”

Immediately after I yelled out the activation words, I was standing at the entrance of the Sixth Floor’s Stage. To be precise, I was standing on top of the magic circle I drew there.

This time, I had some results.

I killed three priests. The ten other priests were all busy with casting attack and curse spells so they stopped the summoning magic.

It was going to take quite some time before they could restart the summoning magic for the skeleton soldiers.

“Huuuuuuuuuu.”

I sounded like wind was coming out of me. I plummeted to the ground.

I used too many magic spells in a too short of a time frame.

Not to mention they were all pretty high level magic spells.

I was at my limits on mana, mental strength, and stamina. I was barely holding on.

There was only one course of action, to use potions to replenish my mana and stamina.

I brought out mana potion as I listened to the explosion sound of the explosive trap echoing from a far distance.

Chapter 53

Tutorial 6th Floor (3)

[Round Five, Day 8, 09:30]

[Welcome to the Sixth Floor's Stage.]

[The Sixth Floor's trial is starting.]

I had no need for preparations or making plans.

As soon as I woke up I stretched and checked the Community then went straight to the Stage.

With light steps, I stretched some more as I walked.

I had to walk like this for two more hours before running into the skeleton soldiers.

‘Um... I’m throwing away a lot of time here. Should I work on passive skills?

No, I won’t exactly have much time to recover before the battle.

It’s not like I can keep on using potions.

Um...

Should I get there while exercising a little?

I could do a burpee exercise each time I take three steps. I can exercise like that until I am about 30 minutes away from the skeleton soldiers.

I can calm my breathing for the battle and rest then.

That does not sound like a bad idea.

Let's do it.'

Having repeated the burpee exercise for several tens of minutes, my breathing became fast and my leg muscles were getting stiff.

"Wow..."

All of my physical abilities, including raw muscle strength and endurance, far exceeded that of humans.

Still, a simple exercise like this was having such an impact on me. I never thought it was possible.

'Looks like I had been slacking off on basic exercises too much.

The growth on passive skills are slowing down to a crawl nowadays. I think it will be more effective to do this kind of physical exercises in my spare time from now on.'

I took a moment to catch my breath and calm down. While I was at it, the sounds of skeleton soldiers' steps were starting to be heard.

'Now, let's start again today.'

[Level Up.]

[Strength went up by 1. Stamina went up by 3. Mana went up by 1. Defensive Skill went up by 1. Hand-to-Hand Combat Skill went up by 1.]

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

* * *

One time, the number one gamer of a popular RPG game was asked a

question. The question was,

“You must be hunting whole day. Are you not bored of it?”

The response was,

“Are you not bored of living?

Life is repetition of daily routines, and I get to repeat what I like to do every day.

I don't get bored of it.”

It was a great answer.

It was lacking a little in the logic department, but it was very convincing for a gamer. It was enough for gamers to agree immediately.

It was the story that the coach for a professional game team told to the players who complained that they were sick of the game.

I did not know if someone actually said something like that. I did not know if he meant it either.

I was also not interested enough to know.

Actually, I became a professional gamer because I liked winning. It was not because I liked playing video games.

If it was just the game that I liked, I would have been satisfied with being an ordinary gamer.

By being an ordinary gamer, I could play all sorts of games as I want whenever I wanted. That was way better than being a professional gamer.

Because my goal in professional gaming was not about enjoying the game itself, I was not particularly bothered by repetitions in gaming.

‘However, I do want to go run to that top RPG player and ask.

I want to ask if he doesn’t get sick of it.

I want to ask what I could do to not get sick of it.

I want to beg him to tell me.

I am getting sick of this.

Smashing skeleton soldiers’ skulls...

Enduring noise pollution from their giiiaaaaak yelling...

Repeating same motions with sword and shield over and over...

Feeling pain from being cut by rusty blades here and there on my body...

Damn it all. Even if I am getting sick of them all...

I have to do this. It is my work.’

I thought that and repeatedly reminded myself.

‘It probably will come to an end soon.’

There was one thing great about all this.

I became completely used to the sword swing motion.

I had been swinging it in a similar motion through a similar trajectory through countless familiar situations that repeated over and over. It resulted in me developing a way of sword technique that I usually used in most situations.

Thanks to it, my swordsmanship skill’s level went up quite a bit.

As I got used to swinging the sword, moving the shield also became a lot more natural.

[You acquired Basic Swordsmanship Lv.10.]

[You acquired Basic Shield Technique Lv.7.]

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

* * *

[You acquired Battle Focus Lv. 13.]

With the Battle Focus level increased, the cognitive processing ability during the accelerated state improved.

When I first acquired it, the effect only allowed me to see things in slow motion.

Now, I could almost see the world as if the world was standing still.

Of course, that kind of heightened focus could be maintained only for a moment. Still, I thought I was still developing further and there was a lot more room for growth.

[You acquired Will Lv.7.]

It seemed that using the Battle Focus often lead to the Will to also increase.

[You acquired Basic Swordsmanship Lv. 11.]

[You acquired Basic Shield Technique Lv.10.]

Lately, the shield technique was catching up to the swordsmanship.

‘Is it because I had been ending up doing a lot more shielding because I was fighting many enemies at once?’

[You acquired Iron Wall Lv.1.]

[Hardened Skin Lv.4 will be combined with Iron Wall Lv.1.]

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

* * *

“Uuuuaaaaa!”

[You acquired Battle Cry Lv.2.]

The Battle Cry was a kind of boost skill.

In video games, barbarians or tanker warriors had this skill.

The description said the combat abilities will increase by a small margin. However, I was not sure just how much it was.

I was so annoyed by the skeleton soldiers yelling giaaaaaak giaaak at me, so I had been yelling back at them. I ended up acquiring the skill from doing that.

Thanks to that, I often returned to the waiting room with worn out voice.

The waiting room gave me a complete recovery as usual, including my worn out vocal cords.

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

* * *

[You shall experience death! I, the death knight Asthe shall gift you the great slumber!]

A mid-level boss showed up.

For a moment, I was excited because I mistook that monster as the final boss.

‘You bastard. Go rot in hell...

Well, you are already about half rotten, but... ’

“You bastard! You made me excited for nothing. You are dead!”

Now that I think about it, even I think my line sounds like I had a loose screw somewhere in my head. Along with that shouting, I charged toward the death knight.

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

* * *

‘Damn it all. I was stopped again from progressing further.’

The forks were the problem.

After the straight pathway on the corridor ended, forks with two pathways started to appear one after another.

Even if I chose one and broke through the army along that path, the skeleton soldiers that got through the other path reached and opened the stone door.

‘What should I do... ’

The first option was giving up on breaking through the skeleton army and blocking the straight path until the holy knights arrived.

‘That is unrealistic.

The holy knights are coming way too late.’

One time, the holy knights didn’t show even after 13 days since the trial started.

It was possible they were not going to arrive until the very last moment, just before the end of the 30th day.

When I held out for 13 days, I barely managed by really forcing myself to do so.

During that time, I ended up using all of my potions, so I could never do that again.

It was not that I was lacking strength to fight. It was a matter of endurance limit. It was seriously lacking.

The second option was to go through the pathways before the skeleton soldiers get to the stone door and clear the stage.

It seemed like the second option was even more unrealistic. However, the idea sounded more appealing.

Both options required me to become stronger.

‘I should go back to focusing on becoming stronger.’

[You acquired Bleeding Resistance Lv.8.]

[You acquired Piercing Resistance Lv.4.]

[You acquired Paralysis Resistance Lv.9.]

Meanwhile, my passive skills improved a lot.

I had been getting cut by rusty weapons more frequently. With that, the Paralysis Resistance went up the most.

The Pain Resistance didn’t increase.

It seemed like simple flesh wounds were not going to make it develop further.

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor’s trial.]

[Human who are blessed by false gods! You shall experience death!]

[Level Up.]

[Strength went up by 1. Agility went up by 1. Basic Swordsmanship Skill went up by 1.]

[You obtained Basic Swordsmanship Lv.15.]

[Basic Swordsmanship Lv.15 was changed to Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.1]

[You obtained Mana Circuit Lv.1.]

With the Mana Circuit, it became possible for me to utilize the mana hidden inside my body.

I was still clumsy at using it, but I had been making the mana to circulate through my body whenever I had the time.

The circulation worked only through the same paths.

I had to work hard to memorize these paths and understand them.

[You obtained Mana Circuit Lv. 4.]

With that, it became possible for me to put on a thin layer of mana on my hand.

Also, even without wrapping my body's surface with mana, I could boost my physical abilities just from having the mana circulate through my body.

I thought it might be also possible to use explosive strength by sending mana to the muscles at the moment of need.

I had to practice some more.

[You obtained Mana Circuit Lv. 7.]

[You obtained Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.2.]

It's a light saber!

I'm Jo-seon's first sword master!

[TL: Jo-seon is the name of the Korean kingdom before the country became a democratic nation.]

It became possible for me to surround my sword with mana.

As I got used to utilizing mana, the amount of mana I had started to be relatively insufficient.

I wondered if there was anything I could do.

* * *

[Servant of false gods! Witness the power of true greatness! The greatest and absolute power, the only one in existence in this world, shall become the savior to this corrupt world!]

[Human, you are brave but foolish! You have chosen the wrong path!]

[I, Khezas shall lead you to death!]

[You obtained Meditation Lv.1.]

Unfortunately, Meditation had nothing to do with increasing the mana capacity.

As the word said, it was simply for meditation.

It didn't look like it could be of any use, but it turned out it was very useful in focusing my mind through the Magic Circuit.

I started to meditate whenever I had the time.

With the Meditation skill obtained, I got to have chance to look back at all the things that happened lately.

Many things had happened since I ended up inside the Tutorial, and...

...Having thought about it, I realized that nothing good ever happened, not even one.

As I thought more and more through meditation, my chest felt frustrated and the thoughts seriously agitated my mood.

However, I couldn't stop thinking about the past.

As if I was possessed by something, I continued to think about negative thoughts.

They spoiled my mood, and the negative mood resulted in loss of will to go on.

[You acquired Mental Corruption Resistance Lv.2.]

...

I thought it was subjecting me to mental stress, but I didn't know it was to the point of mental corruption.

Actually, I noticed signs that indicated I was losing my mind a little.

Something like this happened in the past.

It was when I was grinding away at the Second Floor... I think.

Back then, I was worried and scared, thinking I might end up with a mental illness.

Claiming it as a hobby, I picked up knitting and made gloves and scarfs.

Still, back then, I had the confidence to clear the floor anytime I wanted. I was grinding just for the sake of growth.

Compared to that... right now...

[You failed to clear the Sixth Floor's trial.]

* * *

“Uooooooooaaaaa!”

[You obtained Soul Cry Lv.1.]

[Battle Cry Lv.3 will be combined with Soul Cry Lv.1.]

I had been screaming by putting in mana while using the Battle Cry. I got a new skill from doing that.

When it came to boosting my combat abilities, the skill was the same as the Battle Cry. However, there was one extra feature to the new skill.

[Extra feature: The enemies below your level will not be able to ignore you and run away or avoid you.]

An area effective provocation skill was created.

With this skill, I was going to be able to easily tie down the skeleton soldiers who got past me and ran toward the stone door.

Not just the swordsmanship, but the shield technique and hand-to-hand combat technique also became mid-levels.

[Human, you possess astonishing power! This is the true form of myself, the Khezas!]

[You acquired Curse Resistance Lv.6.]

[You acquired Grand Magic Resistance Lv.2.]

I really almost died.

I had been exposed to danger for so long all this time that my sense of alertness became faint.

My Curse Resistance had grown quite a bit. Putting my faith in the Curse Resistance, I took on the Khezas with a complacent attitude. It turned out that the final boss really was deserving of the position.

‘To fight that bastard, I need to kill all of the death knights, skeleton soldiers and other priests. I need to fight it only after I clean up everyone else.

I am almost there.

Let’s not be impatient.’

* * *

[Human, you are blessed by false gods! You...]

“Just shut the hell up! You numbskull bitch!”

Even patience had limits!

The priests kept on saying similar lines as if they were programmed to say them. Having heard the lines so many times, now, I became infuriated just from hearing creepy voices from those priests that looked like they were wearing skull masks.

“Just transform into the squid already. Let’s end this now.”

This time, it really was the time to end this once and for all.

It had been a very long time.

I could go on in verbose detail about how long it had been. However, nothing was more accurate than saying that it was excessively long.

[You cleared the Sixth Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormality and injuries will be recovered.]

[You obtained 2000 points as the clear reward.]

[You obtained 2000 points for being the first one to clear the floor.]

[There are many gods who are showing positive responses toward you. You obtained 9100 points.]

[There are many gods who are showing negative response toward you. 600 points were deducted.]

[Based on your play records, additional reward will be given.]

[Many gods would like to give you a special skill as the reward.]

[Voting results: 43 Yes, 1 No.]

[Would you like to accept it?]

[You obtained Soul Steal Lv.1.]

* * *

[God of Slowness would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

[God of Adventure is panicking.]

[God of Adventure would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

[God of Slowness is displeased.]

Chapter 54

Tutorial 60th Floor (6)

“With the spring wind in the air~ Flower petals flowing~”

‘For some odd reason, I found the sound while writing on paper exhilarating.’

Unlike the usual, I was writing a book instead of a letter to Lee Yeun-hye.

It was magic instructions for the hatchling that was going to be born from the egg soon.

I learned something shocking a few days ago.

It was the fact that there was no magic instruction for dragons.

It was absurd since dragons were also called the race of magic.

The reason for the lack of magic instruction texts for the dragons was quite ridiculous.

Apparently dragons naturally realize magic and learn it as they grow, so there was no need for educational magic texts to teach them anything with. Also, because dragons’ memories do not fade over time, there was no need to record any magic in writing either.

I was dumbfounded for a while.

‘What despicable beings.

Ah, my bad.

I'm sorry.

I didn't direct that comment at you, Yong Yong.'

[TL: Yong is the pronunciation for the word "dragon" in Korean.]

I apologized to the egg inside the incubator. I directed my gaze back to the book.

Although I understood that dragons didn't need any education in learning magic because they learned them on their own, I figured that still providing them with education would not hurt.

'If I teach this dragon magic, it will learn magic faster.'

To clear the 61st Floor, the most important thing that I needed the hatchling to learn first was polymorph.

It was a pretty high level magic, so I had no intention of waiting until the baby dragon learned the magic on its own.

So, here I was, writing an educational magic textbook.

I used the textbooks by other beings as the basis. I cut off the parts that dragons didn't need to know. I focused on activation magic spells and internal mana operation and utilization.

I figured there was no need to teach everything about magic.

It was going to be enough as long as it allowed quicker learning of the basics.

Like that, I was rolling my pen. However, I saw a message opening in front of my eyes.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Report.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Nothing to report at 60th Floor of the Hell Difficulty. Don't you get bored doing this every month?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Aren't you getting sick of hearing me nag? The message always tells you what time it is. Why are you always late?]

'Her words ended with a question.

I shouldn't have agitated her.'

For a moment, I was forgetting about the fact that Park Jung-ah had been having really bad days lately, making her emotionally strained.

'In times like this, it is best not to face her.

From past experiences, I know well that I'll only see blood if I carelessly agitate her.

Instead of fighting a battle that I will lose for sure, I should just throw off the chess table.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Phew... I am sorry. I've not been thinking of the passage of time lately. I've also been trying hard not to look at the time message either. I ended up not checking the time before it was too late.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I am sorry. I am feeling a little weird lately. I think I had been trapped here for too long. Maybe I'm getting metal illness again. Nowadays, even medicines are not being effective.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Ah... Um. I'm sorry. I didn't know. I was too insensitive.]

'Ha. Take that.

You have no idea how long I have waited to say that line.'

Park Jung-ah was probably feeling even sorrier for criticizing me so many times for being late.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That's right. You were being too hard on me.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Huh? Um... Right. You don't need to report regularly from now on. I'll contact you only when I need to.]

As I planned...

It worked out insanely well.

I wondered why I am so brilliant.

During a moment of danger, I turned it into an opportunity. It was magnificent.

'Looks like I'll have one less bothersome thing to do from now on.

While at it, let's try to reduce it by one more.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I am sorry, but can you please check up on Lee Yeun-hye before she enters the Stage?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Okay. I can do that, but why? Won't it be better for you to do it yourself?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm going to go check out the 61st Floor for a bit.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Why there?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I used too many points. I need to earn more.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I got it. All right.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Tell her to not forget the message she needs to deliver to the manager.]

With that, another bothersome thing was off my list.

It felt great.

‘Should I continue to ask Park Jung-ah to check on Lee Yeon-hye from now on?’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: If you can, you do it. The newbie is still at the Sixth Floor, right?]

Tsk.

Lee Yeon-hye’s growth had entered a stable rate.

I had been worried for her about being at the Sixth Floor, but it seemed she was getting used to it pretty well.

I even thought she might get stuck there forever without finding a way to break through the floor.

Fortunately, in her own unique way, she was diligently progressing her conquest step by step.

This was the Sixth Floor, so I figured it would take a little more time. It looked like I didn’t need to worry about her getting stuck there.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: That brat is amazing too. From how you see it, how strong do you think she is?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Even I think she is quite talented. She is not as talented as me, but she is top-notch when it comes to her abilities as a caster. She is also good at utilizing mana.]

To overcome the drawbacks of being an archer at lower floors, Lee Yeon-hye tried to master activation magic spells.

I agreed on her idea as well.

Now, the efficiency and power of the archer and caster combination was beyond proven.

The research on activation magic had been progressing for a long time in Tutorial by many people. So, Lee Yeon-hye was able to obtain

information on her own using the points through the Community.

As for magic that were difficult to master, I wrote the instructional texts and sent them to her to master them.

Of course, just knowing the mastery method and reading the instructional texts on magic did not necessarily lead to everyone learning the activation magic.

For those who were not talented at mana, it was better to not even think about using activation magic.

Activation magic spells were easier to master than traditional magic spells. However...

Activation magic spells were focused on casting.

Once the skill was acquired, it could be activated without much difficulty by just reciting the activation word and supplying the mana at the right time.

During the early days in the Tutorial, people in the Community called activation magic as half-witted magic spells and down-graded them. However, before long, the activation magic pushed aside the traditional magic and became the most dominant type.

Compared to traditional magic, the activation magic spells were not as powerful. Also, activation magic spells could not be altered at all. Despite these drawbacks, the ease of usage and quick casting speed more than made up for the drawbacks.

Nowadays, of all mage class players, it was hard to find anyone who was not an activation magic based mage.

Traditional mages such as casters or shamans required high level of understanding of magic and long casting time to use magic skillfully.

Because of these, the traditional magic spells were hard to make good use of during battles even in the easy difficulty. That was the general consensus on the traditional magic's usefulness.

Except extreme few players who had researcher type personalities and myself, there was hardly anyone that knew how to use traditional magic properly.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: By the way. I've heard rumors lately again. I think something is going to be held again.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Right... There was information like that. It isn't confirmed at the moment. I need to look into it some more.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: If there is going to be something, it would be nice if it was the day of the great harmony. Other things are such a bother.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: If it really turns out to be the day of the great harmony, everyone is a dead meat. It hasn't been all that long since what happened last time, and they managed to make another hole?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You take it easy too. You've been too harsh to the grunts under your command that they are on their way to the graves. The guys in Order of Vigilance had been complaining and crying to me daily.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Who did?]

Before long, her sentences became short again.

I could not afford to catch fire from her fury, so I told her the list of names politely.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Ugh...]

I was fairly certain the omitted parts were swears.

I wished good luck for the grunts who probably were not aware that they were dead.

'I am sorry.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Instead of punishing them, ease up a bit and raise them. Now even Kim Min-huk left the Tutorial. You can't keep on punishing your underlings.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Kim Min-huk had been like the mom for everyone in the Order of Vigilance. Now that he left the Tutorial, you need to double as that mom role.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor:... I really can't do something like that.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You need to do it now. Otherwise, you need to find someone who can take on that role.]

'I bet there isn't anyone.

I bet you won't be able to find someone for that.

Park Jung-ah has difficulty in trusting others.

With Kim Min-huk gone, she only has a few people she can trust... No. It is possible I am the only one she trusts.'

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Why didn't you stop Kim Min-huk when he tried to get divorced? You should have.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor:... Who knew he would leave the Tutorial right away after the divorce. I thought it was just another fight between a married couple.]

'She certainly has a point.

That bastard had been lecturing me about the relationship between a man and a woman, how dating works, and etcetera. Now, to think he got divorced and left the Tutorial...

As they say, you never know what could happen in life.'

I finished the writing after being on it for a long while.

I put the notes and writing tools to the side of the desk and placed the desk with things on it as-is into the inventory.

‘I was almost finished writing the magic instructions.

It would be better to finish the rest after looking at the hatchling’s type.

I wonder what color it will be.

Personally, when someone mentions “dragon,” usually gold, red or black colors come to mind.

Maybe the color might end up being something completely dumbfounding.

Personally, I wish it turns out to be a red dragon.

I don’t have any particular reason for the preference, but red dragons are just so cool.’

Like that, I indulged in useless thoughts as I went close to the incubator to say hello to the egg.

“Hold the port for me while I’m gone, Yong Yong. Your daddy is off to earn some money.”

‘I probably won’t be able to come back any time soon.

Clearing the 61st Floor will take a bit of time.

Let’s see. The temperature and moisture control devices are working normally.

I don’t need to worry about noise pollution or someone breaking in while I’m gone since I’m the only one in the 60th Floor.

Um... Still, I’m worried for some reason.’

I couldn't figure out why I was worried. Moreover, because of my worries, I could not step away.

‘This... I don't think I can just go like this.

Tsk.

I wonder if a parent who left the child to play near a water would feel like this?

No, is it a little different?

Anyway, I need a safety device.’

I waved my hand in the empty air, drew two magic circles on the floor, and stepped on one of them.

“Summon.”

Light poured out from the other magic circle and came together. The lump of light started to form the shape of a human.

When the brightness of the light subsided, there was a man standing on the magic circle. He looked identical to me.

“What are you looking at, original bastard.”

‘What the, look at this little son of a bitch. He has no manners at all.’

“Watch the house, you clone bastard. Keep the egg safe too.”

“...Do you realize where this place is? Do you have dementia? Is it something like that? In that case, why don't you hand over the position of being the original to me?”

“Something like that will never happen, you clone bastard.”

‘He is my clone, although he is incredibly rude and weak as hell. I cannot believe he was created based on me.’

“Who are you calling weak as hell, you original bastard.”

‘Like this, we can read each other’s minds.

Even from distance, I can feel his emotions and conditions, so I can come right away when something happens to the egg.

I just need to think of this bratty clone as a high performance alarm magic.’

“Don’t define me like that to whatever you want.”

I made this asshole for the purpose of clearing the 61st Floor. Unfortunately, when I realized it was not possible to clear the 61st Floor with him, he became almost useless.

‘It’s good that I found a use for him for watching the house.

Even dogshit can be... ’

“If you have any more degrading thoughts about me, I am going to go on strike.”

‘I cannot let that happen.’

“Well then, I’ll go earn some points. Make sure to watch the house.”

“All right. Come back safe. It is all right if you never come back.”

I walked toward the portal that lead to the 61st Floor’s Stage as I listened my bratty clone.

Chapter 55

Tutorial 61st Floor (1)

I lied down on a gigantic ice throne and rolled around.

Compared to the motel room I had been using at the 60th Floor's residential area, this throne was at least twice as big.

It would have taken someone with a butt five meters wide to sit here as intended to. I once questioned if this thing could be called a throne.

However, the last owner of this throne clearly called it a throne.

‘So, it must be a throne.

It's good not to question something that already has an answer.’

It was a habit I developed while I was stuck at the 60th Floor, not being able to clear the 61st Floor to be precise.

It was best not to look back on something that was already decided.

‘I cannot find the answer.

I don't even know if there is an answer.

I already wrote my answer and submitted it as such a long ago. However, I don't know when I'll get the result back. I don't know if there is an end either.’

So, I decided not to look back.

Things like a question that does not have an answer or regretting a decision I was not sure about only rotted my mind away.

‘Maybe it is the cool air from the throne. I feel refreshed.

No, this is actually a special attribute of this place.’

It seemed like just sitting around idly on my butt had cleared my head and mind.

It could be said that it felt like taking a nap at Kiri Kiri’s green plain.

That reminded me that it had been a while since I met Kiri Kiri. Also, it had been ages since I took a nap in her world.

Um...

I quickly erased the thoughts that were coming up in my mind.

I came to the 61st Floor to cleanse the leftovers in my head and chest. If I accumulated negative thoughts instead, that was no good. I could not let that be.

A message came while I was rolling around on top of the throne of ice.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I just talked to Lee Yeun-hye.]

‘Well done.

Good work.’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: By the way, are you really busy right now? If you have time to spare, won’t it be better for you to see her off?]

‘Why is this lass on the edge again?

Is it just the mood?’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I’m busy, I’m ultra-busy.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: You don’t look busy at all. Next time, don’t

ask me to do things like this.]

‘Why is she acting like this again?

Was there a problem?’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: No, it’s not like that. I think Lee Yeun-hye hates me a little.]

‘...That’s so out of the blue.

What are you saying? Do you think there is another person in this entire Tutorial that would welcome you and like you?’

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Enough with bullshit. Seriously, am I being too sensitive?]

‘How should I respond to this?

There is a long journey ahead to get to the right answer for this, and there are too many traps laying all over the path.

It feels like this will come back as a poison no matter how I answer it.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: You have that independent image. Maybe she is just nervous?]

‘People call you iron-blooded witch or a sociopath wearing the mask of justice just to send people to graves. I’m saying maybe Lee Yeun-hye shriveled because someone like that sent her a personal message.

However, Park Jung-ah doesn’t hate that independent image.

She is thinking it is helpful in maintaining the Order of Vigilance.

I made the right choice of using this as the reason for Lee Yeun-hye’s reaction.

It won’t spoil Park Jung-ah’s mood. Moreover, it is a very plausible

explanation.'

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Is that so? Anyway, don't ask me to do this kind of things from now on. I can't speak politely to people. It feels like I'm getting rashes.]

'Are you saying you were polite to her?

Maybe Lee Yeun-hye's response was on the edge because you were like that.

When someone suddenly changes attitude, others can see that as a sign of aggression.

I read it at a psychology book.'

Around the Round 60, a player who used to be a doctor of psychology left the Tutorial after clearing it. Since then, the greatest authority in psychology and mental neurology had been none other than myself.

It was because I had been diagnosing the patient with the most serious mental illness daily.

Of course, I didn't send my thoughts to her through the message.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Also, you remember what I told you before, right? I told you it looks like something might be held again. Information about that is going to come in soon, so keep checking messages instead of ignoring it.]

'Yay...

I do need to continue clearing the 61st Floor, but well, I do have a reason.

Something is going to be held, huh...

Um... While at it, I think I should test that thing.

I should test if I can send my clone to other difficulties.'

My clone was considered as a summoned monster instead of an actual player in Tutorial. I wondered if that meant I could send it to another difficulty by sending it to another person.

'In that case, send it to the Order of Vigilance...

No. Perhaps I can send the clone to the outside world.

Damn it. Why did I think of this now?

I can send my clone to the outside world and switch my soul with the clone.

That's perfect?'

[Perfect? Do dogs have horns? I'm not an ordinary summon monster, you original bastard.]

'You were listening?'

[Isn't that obvious you retard? Also, another difficulty is a completely different world from here. Once my link with you is gone, I can no longer maintain my life, you dumbass.]

[You already know all this, don't you? Enough of your useless thoughts. I don't want to die for the sake of your stupid experiment-oriented mindset.]

'Tsk.

He truly is useless.'

[What did you say?]

When I first made that bastard, I was full of hope for clearing the 61st Floor.

However, now that I made that brat, I really had no use for him.

I just ended up with symptoms of shattered mind after trying to split my soul.

Tsk.

[That's my fault? You original bastard... I feel like the youngest son who was born from failed birth control.]

My clone's analogy was pretty good. I laughed by myself.

My mind was at a bit of ease now, so I could afford to laugh at a joke like that.

I should have come to the 61st Floor sooner.

I came to the floor to earn some points and also clear my mind before hatchling came out of the egg.

I felt so refreshed. I wondered why I didn't come here sooner.

I knew this feeling won't last long. Still, it felt great for the moment.

I got up from the seat.

I had been rolling around doing nothing long enough. It was time for me to move.

I came down from the gigantic ice throne and headed to the portal.

[Will you enter?]

'No. You know I can't.'

"Return."

I mumbled the activation word. I left the space covered in ice. Instead,

I was teleported to a dark and narrow space.

There was a familiar looking bonfire.

It was the entrance of the 61st Floor.

There were three portals in front of me.

One of them lead to the 60th Floor.

The other two each led to different Stages.

I needed two parties and clear both Stages simultaneously.

Once the Stages were cleared, I could enter the boss room after activating the portals on both sides.

It was simple.

However, summon monsters or clones were not acknowledged as a different challenger when entering the boss room.

‘What about Yong Yong?’

Yong Yong can be considered a resident of Tutorial who was born here.

Could Yong Yong be acknowledged as a challenger?

Yong Yong is not my summon monster or clone.

If the dragon gets acknowledged as a separate entity... Um...

Actually, that is unlikely to happen.

Still, well... I got to try, as always.

I can’t just do nothing.’

“Enter.”

A moment later, I was standing in a scorching desert.

I had seen this place before, and it was still horrible to look at.

I was not receiving damage from the heat, but I was not feeling comfortable in this horrible weather condition either.

It was extremely hot and dry.

Moreover, the wind was mixed with sand. It was annoying.

I cast mana shield to block the sand wind and walked forward.

“Land-folding.”

I had no intention of standing in this unpleasant environment for long. I had no intention of fighting sticky monsters one by one here either.

‘Let’s just get to the last room.’

I walked as I folded the space. I was able to get to the end of the desert before long.

At the end of the desert, there was an oasis with a portal in the center. I walked toward the top of the portal.

‘This suddenly reminds me of the time when I got to the 61st Floor for the first time.’

At that time, I already heard information about the 61st Floor from Kiri Kiri when I cleared the 59th Floor.

Still, thinking it might be different somehow, with expectations, I stepped on to the portal.

“Teleport.”

[Welcome. It's been a while.]

A giant's voice could be heard from a distance. It sound like it was echoing from the far.

Next to the huge, empty throne, there was a red giant who was sitting next it. I lifted my head and looked at the giant.

There were red hot magna overflowing around him.

"It sure has, old man."

[I see you visited another place before coming here. How's the former queen doing? Same as always?]

"Well, same as always of course. She is still mighty concerned about skin aging."

An explosive noise could be heard. It was painful in my ears.

Instead of the pain, the fact that I could not identify the noise hurt me more.

My body was still that of a human being.

I focused my mind to cover my ears with mana field, and I was able to identify the noise.

It was that old giant's laughter.

[She has frozen skin, yet she is concerned about aging? Looks like her stupidity has not changed with passage of time!]

"I can't be sure about that? The former queen said the same about you."

Once again, a deafeningly loud laughter spread through the area.

‘Will you stop laughing?’

[About your arrangement, is it not yet?]

‘Arrangement? Can that be called an arrangement?’

“It’s far. I still have a long way to go.”

[That’s a vexing fate. You possess incredible strength, yet you still cannot be used. You had already become the most powerful sword of all, yet you are still not complete.]

“Maybe this is also a step in the direction toward the completion.”

[You are saying something similar to a certain god. Are you saying you are still an incomplete sword?]

[There is no sword that’s being created without a purpose. When you become a complete sword, what will you do with your strength?]

‘What is this question for?’

It’s a difficult question to answer.’

“I’m not sure. For now... I won’t be able to decide what the sword is for until the tempering is complete. Don’t you think?”

[Because you are still an incomplete sword? That’s a funny way to put it. In that case, what about the intent of the sword makers?]

“I have my own free will, old man. I am not like a sword.”

‘...My voice is getting lower from being so annoyed.

Is he interested in hearing the answer again?’

[In that case, what does your free will tell you?]

“I don’t know.”

[Hahaha. That’s right. You don’t know. However, we do, don’t we? King.]

“That’s right.”

‘This old man really doesn’t know to think about others.’

“Let’s stop talking about dangerous things.”

[I am sorry. Because I am getting old, I want to hear a definite answer. That’s why.]

[When the time comes, decide carefully. We already entrusted our will to you.]

[Your indecisiveness should not lead to ruining the decision.]

[In that case, shall we begin?]

The red giant finished what he had to say. He picked up the giant sword that was stuck on the floor and lifted it up.

With that as the signal, the giant knights who were sleeping inside the magna walked out of it one after the other.

Two hundred units.

Considering the strength of each unit, the fact that they were all gathered in this space alone was irrational. Their combined strength was that significant.

[King. Please keep up the good work as always.]

The old giant and the two hundred giant knights raised their humungous swords and assumed poses that appeared to be signs of respects.

I knew nothing of their courtesy, but I could at least tell that they were ready for the duel.

I didn't bother to bring out any weapon to wield.

My body was the weapon, so I just took a step forward and raised my hand.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae, 61st Floor: It is not the day of the great harmony?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: That's right. We didn't find out anything yet. We don't know the date or the reason for it being held. However, it is definitely not the day of the great harmony that will be held.]

'This is going to give me headache.'

Chapter 56

Tutorial 11th Floor (1)

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell difficulty, 11th Floor.]

[You are healed of all injuries and status effects.]

[You have received 2000 points for clearing the Floor.]

[You have received 2000 points for being the first one to clear the Floor.]

[Many gods are pleased with your actions. You have received 6000 points.]

[Many gods are displeased with your actions. 1100 points are deducted.]

[An additional reward is given according to your performance.]

[Would you like to accept?]

“Yep.”

[You acquired great poison resistance Lv.1.]

[Poison resistance Lv.4 was combined with great poison resistance Lv.1.]

[You acquired great poison resistance Lv.2.]

‘Oh... great poison resistance... ’

I already have seen my pain resistance getting upgraded to the great

pain resistance before, so I was aware that a higher rank existed beyond the regular skill rank.

Poison resistance skill was definitely difficult to grow.

Other than the poison on the Second Floor's traps, most of the poisons available were either on enemies' weapons or inside their bodies.

Although this was obvious, getting hit by them on purpose for the sake of increasing poison resistance was like committing suicide.

So, my poison resistance had not changed a lot since I increased it on the Second Floor, but I ended up with the great poison resistance skill. This was great.

I felt like the effort I put into before to raise the poison resistance was wasted. That was too bad. However, I obtained level 2 version of the great poison resistance, so it was not bad.

For now... I plummeted on where I stood.

“Ugh.”

I was tired.

It was a bit too much this time.

It was not about the difficulty. The amount of effort needed to clear the floor was seriously too much.

The clear condition for the 11th Floor was stealing a treasure chest in middle of an underground city that was most valued by all monsters residing in the city.

The problem was that I could not find the treasure chest no matter how many of the monsters I slayed.

There were so many chests.

Beyond several hundreds, it was in order of several thousands.

I had no idea which of them was the most valued one among all underground city monster people.

First, I tried to use the knowledge before the time of Babel and tried to interrogate a monster man for information.

It was a waste of time.

Instead of giving up information to the enemy, apparently all monster people chose suicide without hesitation.

It was as if they could do it at a flip of a switch somewhere inside. At will, they could instantly kill themselves. Their special ability was incredibly annoying.

My interrogation skills had improved in a short while recently, but they were useless against these monster people. I was not able to get any information out of them.

In the end, searching every inch of the gigantic city was my only option.

I dug the dirt on the garden of the underground city's castle where its king resided, and I found a hidden underground passage.

I found a key at the end of that passage. When I put the key inside the gap at the engraving of the handle on the king's throne, a treasure room appeared behind the throne.

‘...How is anyone supposed to clear this?

If I did not turn the king's palace garden upside down out of pure frustration, I probably won't have found this.

Perhaps I should have intuitively realized that there is a treasure room behind the throne after seeing the engraving and just break through the wall? Maybe that is the right answer?

Perhaps...

This reminds me of the time when I was young. I played the English version of the Tomb Raider. I played it while frequently searching the English dictionary.

I remember one time where I had to find the hidden place by following the sound of the clock ticking inside the mansion.

Um... I got motion sickness from the stress and frustration. Because of dizzy spells, I couldn't play 3D games for a month.

I'm definitely weak against these kind of clearing methods.

If I am to claim that I need a partner, I need a partner who can cover me in this kind of tasks.

In RPG games, there are classes like thieves or adventurers.

They can install or disengage traps and find hidden enemies or places.

They can never be the main character, but for the sake of making the main lead's story to progress smoothly, such an extra character is absolutely necessary.

I do have a bastard who I could call as a comrade, but that one is similar to me, so that brat would be of no use in this situation just like me.

Ugh.

I guess I'll just have to play the cards I was dealt.

Instead of aimlessly taking on these kind of challenges, I should get used to deduction, search and etcetera.

I think there will be more of this kind of missions.'

Having organized my thoughts, I placed my hand on the portal.

“It’s been a while, Kiri Kiri.”

“Yep. You came alone this time.”

“I think the time limit expired. It just disappeared. As you said before, the memory will be maintained, right?”

“Yep.”

“Then it is all right.”

“Hehe. This time, it took a while, didn’t it?”

“It sure did.”

It was a ridiculous mission. I had to find a hidden treasure chest. I had no choice but to get here late because I had been digging around everywhere.

I replied with a few words. Out of frustration, Kiri Kiri turned her lips to look like a duck.

“Heng... Your reactions are boring now.”

‘Now what’s up with her?’

“Last time, you cried like a baby, saying it’s been a very long time since you saw me. It was fun.”

‘...This girl’s attitude is growing more and more annoying.

Well, what she said is true, so I can’t really talk back.

All right. I decided.’

“No cake for you today.”

“Ahhhhhhh. NOOOOOOOO!”

Kiri Kiri threw a tantrum and rushed at me. I pushed her away and assumed my position to take a nap.

I was tired.

‘Let’s sleep for a bit and think after I wake up.’

“I’m sorry. I won’t! I was wrong! Buy me a cake!”

I told her I might buy her a cake if she kept quiet while I slept. Like that, I made her close her mouth and went to sleep.

* * *

“Uuuaaaaaam~

How long did I sleep?”

[Round 14, Day 6, 16:30]

‘I didn’t sleep for long.

Actually, should I consider this as having slept long?’

I had been having a hard time sleeping lately.

There was no need to sleep in the waiting room, so I didn’t think too much about this fact.

Meanwhile, inside the Stage, because I was exposed to danger, having the sleep time reduced was not a bad thing.

Time passed like that for a while, and I could no longer fall asleep even when I wanted to.

In the past, I was worried that this might happen, so I had regular

sleep and meals even when I was in the waiting room.

Out of anxiousness, I focused on clearing the Sixth Floor while eliminating the time for sleep, meals and even rest. It seemed my regular daily rhythm was gone after doing that.

Thanks to the waiting room's recovery effect, I could handle the stamina issue. However, mental recovery through the sleep could not be replaced by anything.

So, I had been making up for the lost sleep by taking a nap whenever I visit Kiri Kiri's plain.

Still, I felt fortunate that I could sleep comfortably at Kiri Kiri's plain.

It would have been really difficult if I couldn't even sleep here.

As for Kiri Kiri...

Well, as usual, she slept using my stomach as her pillow.

I stroke Kiri Kiri's head between her large ears.

Kiri Kiri was sleeping soundly like a child. I looked at her face.

She had such an adorable face.

She acted like a kid often, so I thought of her as my little sister or cousin.

'When a friend in middle school raised a rabbit at his home, did he say rabbits don't like being touched on the nose or like being touched on the nose? I don't remember.

Actually, this lass has the face of a human being, so maybe it won't matter?'

I just realized that I had many things to ask Kiri Kiri this time.

Since the Sixth Floor, I had been saving the chances for asking her questions so I could ask her a lot later.

‘For now, let’s organize my thoughts so I can ask Kiri Kiri right away when she wakes up.’

From when this troubling thought started and when I saw the clear message after completing the long conquest of the Sixth Floor around when the Round 12 was coming to an end...

[You cleared the Sixth Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

It was long. Very long.

I could still remember clearly how I felt back then.

The experience through the Sixth Floor was something I never want to go through again.

I liked moving forward.

Being stuck at a place due to inadequacies in my abilities was a really horrible experience.

The broken man’s life that I led after retiring from the professional gaming came to my mind while I was at the Sixth Floor. With that memory overlapping with the stress through the Sixth Floor, it was mentally traumatizing.

I wondered if I was going to spin the wheel here forever.

I was at the mental limit.

I might have lost my mind if there was another boss after that squid looking boss and delayed the conquest of the floor further.

Anyway, things worked out well at the end since I got through it at the last moment.

However, I got a new thing to worry about since I cleared the Sixth Floor.

[God of Slowness would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

[God of Adventure would like to bestow the destiny of apostle to you.]

[Would you like to receive the test to prove your worthiness to become an apostle?]

‘What should I do?’

If just one god proposed the test for the destiny of apostle, I would not be agonizing over it like this.’

I was worried that the god I refused would retaliate out of anger if I chose one.

From what I experienced at the Fourth Floor, I knew gods could blind my vision and teleport me.

It meant they could kill me in middle of battle if they wanted.

I had to be very careful.

‘When I finished the Sixth Floor conquest, as soon as I met Kiri Kiri...

Wait, perhaps it was not immediately... ’

Thinking about what happened during the meeting with Kiri Kiri after clearing the Sixth Floor made me feel a little embarrassed.

‘Let’s forget about it. That’s the best answer.’

Kuhum...

I asked Kiri Kiri about the proposals made by the gods.

Of course, she was not able to answer my questions.

It was because information about gods were expensive, very expensive.

Since then, in order to hear Kiri Kiri's advice about the gods' proposals, I had been saving my chances on questions.

I asked her back then about when I would be able to hear the answer. She said she will be able to tell me when I clear the 11th Floor.

[God of Adventure is anxious.]

Messages like that appeared occasionally. However, I didn't let them make me rush into making the decision.

I felt fortunate that I could postpone making a decision until I confirmed the information first.

'Things for me to check are...

If I can accept both gods' proposals.

If there is a penalty for doing so.

If I can accept one side and refuse the other side.

If there is a penalty or benefit for doing that.

Finally, if I should choose just one side, which side Kiri Kiri recommends.

Did I cover everything?

If I end up with some allowances left for more questions, I should ask about the God of Adventure's preference.'

Other than that the God of Adventure was a fool and acted a little like an idiot, I knew nothing about the god's personality or preferences.

‘Just like how I heard about the God of Slowness's personality and principles, I should hear some about the God of Adventure.

If I still end up with some allowances left after that, I guess I should ask about information on 12th Floor.

Now, that's enough organizing.

I just need Kiri Kiri... to wake up.

This lass is sleeping way too soundly.’

She was snoring rhythmically. She was sleeping with such a happy look on her face. I couldn't wake her up after noticing all that.

‘For now, just a little while longer. I'll let her sleep just for a while longer.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Did anything happen?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Yes. Something big.]

‘Something big...

Is there going to be another day of great harmony?

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Uh... I heard it is going to be held again before this round ends. It's happening almost every other round now.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: What is it this time?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: That's the most serious problem. I have no idea why it is happening again.]

‘That is a big problem.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Well... Keep up the hard work.]

‘I am sorry to say this, but I cannot help you on anything.

Not only am I on a different difficulty, I am no good at finding hidden problems and solving them.

It would be best for you to assign that task to someone else and let me do what I do best during the day of the great harmony.’

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: What about Park Jung-ah?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Well, she is causing a ruckus again. She is thinking really hard about how to punish the members of the Order who failed to hunt down the people who committed crimes in their areas.]

‘That’s not good.

Causing a stir inside the Order of Vigilance is a serious problem.

If the members of the Order get divided or even decide to turn against each other, the Order could get disbanded like that.

Also, from the outside, the Order of Vigilance has to look strong.

The Order is in charge of judging and delivering punishment to all criminals.

They have the power rivaling that of a country’s justice system.’

Also, the source of this power was standing on a very shaky foundation.

The authority given to the Order was based on the power demonstrated by the rankers during the very first day of the great harmony, my own power to be exact.

Also, there was the charisma and ruthlessness of Park Jung-ah, the

one who executed the members of the Representative Federation.

Objectively speaking, we were oppressing the people with strength and fear.

We could not afford to let the outsiders see that the Order was faltering inside.

‘If the Order of Vigilance loses the public’s trust, their judgement and punishment would also lose people’s support.

Without people’s support, we are nothing but just a violent organization that forces our rules to others.

If people made up their mind and stood up to oppose us, there won’t be anything we could do.’

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: I know, you rascal. I bet Park Jung-ah knows that too. She is doing that because she’s just upset. She also needs to do that.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Anyway, watch her closely so she doesn’t cause an accident.]

Kim Min-huk said he got it. With that, our conversation ended.

‘Judging from what he said, it does not look like the problem will be resolved before the day of the great harmony happens.

In that case... It looks like I might end up with something that I will need to do.

Um...

Anyway, Kiri Kiri... This lass...

It’s about time she woke up.’

To wake her up, I pushed in my pinky into her nose that was making

snoring sound so well.

“Kiiiiiaaong!”

Along with her unique shouting, Kiri Kiri was revived. She threw a punch.

Of course, its power was pathetic.

* * *

“There is no problem if I accept both?”

Kiri Kiri had cream on her lips. I asked her again.

“Yep!”

‘...Why are you telling me this now... ’

“It’s because you said you will make the decision after hearing all relevant information.”

‘I did say that.

Um... ’

“Kiri Kiri.”

“What is it?”

“Stop eating that. Hand over the cake.

Chapter 57

Tutorial 11th Floor (2)

“I can choose both? Both the God of Adventure and God of Slowness?”

“Yep!”

It seemed I worried for nothing about the potential consequence for refusing a side.

“There is no disadvantage from doing so?”

“There kind of is one. Both gods’ tests probably will become more difficult. Also, in the end, you can become the apostle for only one god. Only thing you can accept from both are the tests.”

“Can you explain a little about the test?”

Kiri Kiri tilted her head around a few times. She then crunched down on the ground and drew scribbles on the ground.

It was a method unique to Kiri Kiri when she was thinking.

The letters and geometric shapes that Kiri Kiri drew on the ground was completely incomprehensible to me even when I tried to figure it out.

Even the knowledge before the time of Babel was no use for them.

‘Are those letters just not included in the knowledge or is it because my skill level on the knowledge is not high enough?’

I made sure to remember what she scribbled.

“The test to become an apostle is literally what it is. It is a test to prove that you are worthy of becoming an apostle. The test is usually decided based on the corresponding god’s preferences and the challenger’s personality.”

“Can you tell me in detail about the kind of tests? Examples?”

“I don’t know about that. It is not that I am refusing to tell you. It is just that I am not capable of answering that question because I do not know the answer. To begin with, each god has different standards. Also, the test’s standard changes depending on individual challengers. So, I don’t have anything in particular that I could tell you.”

‘So, you can’t tell me anything because you don’t know.

I think this is the first time for Kiri Kiri to tell me she doesn’t know something.’

“What is it then? Is it going to be all hands off after I take the test?”

“Um... I’m not sure. For someone to receive a god’s power and start walking the path to become an apostle means that a god found that person’s principles and behaviors likable. Based on this fact and the gods’ personalities, a prediction could be made at least.”

‘A prediction, huh... ’

“Of course, I can’t make the prediction for you. You need to do it yourself.”

I needed more information.

“First, can you tell me about the God of Adventure and God of Slowness? Not to the point of spending all of information allowances. Just enough for me to get a sense on them.”

“All right. I explained about the God of Slowness last time. I’ll start with the God of Adventure first.”

Kiri Kiri crunched down and sat on the ground again. She was like a

bunny.

I felt a sense of de ja vu.

“You... If you act like that and run off somewhere while forgetting everything, I won’t give you cake. Got it?”

“Ah, I won’t do that!”

‘In that case, hurry up, focus and stop thinking so hard.’

“God of Adventure likes to see someone fighting against adversity and achieving the dream after the end of a long journey. One thing about the God of Adventure that is very different from the God of Slowness is with regards to who is included in that perspective.”

“Perspective?”

“God of Slowness also likes someone fighting on and not yielding to hardship, but God of Slowness’ perspective is always from the first person’s perspective, the God of Slowness’ own perspective only. The apostle also needs to view the world that way as well.”

“What about the God of Adventure?”

“For the God of Adventure, the perspective includes not just the apostle, but the comrades around the apostle, other individuals involved in incidents, enemies, and even others who are not related at all. You need to think about them all carefully.”

‘Um... I can think of a theory here.’

When I first heard the name, God of Adventure, the first thing that came to my mind was stories of adventures that were archetypical.

I was thinking about that thing.

The Japanese style RPG games.

In those games, there were not just the brave hero the main character, but various comrades in the party who each possessed unique magnetic personalities, foes who each had involved and verbose back stories, beautiful and warm friendship and love that bloomed in midst of all things going on, idealistic justice that always tries to save the oppressed people, valor demonstrated by the characters who do not give up in face of hardships...

The adventure stories of outdated romanticism...

‘If God of Adventure’s principle is something like that... I think that’s fairly consistent with the behavior that this god had been showing usually.’

The God of Adventure was proud of me or was concerned for me whenever I was going through hardships or felt defeated.

In particular, whenever I made up my mind to show determination and continue fighting on when facing a hopeless situation, the God of Adventure showed responses.

It was similar to this when the God of Adventure showed interest in me for the first time at the First Floor.

Also, there was the time when I killed the Goblin King and when I refused to revive Idaltaru. When I thought about those instances...

‘Well, they are all conjectures, but...’

“In the end, God of Slowness and God of Adventure have similar expectations for their apostles. It is just that they have emotional differences in the process and preferences.”

‘To put it simply, I think I can say that the God of Adventure likes party play, and God of Slowness prefers solo play.’

If that is the case, choosing the God of Slowness would fit me the best.’

“Um... In that case, can you make a recommendation for me about

who would be the best choice for me?”

I didn't always follow her advice to the teeth.

There were times when I purchased the items she recommended and not use them. There was a time when I gave an item away to someone. Although she told me that focusing on passive skill growth is inefficient, I once focused on working to increase the passive skills.

However, anyway, Kiri Kiri's advices were always invaluable.

It was probably because she had plenty of experiences and knowledge as an advisor. Also, she had the ability to know my current condition and desires precisely as well as what I needed.

I knew that asking for her advice on this was going to cut into substantial portion of the question allowance, but I believed it would be worth the price.

Thinking like that, I sought her advice.

“Personally, I recommend the God of Adventure. Since you are in a unique situation where you get to be alone often, I know the God of Slowness would be also a good fit for you, but honestly, being an apostle for God of Slowness is not something an ordinary human should do.”

Her opinion on the God of Slowness was unexpectedly terrible.

However, excluding her comment on God of Slowness' apostle being too tough to handle for an ordinary human being, it seemed like she was saying the God of Slowness would fit me well given my circumstance.

Since she recommended the God of Adventure, it also meant the God of Adventure was also not a bad choice.

‘All right, I made the decision.’

[God of Adventure is feeling anxious.]

‘Why are you feeling anxious again, old man?’

Ah, that makes sense. I can see why he would be.

He had done many silly things so far.’

“Well then, I am choosing both of them.”

‘Since I need to choose one side eventually and become that god’s apostle, I should make the choice after gathering a lot more information later.

The tests will become harder, but it is not a bad thing.

I could grow more from going through more difficult trials.’

[God of Slowness is disappointed.]

[God of Adventure is relieved.]

It seemed both the God of Slowness and God of Adventure thought I would choose the God of Slowness.

Still, I now had one less of big concerns.

It was a huge thing I had been agonizing on ever since I cleared the Sixth Floor.

[God of Adventure would like to gift you, the one who is about to start the test, with a god’s power.]

[God of Slowness would like to gift you, the one who is about to start the test, with a god’s power.]

‘All right. This is great.

I thought they might give me something, so I was getting my hopes up.

They are each giving me a power skill. This makes choosing both of them the obvious right answer.

Currently, I have two god power skills, the Blink and Talaria's Wings.

From balance stand point, they can be called over powered cheat-like skills.

I wonder what kind of power skills I'll be getting this time?

Let's check.'

"Status Window."

[Lee Ho-jae (Human)]

Lv. 24

Strength: 31

Dexterity: 44

Vitality: 37

Mana: 35

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.19 Willpower Lv.10 Awakening Lv.2 Night Vision Lv.5 Bright Vision Lv.5 Charge Lv.8 Sneak Lv.8 Meditation Lv.8 Natural Regeneration Lv.8 Super Regeneration Lv.5 Strengthened Senses Lv.12 Widened Senses Lv.5 Increased Field of Vision Lv.4 Ironwall Lv.2 Toughened Skin Lv.3 Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.3 Mid-level Shield Skill Lv.1 Mid-level Hand to Hand Combat Skill Lv.1 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.4 Mana Circuit Lv.10 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv.5 Familiarity with Spirits Lv.2 Knowledge of the Time before Babel Lv.5 Soul Steal Lv.5 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.2 Great Pain Resistance Lv.2 Bleed Resistance Lv.10 Faint Resistance Lv.6 Pierce Resistance Lv.4 Great Poison Resistance Lv.2 Paralysis Resistance Lv.14 Heat Resistance Lv.6 Burn Resistance Lv.10 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite Resistance Lv.3 Perseverance Lv.1 Composition Lv.1 Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max, Dead Summoning Lv.???

Misc: God of Slowness is disappointed. God of Adventure is relieved.

God of Slowness' test [Completion rate: 2/11]

God of Adventure's test [Completion rate: 30/224]

The details about the tests were added to the status window.

'It looks like the tests are already completed quite a bit?'

It realized it was a wise decision to postpone on the decision.

It seemed my past actions were taken into account in the test completion.

'By the way... Why is there so many things in the God of Adventure's test?

It isn't just a little different.

It was 20 times more than the test by the God of Slowness.

Before I even realized, I already completed 30 of them, which is a lot, but there are way too many things in the God of Adventure's test.

Well then, should I check the skills?'

[Perseverance (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Adventure.

This power will give you strength when you are facing difficult adversities, especially during the most trying times.

[Focused Effort (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Slowness.

It will lead you to greater result when you pursue something with stronger desire for longer.

The one negative thing about the power skills was that they were all lacking in explanations. I could ask Kiri Kiri to explain more, but the amount of information allowance spent on skill descriptions was significant. It was no joke.

‘Let’s just try to make a guess.

Perseverance seems like it is similar to the Iron Wall. Iron Wall is a passive skill that hardens my body. Perhaps the skill Perseverance strengthens my mind?

It could be a skill that supports my combat abilities.

It could also be a simple skill that hardens my body.

As for the Focused Effort, it might be for improving the efficiency of skill growth when I focus on one movement or skill for a long time to master it.

Like in video games where a boost increases level up or stat speed by two folds...

Something like that.

Maybe it is a skill that allows me to obtain hidden skills or extra attributes.

After the Round ends, I’d be trapped inside the waiting room for three days without being able to leave.

It looks like I’ll be able to see great efficiency in training if I pick a skill and grow just that one while I stay there.

It might be able to affect skills such as swordsmanship or other combat skills during battle.

Although I am not certain right now, it looks like they are both good skills.

I'll have to look in to details later, but I don't think they will be far off from my guesses.

It's just that the Focused Effort skill's effect is... Since it is related to growth rate, it would have been better if I had it sooner.

If I knew this, I would have accepted the tests as soon as I cleared the Sixth Floor.

It feels like the disappointment from missing the double experience points event at a PC room.

...Um... This does make me feel bitter.

Actually, it is beyond bitter. It is aching.

I did end up with losses because I acquired the skill late, but it is not serious.

After the Sixth Floor, I went through all floors quickly except the 11th Floor.

If I got the skill before the Sixth Floor, then it would have had a great effect on my growth results, but since it would have been for after the Sixth Floor, it would have made little difference to what I gained after the Sixth Floor.

Actually, it would have made some differences, but I am okay with not having gained them.

...I'm just justifying the situation.

I know this.

It is a serious loss.

Still, I need to keep my mind positive, shouldn't I?

The reality is that I am in the Hell Difficulty.'

I looked at Kiri Kiri who was again focused on the dish that had the mousse cake.

"Aaaang! L... Let me eat it! Don't take away what I had been eating!"

'It's probably going too far to take away something she was eating.'

I gave the dish back to her. Instead, I picked up the only macaroon placed on top of the cake.

"Aaaaang! Aaaaah! I was saving that!"

'Hey, I'm the one who bought this.'

* * *

Kiri Kiri cried out a river because the macaroon was taken away from her. It didn't take long to calm her down.

Actually, I tried to console her, but I gave up right away due to laziness. Instead, I just bought her a macaroon set.

"Hehe. You are so kind, Hojae."

'Of course I'm nice.

I'm also great looking, right?'

"Yep! You are so cool, Hojae."

'Of course. Of course.

I always get this impression from her, but this lass acts like she would hand over her very own soul if I buy her the right foods at the right

time.

Kiri Kiri, you shouldn't go with some stranger who buys you candy.'

"Why?"

"That guy will try to give you something other than candy."

"If not candy, what is he going to give me?"

"...Well, anyway. Not something you should eat. Well, actually, is it something you can eat?"

"In that case, can I go with him?"

"No."

"Why?"

'How am I supposed to explain this?'

[Lee Ho-jae, 11th Floor: Hey. What do you think is the reason why kids shouldn't follow strangers offering them candy?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor:... What the hell is this about now? I'm busy at the moment. If you are going to ask me weird things out of the blue like this, I'm going to ignore you.]

Chapter 58

Tutorial 12th Floor (1)

“Make it so I can see additional explanation while I’m at the waiting room.”

“Okaying~.”

With this, I guess that is enough for the power skills.

As for the rest, I can check their performances in detail when I’m at the waiting room and organize my thoughts again.

One thing I am disappointed about is that the skills are not at Max levels.

Perseverance and Focused Effort are both at Level 1.

I should not expect them to be as high performance as the Blink and Talaria’s Wings that I got with the levels already at the Maximum.

There is potential for growth in the skills, so maybe they might show just as good or greater effectiveness later, but...

Um... Well then...

“Kiri Kiri. Do I still have allowances left?”

I had been saving my allowances since the Sixth Floor. I rarely used them.

I did just get huge amount of information about the gods and being an apostle, but still, I think I have some left to spare.

“A little.”

A little you say... They were expensive as fuck.

“In that case, do you have any advice for me for the 12th Floor?”

“No. Howjae... It would be a little convenient for you if I gave you advices, but the result will be the same. I recommend that you just don't hear the advice this time. You will be able to get through the floor with ease.”

That's probably the case.

Ever since I cleared the Sixth Floor, I never felt the floors afterwards were as difficult as the Sixth Floor.

I cleared the Six Floor which required five people in a party.

It means I have the strength of five challengers at that floor in the Hell Difficulty.

Actually, if I think about the strength and the roles, my strength is greater than that.

There were more stages since the Sixth Floor that required party plays.

However, ever since I overcame the wall of five people's worth, I was able to clear them with ease.

It will work out the same this time.

It might get a little tough if they throw a raid stage that requires 25 people or more, but...

That didn't happen yet.

I purchased food, potions and other simple expendable items and got up.

Looks like I finished everything I need to do.

In particular, I feel refreshed now that I organized the things related to the tests for the apostle.

I had been postponing it for too long, thinking I should decide after getting information first.

“Well then, I’ll see you next time.”

I waved at Kiri Kiri and headed to the portal.

“Bye! You mustn’t cry when you get lonely!”

...I am not going to cry.

Just wait until I see you again next time.

I got on the portal as I planned petty revenge that involved cakes.

“Good luck!”

Still, looking at Kiri Kiri hopping at the spot and waving at me, I also waved back at her.

It feels great to have someone who always greets me and sees me off with bright attitude.

It is to the point that makes me wonder if I would have lived my life a little differently in my past if I had someone like her.

[You have entered the waiting room at the 12th Floor.]

This time, beyond just being big, it is a ginormous stone room.

It was unexpectedly big. I looked around the space and promptly opened the status window.

It is time for me to check my power skills performances in detail.

It feels like scratching an instant lottery.

My heart is pounding.

[Perseverance (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Adventure.

This power will give you strength when you are facing difficult adversities, especially during the most trying times.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the enemies' number and strength.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the number of comrades you have standing behind you.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to your exhaustion and wounds.

The effects can overlap with multiple situations happening simultaneously.

Additional attributes: A certain amount of resistance will be given to you against mental magic attacks and stress.

It is the best.

There isn't anything I would throw away among the skill's effects.

There are three situations where my combat abilities will increase.

Moreover, if all three situations applies, I can receive all three boosts at the same time.

Although I still don't know by how much the effects are when it said in the description that the increase will be by a small margin.

I cannot always have comrades, but I can always satisfy the other two conditions.

This is Hell Difficulty after all.

It is not hard to use at all too.

Actually, using it is too easy.

It is a combat type passive skill with applicability that is very wide and top notch.

Growing this skill is probably not very hard either.

I also like that the increase will be in proportion to danger.

It will be great to have everyday, but it will be like a ray of light in the darkness when I'm in a serious pinch.

Moreover, it is giving me resistances to mental attacks.

Since I have the Mental Corruption Immunity Skill and this Perseverance Skill on top of that, I think it will be all right for me to ease my worries on mental attacks.

Although I am not getting a feel for the resistance against stress.

[The God of Adventure is looking at you. He is excited with anticipations.]

Excited with anticipations, what a load of...

Kum. Uuuuhm.

...Wow, God of Adventure is the best.

[God of Adventure is proud.]

Had I only been complaining and making fun of the God of Adventure? You are even saying you feel proud now?

Now, let's check the Focused Effort Skill.

[Focused Effort (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Slowness.

It will lead you to greater result when you pursue something with stronger desire for longer.

Mastery growth rate will increase if you focus and work on a particular move for longer than a certain duration.

Additional attributes: Increases focus and mental strength by small margins.

The Focused Effort was not far off from what I thought it was.

The question was how long I needed to maintain the focus for the improved mastery rate.

Also, since it said a particular move, I wondered if it meant I had to refrain from doing anything else.

It probably means I can't occasionally try out mana circulation training while doing swordsmanship training, but what about shield techniques?

Both swordsmanship and shield techniques are under the combat skill classification.

Could they be considered same move?

Also, if all other movements are not allowed, does that include breathing?

That probably is not it.

This skill has a lot that I need to find out from now on.

I should check it out whenever I can while clearing the floor. If it is really confusing, I should just ask Kiri Kiri for more detailed explanation.

All right. That's enough of organizing.

[Round 14, Day Six, 17:10]

Shall I head out?

I have no need to rest in the waiting room.

I had plenty of nap at Kiri Kiri's field. I'm already healed of all wounds, and my exhausted stamina is also replenished.

Let's just go now.

[Would you like to enter?]

Um?

The party setting window is not appearing.

That means... it is a solo stage?

I get why I was teleported without any conditions and Kiri Kiri said I'll be able to clear this without much difficulty.

They were probably omitted because they are not needed.

I think I'll be able to get to higher floors pretty quickly if solo stages continue for a while.

While I'm at this, let's try to catch up to the floors that others are at on other difficulties.

Initially, I was at fairly high floors in comparison to other challengers, but I spent too much time at the Sixth Floor.

In other difficulties, there are numerous rankers who are at the 30th Floor, which is called the residential area, and the floors above.

Of course, the stages at the Hell Difficulty are different, but I don't like that I am behind on floor numbers.

I should go up faster.

I want to check out the residential area too.

“Let's go.”

* * *

Through the portal, I got to a bonfire room. I activated another portal inside the bonfire room, and I was standing at a lush jungle at an instant.

The landscape is something I had not experienced before.

It is probably better than deserts or ice lands.

It is a little, no... seriously hot and humid, but I can definitely endure this.

Still, if I didn't have the heat resistance, I think I would have been in for a lot of pain.

What's the clearing goal?

[You have entered the 12th Floor's trial.]

Description: Welcome to the Ihaoi Continent, the place that is well known to be the home world of Ihaoi race.

Ihaoi Continent's environment is full of danger to the point that it is

understandable why even the original residents abandoned their home world and left.

It is a savage world without any civilization. However, the continent is a prized tourist destination famous for extremely low chance of survival and ferocious predators.

Of course, there are not many challengers who came to test their strength at the Ihaoi's jungle and left the place alive.

Young challenger who just became an adult and wishes to prove your abilities, the value you should possess in this continent is not bravery but cautiousness.

There will always be countless predators that will attempt to take your life. Survive the jungle for 25 days and prove that you are a fully matured adult and a warrior.

[Condition of Success]

1. Survive for 25 days.

It is such a clear cut explanation.

Survive.

[Your inventory window is becoming inactive.]

My inventory window is becoming inactive?

“Inventory.”

There really is no response.

I looked at my two hands while feeling hopeless.

I didn't even get to take a shield or sword.

In my pocket... It is empty.

There is nothing there.

Hahahaha. I feel like cursing someone.

Who should I curse?

...I should curse myself.

I let my guard down and entered this place without proper armaments.

I should reflect on this to never let it happen again in the future. Let's hold out and think of this as a punishment.

I looked at the clear condition again.

Survive for 25 days huh...

By any chance... I need to be here for 25 days no matter what? That is not the case, right?

Right?

Uh? That isn't the case, right?

* * *

"Kiri Kiri!! You should have told me about this!"

I am done for.

There is no condition for failure.

Moreover, there is no return portal.

I looked everywhere over and over, but I don't see any portal.

In other words, unless I die, I need to stay in this jungle for 25 days no

matter what.

However, now is...

[Round 14, Day 6, 17:15]

Considering the time, I cannot stay here for 25 days.

There is only 24 days before the round ends.

In other words, I need to stay trapped here for the next 24 days, and then I'll get teleported to the waiting room.

After that, during the next round, I need to survive 25 days from the beginning to clear this place.

I have never seen a stage so shitty like this.

If I cleared the 11th Floor just a day sooner, just a day... This foul luck would have been avoided.

Uuuuaaaaa. Fuck.

Ugh. Let's get this straight.

What should I do from now on?

I need to try to be content while living in poverty for the next 24 days.

I need to make a place to stay.

I need to make complete safety as my uttermost priority and procure food.

It is like being on a vacation at a South American jungle. Holla!

Still, making a camp and procuring food won't be easy.

This is the 12th Floor at the Hell Difficulty.

Just like how wild animals declare their territories, should I select a territory and let that be known to the natives of this jungle?

Um... Since I still don't know what kind of enemies I'll be meeting, I am not sure yet.

They could be similar to humans or they could be wild animals evolved closer to monsters.

They could be something else completely unexpected.

Let's think about this later.

One remaining method is clearing the 12th Floor in 24 days and getting outside.

Through the conquest clear.

The clear condition is 25 days of survival.

In that case, what if I eradicate all things that are threat to my life?

For now, I should explore this place and get a feel for the difficulty. If I see a possibility for success, then I should aim for the conquest clear.

[Kiaaaaaaa~]

An unpleasant high pitch roar was heard from somewhere.

Also, a giant shadow darkened the area.

When I turned around, what came into my field of view was a house sized... No... It was a building sized dinosaur.

A dinosaur that looks like that... What was it called?

I saw one in a picture book when I was a kid.

Brachiosaurs?

At that moment, there was another dinosaur of similar size that was charging at the one that I thought might be a Brachiosaurs.

Of the two dinosaurs fighting over there, none of them is an herbivore.

They are both carnivores.

It looked like they had been chewing on meat jerkies ever since they were hatched.

Along with loud roars, claws that were just as gigantic were swung, and soon incredible amount of blood was spread to the air.

It looks like water coming out of firetruck's hose.

I think I could make a swimming pool if I collected all that blood on a crater.

[Kwaaaaaa!]

A roar exploded out again, and this time, red flame started to linger around a dinosaur's mouth.

With that, the dinosaur was...

What the, what is that? By any chance, is that it?

It is not the time to just sit here and watch.

For now, it's time to bounce.

The amount of mana being focused at that dinosaur's mouth is no joke.

I'm far away from it, but even I can feel it.

That is extremely dangerous.

Kwaaaaang~

While I was running, I could hear colliding sound from my back, and the ground shook.

I slowly looked back to see. It seemed like it was a shockwave from the fire breath from one dinosaur colliding with the barrier of the other dinosaur, the one that I thought was a brachiosaurus.

It was the real fire breath!

Seriously, why the fuck is there a dragon on the 12th Floor?

I need to run.

Dinosaur blood was raining down from the sky like heavy summer rain. I ran through the bushes to avoid the blood rain. I diligently rolled my brain while running.

What should I do?

I don't even have any information. Aiming for the conquest clear at a Jurassic Park with berserk dragons running around is not a sane decision.

I need information.

Chapter 59

Tutorial 12th Floor (2)

It took a while for me to get away from the scene of two fake dragons running wild.

Because their bodies were so huge, no matter how far I got from them, I could still see them clearly as if I was right next to them.

I was able to get away from the scene of violent battle after running for a long while through the bushes.

When I thought that I was finally and definitely out of danger, I sat while leaning on a tree.

“Ugh.”

What should I do now?

This really feels hopeless.

I wouldn't be feeling this way if I could just open the inventory. No, if I had the basic sword and shield at least, I wouldn't feel so hopeless right now.

First, since I can't bring out food or water, I need to worry about food.

This place is a lush jungle.

Since there are grasses and trees everywhere, I think I'll be able to find edible fruits or vegetables.

However, if I carelessly pick and eat fruits out of hunger and get poisoned, that would be a serious trouble.

I don't know when or where unexpected danger might come at me. If I get poisoned by chance, I cannot even bring out antidote potion.

Since the situation came to this, it was really fortunate that I got the Great Poison Resistance Skill after clearing the 11th Floor.

I should gather fruits when I see them. After securing minimum safety, I should eat them only when I feel like I'm dying from hunger.

The food that seems the safest to eat are meat...

If I could find raw meat and roast it on fire to eat, I probably won't need to worry about poison.

Poisonous animals usually have the venom gland at the mouth, so I just need to cut off their heads instead of going through the difficult process of eliminating poison from the meat.

It is not perfect, but I think that should be enough as the bare minimum safety against the poison.

I am not going to do further measures against poison since I don't know anything else.

Thinking about procuring food made me think about the two fake dragons that I ran into earlier.

They had humongous bodies.

If I can get even just a part of their meat, I probably won't have to worry about food for a while.

The fight is probably over by now?

Um...

No. Let's not get distracted by the thought.

Even if one of them is dead, the other one must be still there.

If I approach it carelessly, and if it attacks me because I am bothering it while it is eating, that would be a big trouble for me.

Also, there are probably other scavengers who are thinking the same thing I am.

Would I be the only one who is interested in that giant dinosaur's dead body?

Probably not all of the living beings in this jungle are as big as those dinosaurs.

There probably are ones that are a lot smaller.

Maybe there are also ones as small as me.

To me, the smaller-sized enemies could be more dangerous than the giant ones.

Enemies like that are going to be hanging around the dead body. I shouldn't even try to put myself in danger by butting in there.

Actually, I should get further away before such bastards show up.

Let's move again.

* * *

Having walked inside this tightly packed jungle for so long, and then for a little longer again, the sense of alertness I had initially had become dull. Instead, all I was left with was frustration.

It's hot. Also, it's too humid.

The grass that's sticking to my skin... The grass that's blocking my field of view... I hate them all.

I hate the bugs flying around near me even more.

Fuck.

After entering the 12th Floor, what I have seen so far are the two dinosaurs, ridiculous amount of trees, grass, and bugs. Those are all.

This environment is provoking extreme discomfort.

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: Big Bro, are you busy right now?]

It is a message.

...Since a message came, I might as well rest for a bit.

I'm pretty far from the starting point. Also, let alone any danger, I don't see any organisms besides bugs around me.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: No, not yet. I'll get busy soon.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: You are at 12th Floor. How is it?]

I thought hard about how to tell him and then decided to just be honest.

Afterall, Lee Hyun-jin is also in Hell Difficulty.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: It is a real bitch. The Inventory Window is closed.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: Inventory Window is?]

I explained my situation in detail to satisfy his curiosity.

Lee Hyung-jin didn't send any response for a while.

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor:... I think I shouldn't get that far, Big Bro. Actually, I guess it is just that I cannot get that far.]

Um...

Actually, I was expecting a response like ‘As I thought, the difficulty is insane. Keep working hard, Big Bro.’ Because of that, I explained with exaggeration. However...

Lee Hyung-jin was also a challenger in the Hell Difficulty. It seemed I took this fact too lightly.

It looks like this kid’s mental game is about to develop a crack.

Let’s divert the topic.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: How are the newbies?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: They are doing okay. They seem frustrated because they are not able to get past the First Floor, but what could they do. If they carelessly rush the stage, they will die.]

This guy is not usually gloomy like this. Usually, he has a bright personality. He laughs even at the smallest things.

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: What about you?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: I am thinking about postponing challenging the Third Floor boss room until the next round. Unlike you, it will be hard for me to not fall on the cloud bridge. Also, I don’t have any information about what’s below it, so I don’t want to challenge it when I don’t feel comfortable.]

Could it be that he lost confidence when he gave up the Third Floor boss room?

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: For now, I am going to wait until I grow strong enough to have the confidence in getting through the floor.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: All right. That’s safe. Well then, keep up the good work.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 3rd Floor: Okay, Big Bro.]

Lee Hyung-jin had bubbly personality when it came to dealing with people. However, when it came to the stages, he was very calm and safety-oriented.

His play style was very meticulous and calm.

He thinks about a lot of things and makes the move after checking them.

To base it off of video games, I guess I could explain him as a thief or assassin class.

He was still at the Third Floor, so he had not had a real combat yet, but his tendency was like that.

He was the first challenger besides myself that got past the Second Floor in the Hell Difficulty, so that proved his abilities.

I asked why he entered the Hell Difficulty when he is so careful like that. He also said he was drunk at the moment and selected the Hell Difficulty out of whim under influence of the alcohol.

As I thought, alcohol is the cause of all evil and wrong.

Still, because he has a warm personality, he likes talking to people. Other people also likes talking to him.

Also, because he is very thorough and careful, he is taking care of all lower floor challengers, who were all at the First Floor, giving them advices and counsel.

Most of the advices he is giving are coming from me, but it is far better for them to come through Lee Hyung-jin than from me directly.

People are more comfortable with that, and Lee Hyung-jin is good at leveling the eyes with others when explaining things to them.

When it comes to psychological counseling, he is far better than me.

He is a friend I am thinking highly of in many ways.

He is a few years younger than me, but there are a lot I could learn from him as well.

Seeing a guy like that getting depressed is bugging me.

Now that I think about it, I've heard that there is going to be the day of the great harmony at the end of this round.

I should meet Lee Hyung-jin and talk to him for a bit.

If possible, I should ask Kim Min-huk to join us in the conversation.

Honestly, I am not confident at all about making someone feel better through a conversation.

With Kim Min-huk tagging along, he should be able to console Lee Hyung-jin by himself.

I realized Kim Min-huk was busy lately. Although the thought zapped through my mind, I ignored it.

Now, let's focus on my own situation.

First, I need to find a place that could be used as my camp.

Since the clear condition is surviving here for a long time, I desperately need a camp site where I could rest and be safe.

I should gradually expand my territory with my camp as the main site.

The camp site candidates I can think of right now are...

Next to the river.

Cave.

Above a giant tree.

Are they all?

The area near the river has high likelihood of already being the predators' territories. As for a cave, it would be hard to find.

That leaves above a giant tree as a camp site.

I should look for a tree that is significantly bigger and taller than others, one that's big enough for me to make a tent above it and reside.

How do I find it?

...Do I need to walk around aimlessly until I find it?

Through this jungle?

If possible, I wish I could look around the area.

My field of view is too limited because of tightly packed trees growing everywhere.

The stage... No, even if it is just the landscape nearby, I would like to confirm it with my own eyes.

To see my current position and the landscape around me, the easiest thing I can do is just flying up.

However, if I do, I'll be exposed in midair.

If there are enemies who include the sky as the attack range, I'll be attacked right away.

When I was concerned about my visual range, I could hear steps nearby.

It was a really, really quiet sound.

However, it was not the kind made by small bugs causing the leaves to swing.

They were footsteps.

They were sounds of intentionally cautious and quiet steps.

The feline predators at the Eighth Floor had this kind of footstep sounds.

I kept my pose steady and moved only my eyes to look around.

There is nothing.

I looked around at the direction where the footstep sounds came from, but I don't see the cause.

Did I get the wrong direction?

No.

Although I am at the jungle with the sounds of leaves waving in the air and chirping of birds and bugs chaotically mixed in, there is no way my senses could be wrong.

The footstep sounds definitely came from my left.

[Battle Focus]

That means I just cannot see the opponent.

Everything was slowed down because of the Battle Focus. In that slowed down world, I patiently waited until the opponent showed up.

This is the first time for me to fight an assassin type.

Against an assassin, it's probably the surprise attack that I should be cautious about.

However, if I know where it is before it happens, I will be the one who will deal the surprise attack.

There it is.

With the invisible enemy coming closer, I can feel its presence more clearly.

The sounds of quiet footsteps are coming toward me too.

Little by little...

I used the Mana Circuit to circulate the mana inside my body and focused a part of it on my left hand.

I swung my hand to the left side as soon as I became certain the invisible enemy was within my range.

The mana was focused on the tip of my hand like a sharp edge. I felt something was cut with it.

Slice...

[Kiiiiiaaaaak!]

“Now I can see you. Hello?”

The enemy in front of me was a monster that resembled the appearance of a long armed orangutan.

I thought this environment was like the Jurassic period, but this place even has mammals.

I called that bastard a monster instead of just orangutan because it had gigantic scythes below its shoulders instead of arms.

They were like arms of a mantis.

Also, its mouth was a playful mix of a bird's beak and sabretooth's

dental structure.

For the sake of convenience, let's just call it an orangutan monster.

The orangutan monster was bleeding around its neck.

As I thought, my attack was dealt correctly.

I felt a little bit of satisfaction from having confirmed that.

It seemed the orangutan monster panicked from realizing it could understand my words. Perhaps it panicked because I attacked it when it knew it was invisible. Although I could not be certain why, it was hesitating to do anything.

"I'm so glad I met you. I wish we could chat for a while. I have a lot of things I would like to hear, you see?"

[Ki... Kiiiaaaaack! Kiiiiack!]

"Why are you acting like you cannot understand me. I know you can understand me just fine."

The knowledge before the time of Babel was merciless.

Nobody can escape its effect, not the one possesses the skill nor the opponent in the front.

[Kuuurururu... Kuruooooaaaaa.]

Anyway, this bastard is too incorporative.

It seems there are plants that mesmerize other animals and eat them.

Is it like the ultimate evolution version of the venus fly trap?

"Why don't you calm down a little instead? If the conversation goes well, I might let you live, you get it?"

[Kuuuuuooooaaa!]

I don't think this will work. Hostility is only deepening after each time I try to talk to him.

It cannot be helped.

They said the best medicine for those that don't understand words is a good beating.

Let's try talking to it a bit later.

I took a step in, and the orangutan monster charged in after another beastly roar.

It has invisibility cloaking, which is a cheat-like ability. However, its abilities are so-so besides that one thing.

Although it is completely visible now, it is just charging at me without any plan. I don't feel so threatened by it.

It does have many violent looking things attached to it, but it is only on par with ordinary wild animals.

I blocked the swung scythe with the hand covered in mana. I swung my other hand and cut its shoulder.

The mana-covered hand could be shield or sword.

Of course, mana-covered shield and sword are far more powerful.

The difference in reach is substantial, and they are safer too.

The orangutan monster screamed in pain. I kicked its lower body to knock it over. I stepped on its chest so it could not move.

However, even in that state, the monster continued to struggle and resist.

To stop the scythe being swung at me, I cut off its other shoulder. Also, to stop it from struggling, I struck its stomach a few times.

Finally, the monster stopped for a moment.

I think I can finally interrogate it.

“Does it hurt? See? Wouldn’t it have been better if you acted like a gentleman from the beginning? If you answer my questions from now on, I will...”

Ah... I don’t have any potions.

In that case, I think this bastard is going to die before long.

I was going to ask the monster before it stopped breathing so I could get some information even if it was going to be only a little bit. However, the monster opened its mouth first.

And then...

[Kiiiiiaaaaak! Kuuuuuaaaaaak!]

It roared loudly.

This is not good.

It spoke a simple language of wild beasts, so the meaning was not as detailed as beings of higher intelligence.

However, the beastly roar that it just screamed had one clear meaning.

Revenge.

[Kiiiiiaaaaak!]

[Kiiiiiaaaaaaaaak!]

I can hear similar kinds of roars from the distance.

They are not coming from just a few.

Ones I can hear are in order of several dozens.

I turned my head and looked at the monster crushed below me.

The monster already had stopped breathing. It was dead.

The situation is getting twisted in a really annoying way.

I thought about things as I listened violent sounds of footsteps from the distance.

I don't know the enemies' strength.

I don't know their number either.

I don't know the situation in this place either.

I don't know the landscape.

I'm at a disadvantage on everything.

I should run for now

Chapter 60

Tutorial 12th Floor (3)

Ugh... Fuck.

I knew this would happen.

This god damn Hell Difficulty never lets me off easy.

I didn't stop moving while I complained inside.

[Kiiiiiaaaaak!]

Why do I have to suffer this trouble because of those crazy orangutan bastards?

Running through the jungle with tightly packed woods was harder than I thought.

The ground is bumpy and slippery. Also, it is easy to get tripped over the tree roots. The view is completely covered by the leaves. Viewing anything beyond 10 meters was difficult.

I wish I could just fight them for a while and end this vicious cycle.

Unfortunately, the orangutans did not agree.

After killing the orangutan that I met first, I killed the other orangutans that came running after hearing that one's roar.

These monsters also roared before dying, and other orangutan monsters appeared.

This cycle repeated over and over.

The problem was that, having confirmed the difference in strengths, these pricks didn't even rush at me anymore.

Keeping their distance, they screamed from the distance to annoy me. When it looked like I was letting go of my focus even just a little bit, one or two of them attempted surprise attacks as if they were suicide squads.

They scattered and ran away when I approached them.

Do these assholes not even have basic survival instincts?

The orangutan monsters gladly tossed their lives away for the sake of disrupting my focus and interfering with my resting.

Like that, the frustrating standoff continued for almost a day, and I had no choice but to escape the place.

If they are extremely weak, I could just beat them to death one by one, but they are not that weak.

Every one of the orangutan monsters have the minimum combat abilities becoming of the residents of 12th Floor of the Hell Difficulty.

They have gigantic scythes on their shoulders, and they are very quick.

Also, they are very intelligent.

They are cornering me and chasing me like how hunters hunt wild animals.

Even when I put distance between us using Talaria's Wings and Blink, somehow, they get right on my tail again.

I was flying low for a very short duration, trying not to draw attention from other monsters in the jungle. Because of this, I was not able to lose the orangutan monsters.

Even so, I don't want to encounter new dangers by flying high for a long time.

Compared to the two dinosaurs I ran into when I first entered the 12th Floor, the orangutans are not much of a threat.

It is just that there are many of them, and they are clever.

The orangutans already set up a wide perimeter to surround me. They are moving the perimeter along with my movements so I cannot escape the formation.

Damn it. I would feel better if they just swarmed at me in hundreds right now.

Is it going to take acting like I collapsed after being wounded for these bastards to let their guard down and attack me?

Ah, there is one more.

The reason why it is so difficult to deal with these orangutans.

Each of these bastards has unique skills.

It seemed this was not something special to the orangutan monsters. It seemed this was the special characteristic of this jungle.

The two giant dinosaurs I met earlier used barrier and fire breath.

It was so out of the blue.

They were in the middle of physical struggle, but all of the sudden, they used magic-based techniques.

It does not make sense.

No matter how I think about them, they are skills.

Just like how I obtained them and used them in the Tutorial, these

guys each have a skill.

The first orangutan had invisibility skill. The second one used physical strengthening type skill and wind type magic attack.

I don't know which bastard is going to shoot which kind of attack. This is getting really complicated.

Damn it. Only if the environment was something that I am more used to...

No... Only if the surrounding was more open...

[Kiiaaaaaoooo!]

An orangutan that was hiding in the bushes jumped out to the front of me. It seemed it was hiding and waiting along my route that I was taking in attempt to run away.

I knew all along that you guys were hiding in there.

Puuk.

Along with that sound, my right hand pierced the monster's chest.

After that, I kicked the other orangutan monster that came at me after a delay.

[Kiiiiiaaak!]

The one that I kicked rolled on the ground. When its scythes touched the ground, the dirt became stained in black along with sparking sound.

...What is that. Electricity?

Are you Pikachu?

The orangutan monster was trying to get up quickly. I started to run

again after sending its head off flying with the edge of my hand.

Gosh... you annoying pricks.

I think I killed over a hundred of them. Just how many are there?

Because they are only continuing to bother me in small groups of two or three, I cannot determine exactly how many there are.

While running, I looked at a large cliff that could be seen through the gaps between the tree branches above.

I just need to get there.

When I get there, I should go up using Blink and Talaria's Wings.

Those insane orangutans do not have hands.

They have scythes instead of arms.

They probably can't chase me by climbing the cliff.

Even if they do get to the top of the cliff by going round and round the cliff for a long time, I would be somewhere else by then.

The problem is how long it will take me to get to that cliff. It seems pretty far.

Half a day... or a day even if it takes long?

* * *

I looked at the orangutan monster in the distance that was glaring at me and clicked my tongue.

Wow... This is just too much.

Even though I don't want to swear, I cannot help myself but to do it.

These sons of bitches.

Haven't you guys had enough?

These guys don't know when to quit.

These complete morons' guerrilla tactic is continuing for two days.

I thought I'll get to the cliff soon, but I don't feel like I'm getting any closer although I had been going in the direction.

The cliff was huge. The jungle was vast, extending to the end of the horizon. Also, my field of view was blocked by lush forest. Because of them all making things worse together, I could not measure the distance to the cliff accurately.

Now, I am really getting closer to the cliff, but I'm slowly losing faith in my sense of distance.

I have not had anything to eat or drink in the past two days.

Of course, I didn't get to sleep either.

Actually, resting was not the problem. I didn't even have time to poop.

"Hey, you moron bastards! Are you assholes going to take responsibility if I crap in my pants?"

Of course they won't. You irresponsible bastards.

I used Soul Cry Skill and shouted that, but it is not doing anything.

Ever since I killed all orangutans near me by provoking them to come out using the Soul Cry Skill, they are lurking around just beyond the range of the skill.

Of course, the suicide squads ambush continued periodically.

Just how intelligent are these guys?

The sophistication of the perimeter that the orangutans formed is no joke.

I feel like I'm getting an indirect experience for what it feels like to be inside the thousand-mile formation described in Murim warrior fictions.

There are traps and ambushes here and there along my path.

The interval of their ambushes is incredibly annoying.

There are others glaring or screaming at me from the distance to add to the frustration.

Those are not all.

I tried multiple times to escape the formation using the wind spirit and suddenly changing the direction. However, I failed every time.

It seems they formed the perimeter in a complete circle.

On top of that, it is layered after layer.

I think there are at least four layers.

Is this even possible?

When we are in a jungle where I can barely even see past 10 meters?

How could such a large number of monsters make such accurate movement in a place like this?

This is impossible unless there is a control tower where the locations of all orangutans and my location could be observed along with the full open view of the surrounding terrain to carry out tactical level plans.

It is to the point of making me wonder if these bastards actually have incredible science and have artificial satellites and radio

communications.

Is it a skill?

It is plausible.

These bastards each have a special skill.

They were mostly the kind that were directly useful during combat. However, just like the invisibility skill that the first orangutan had, they each had all sorts of extraordinary skills.

If some of them had skills that allowed one to see the terrain from the sky and enabled mass communication to all orangutans in the jungle...

Also, if they have a commander that can lead them using those skills...

It is a plausible explanation.

Also, it is a plausible explanation that is not solving anything for me.

I thought about it as I dodged the ambush by orangutans jumping down from the tree branches above and smashed their heads to the floor.

If my theory is true, then I don't think I can escape this formation.

Let's organize the choices I have.

Find the enemy's control tower and kill their commander.

Use the Talaria's Wings and run using high altitude flight.

Go over the cliff.

The first choice is impossible.

The second choice is too dangerous.

Considering the range of these bastards' formation, I'll probably have to fly for quite some time before I can escape it.

Also, if I tried it just to escape these annoying orangutans and end up encountering one of those bogus dragons, that will just make the problem bigger.

In the end, that leaves the third choice, going over the cliff.

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: Hey. Are you busy?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 12th Floor: Yes. I am. What is it?]

I threw a rock at an orangutan that was lying low under the bushes as I replied.

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: I got a weird info. It is not urgent, so I'll talk to you later.]

What was that for? You are leaving me hanging.

I roughly erased the thoughts about the message and focused again in running.

* * *

Finally!

After running and running, before I realized, the cliff looked closer.

Now, it really feels close.

I haphazardly dodged suicide attacks by the orangutans who were throwing themselves at me. I used Blink several times to move up.

[Talaria's Wings]

I used the Talaria's Wings as soon as I got to be in midair.

The flight effect of the Talaria's Wings was activated. Like that, I started to fly.

Finally, I am free. I am so sick of you bastards!

[Kiaaak. Kiiaaaaak!]

The bastards were screaming at me as they watched me flying up. I sent them a fist potato and focused on flying.

Near the cliff, I flew as I slowly raised the altitude.

There better not be a dinosaur like the one I met on the first day.

As soon as got to the top of the cliff, what I saw was an open field.

Also, there were orangutan monsters. At a glance, it seemed there were over a thousand of them.

What are these guys doing here?

I thought about that as I landed at the edge of the cliff.

A thousand... Two... three thousand...

On top of that, there are ones that are significantly bigger than the orangutan monsters I had seen so far.

Why are they all here?

Although I am thankful that they are all gathered in one place.

I guess I can just leave these guys here and go down the cliff by flying again.

I realized why they were gathered here after the orangutan in the

front swung its arm.

[Talaria's Wings is sealed temporarily.]

Oh...

I didn't even think about this being possible.

Having their forces ready at the top of the cliff based on my current heading and sealing my flight ability when I get to the top...

These guys are super smart.

[Kiiiiaaaaa!]

[Kiiiiaaaak!]

Countless orangutans gathered at the open field roared.

Their roars contained revenge, animosity and belittlement.

Fuckers... Looks like they are excited.

There are about three thousand orangutan monsters, and my flight ability is sealed.

The difference in combat potential is overwhelming.

It is a fight I cannot possibly lose.

“Soul Steal.”

[Soul Steal (Lv.5)]

Description: You produced surprising result that no god in Pantheon thought would be possible. A nameless god who wishes to hide the true identity is gifting you this power.

When you cast it, the enemies within the range will be marked in their souls and slowly drained of their energy.

When you kill the marked enemy, you will absorb its soul which will heal your body.

It is the skill that I obtained after clearing the Sixth Floor which made me go through the worst possible hardship and grinding since I entered the Tutorial.

Since then, the skill allowed me to clear up to the 10th Floor as if I had a free pass through them all.

This skill lowers enemies' strength within the range, and there is the healing effect from defeating them.

Moreover, the enemies lose strength even more over time.

Since then, a group of monsters with so-so strengths was no match for me.

On top of this, now I have a new passive power skill.

[Perseverance (Lv.1)]

Description: It is a gift from the God of Adventure.

This power will give you strength when you are facing difficult adversities, especially during the most trying times.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the enemies' number and strength.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to the number of comrades you have standing behind you.

Your combat abilities will increase by a small margin in proportion to your exhaustion and wounds.

The effects can overlap with multiple situations happening simultaneously.

Additional attributes: A certain amount of resistance will be given to you against mental magic attacks and stress.

A perfect chance for testing the Perseverance Skill's boost effects came.

With the Soul Steal starting to drain strengths from the monsters, they were starting to panic. I watched them and smiled big.

It's good that you guys read the opponent's mind and set a trap, but...

Taking a chance could lead to danger.

Did you know that the most certain tactic for victory is continuing with the same tactic once you got the upper hand?

"Don't even think about running! Come at me you little bitches!"

I used the Soul Cry as soon as I noticed some of them hesitating and running away.

[Additional Attributes: Enemies who are not as powerful as you cannot ignore your cry and run.]

You cannot run because of the provocation effect of the Soul Cry.

Where do you think you are going?

Since there are many, this will take a while.

However, that's the only downside to this.

I am not worried at all about the outcome of this battle.

I am the expert when it comes to slaughtering a large group of monsters.

[Kiiiaaak! Kiiak!]

Their beastly roars exploded. Various mid-range skill attacks were launched from them.

[Battle Focus]

Having confirmed the trajectory of their attacks,

[Blink]

I penetrated deep into the group and swung my hand that was covered in mana.

Orangutans' bodies were cut off every time I swung my hand, and blood gushed out.

Every time I harvested each death, the Soul Steal's effect returned them as my energy.

The bloodbath, which started like that, continued until not a single one of them remained standing on the field.

* * *

I washed the blood off of my face using the drizzling rain.

On the field, there was just me and blood and dead bodies of orangutan monsters.

I think this place will develop horrible stench of blood soon.

Fortunately, there is rain falling right now.

It will wash away the smell of blood a little.

For now, let's get away from this place.

From loads of dead bodies on the ground, I picked up a cut off leg and opened the Talaria's Wings.

The seal on the Talaria's Wings was canceled only after I killed the caster.

I started to glide after jumping off from the cliff, and I landed on a suitable place after gliding for about ten minutes.

Now I am back to where I started.

To point out a few changes, I am pretty tired now, and I'm holding an orangutan's leg.

What should I do now?

I could think of eating, sleeping, finding a camp site and gathering. However, I ignored them all.

I had one thing left that was more important.

I need to poop first

Chapter 61

Tutorial 12th Floor (4)

It was pouring rain. With almost no strength left, I walked through the forest.

When I just got rid of the pesky orangutan bastards, now it rains.

Would it kill to rain just the right amount... Instead, it had to rain the point where it was difficult to keep my eyes open to see properly.

I have recovered considerable amount of stamina using the Soul Steal. However, I spent more than what I recovered.

It is going to be too much to try move quickly through this rain in current condition.

I think it will take a while to get to the destination.

I worked on the orangutan's leg that I was holding on my hand as I walked slowly.

I was not doing anything special.

I used my hand wrapped in mana to haphazardly cut away its hide, fur and skin. I was trying to slice off the flesh from the bone.

I thought I could do it cleanly like what I saw when I was young at a fish market where some old lady perfectly lifted just the flesh off of the fish while leaving the bones behind. However, I was mistaken.

The pieces of flesh that were cut from the leg were not even the size of a handful. They were full of bad cuts resulting in loose flesh hanging here and there. Also, they had squashed parts because I was holding them with my hands.

It looked like a clay monster that a young nephew of mine gave me as a present when he came back from kindergarten.

By the way, the clay monster was made with me as the model.

Still, I should eat this.

I washed the flesh in the rain, cut it little bit at a time, put it in my mouth and tried to chew.

It is the worst.

It reeks of fat and fishy smells.

It was slimy yet tough.

Blood came out of the flesh every time I chewed on it, and it was strangely sticky.

I fought the urge to spit out the meat and swallowed it.

Wow... The raw meat of orangutan had the destructive power beyond my wildest imagination.

I attempted eating the raw meat because I had been eating mostly meat jerkies since I entered the Tutorial. However...

This is total failure.

Still, I need to eat this.

I have been moving for the past four days without eating or sleeping.

I cannot afford to complain about the food.

I thought about Kiri Kiri who did not tell me that the inventory window will become inactive.

She said the result will be the same even if she gave me any advice, and she also said I'll be able to get through this stage safely.

However, before saying all that, she also did say that I would have it a little easier if she did give me an advice.

A little? This is not a little!

If I knew I was going to suffer such huge inconvenience, I would have been better off if I received the information.

If you think I'm going to buy you cake next time, just wait and see.

I complained like that by myself and continued to walk.

Unlike how I was when I first arrived at the 12th Floor, I now had a destination to go to. That fact gave my legs some strength at least.

Before I came down from the cliff, I saw a monster moving just below a small hill in the distance.

It was going into a cave to hide when the rain started.

It was far, and it was a small cave hidden amongst the grass. However, I definitely saw the monster going inside the cave.

Thanks to all vision related skills I've acquired in addition to the improved vision, my vision was as strong as rapacious birds.

So, I was certain about what I saw and decided to go there.

After coming down from the cliff, I took care of taking a dump, which was the matter of the uttermost urgency, and I started to move immediately.

That was until the rain started to pour where I could not move fast anymore.

Ah, of course, I used leaves to wipe myself.

Although this is obvious now, but as for the idea of doing it with orangutan's leg... Um... That never happened.

It was extremely unpleasant to poop while crunching under pouring rain, although the rainfall acted like natural videt, and that could be considered as convenient.

However, actually, I was super concerned the poo might get on the pants because of rain and resulting splashes.

Because my body and clothes all got soaked, it was very uncomfortable and inconvenient.

I suddenly feel nauseated.

The orangutan meat in my mouth right now feels even more disgusting.

Uuugh.

I felt the urge to throw up.

I unconsciously spat out everything in my mouth.

Ugh... Really...

I looked at half chewed up meat on the ground that I was chewing and the meat that was still on my hand.

I really cannot eat this.

A part of me said 'how could I possibly complain about the type of food when I was at the brink of collapsing out of exhaustion or dying from hunger?'

The other part of me yelled 'fuck, you call this edible for human consumption?'

The third part of me, who became the judge, raised the arm of the

other part of me.

This is not something a human being should eat.

A human being has something to protect before just surviving.

I threw away the orangutan's leg meat and just continued to walk.

A part of me said how about keeping the meat and roasting it when the rain stops. However, I ignored it.

I did not want to turn back just for that disgusting meat.

If I feel like I would really die from hunger, I'll go peel off the tree barks and eat them.

I collected the rain to wash my mouth which reeked of meat fat and blood smell. Having done that, I felt like I could see things a little clearly.

I think I finally get what the theme is for the 12th Floor's Stage.

Not only do I need to survive, I need to master various survival skills.

The difficulty in combat itself does not seem very high.

The two fake dragons that I ran into when I first entered the stage must be the unusually strong ones.

There were the orangutans, but other monsters I saw while I was being chased by the orangutans were not overwhelmingly strong.

Instead of the combat, this stage requires abilities to resolve the matter of shelter, gathering, hunting, butchery, and cooking and good decision making.

I really hate this place.

I prefer fights to the death.

I finally got there. In the end...

The rainy sky finally started to calm. I looked up the sky and sighed.

It was an incredibly difficult march.

No matter how long I waited, the rain did not stop, so I had to keep on walking through the rain storm.

I am glad I didn't get lost on the way.

If it took longer, it might have gotten dangerous.

My wet hair kept on blocking my view. I brushed it up and looked around.

Front of the cave had a leveled ground. The top of the entrance of the cave was covered in vines. The entrance was also hidden behind grass.

If I did not see that monster going in here, I would not have noticed this place either.

As I could figure out from how the monster entered the cave when the rain started to fall, the cave was proofed against rain.

The cave was not leading downward. It was shaped such that it was dug upward from the bottom of the small hill, so there was no concern for water coming in.

As long as the water does not leak from the ceiling, this place is perfect.

There is actually a problem.

The cave's owner, no, the cave's old owner does not know how to greet the guest.

“Hey, come out.”

I couldn't sense any presence, so I picked up a rock and threw it into the cave entrance.

There was still no response.

[Soul Cry]

“Come out. This is now my home.”

Kuruk Kuruk.

Echoing sound could be heard from the cave. A monster came out while making crackling sound.

It looked like how a weasel or otter would look like if it was enlarged to the size of a crocodile.

It looked pretty cute.

Things unique about it were that it was standing up right in two feet even with its bent back.

Also, its front claws were wrapped in electricity.

[Soul Steal]

I activated Soul Steal to weaken it and thought about it.

How should I attack an enemy who has electricity on its claws?

I don't even have any weapon.

Moreover, there are lots of water around me at the moment.

I think I'll get electrocuted if I got near it.

Wait, if it just touches the water with that claw, am I going to get electrocuted to death with it?

I never met anything that attacks with electricity, so I don't know a way to deal with it.

[Kiiiiaaaaaooook!]

The weasel roared and charged at me from the front.

Although it is wrapped in electricity, if it is going to charge at me thoughtlessly, then...

[Talaria's Wings]

I swung the left wing and struck the weasel.

Not only do the wings have strong resistance to magic, they are also not directly connected to my body.

Each wing is about two meters in span. I just need to kill it before it gets near me.

Let's kill it fast.

Although rain stopped, there are too much water everywhere.

There is danger of getting electrocuted just from having that bastard around me.

I am curious how powerful the electric attack from that thing would be, but I might go straight to the grave if I tried it out now on my body.

The weasel was thrown off after getting struck by the wing. It was struggling to get up. I set the direction as I looked at the weasel.

[Blink]

Kek!

Along with that last word, the weasel was thrown off to the tree at a distance. It got stuck at the tree trunk.

It was the certain kill combo using the Talaria's Wing and Blink that I started to use since the Fourth Floor.

Its power was still cheat-like even at the 12th Floor.

It seemed the weasel lost its life. My stamina was replenished a little from the Soul Steal's effect.

It took me by a surprise because I ran into a monster that had a skill related to electricity in a situation like this.

I think I should learn something like a resistance to electricity when I get the chance.

I left the monster's dead body be for now. I entered the cave to check out the inside.

Oh... It is nicer than I thought?

It is bigger than I expected.

Inside of the cave was filled with warm air. Other than the smell of the soil, it didn't have any horrible stench.

The cave was about two meters in height, so it didn't cause inconvenience in moving around inside.

[Battle Focus]

Out of reflex, I used Battle Focus.

I heard something just now.

For now, I don't see anything.

It is not to my front.

It could be my rear, side or ceiling.

However, those are also unlikely.

I entered the cave and had been moving further in while carefully looking around the area.

There is no way I would have moved past an enemy without noticing it.

Is it a monster with invisibility or stealth skill?

Damn it, I totally fell for it.

I felt the presence, but I could not figure out the direction.

[Sensory Boost]

I even used the Sensory Boost, a skill that enhanced all of my senses temporarily.

Even with my heightened senses, I still didn't notice anything.

The presence just zapped past me during that one instant.

There are only two possible choices that the opponent could make. It could either attack or run.

I calmly waited for its next move.

Inside the world of accelerated consciousness and heightened senses, I quietly waited.

Left.

Rear.

Ceiling.

I turned around as soon as I felt a small movement and realized the location.

[Kyaaaaaak!]

It came flying toward my face. I grabbed it with my left hand.

Damn it. I shouldn't grab it. Out of reflex, I ended up grabbing it because it was small.

I grabbed on to it tighter with my left hand and swung my right hand after wrapping it in mana.

Along with a slicing sound, the enemy's head was cut off.

Tsk.

I clicked my tongue and dropped the dead body of the small weasel monster.

It looks like it must be the offspring of the one I fought earlier.

Unlike its mother, which was the size of a crocodile, this baby weasel was the size of a person's palm.

Considering the difference in size, it must have been born only recently, yet it was quite dangerous.

It seems all beings in this jungle have all sorts of skills, near max level skills on top of that. This is incredibly frustrating.

I checked the top of my hand.

Before the weasel monster's baby died, it left a long wound on the top of my hand.

It was not deep, but...

Soon, the wound started to close slowly.

Actually, I guess I shouldn't call this kind of healing speed as slow.

The wound was completely healed in about a minute.

[Natural Healing Power (Lv.11)]

[Super Regeneration (Lv.5)]

Along with the Soul Steal, they were the skills that enabled me to go through more party stages that came after the Sixth Floor.

They were incredibly useful because I now possessed methods of healing other than relying on expensive healing potions.

Of course, they improved my chance of survival. Also, they greatly increased my range of activities.

I also could save up on potions a little more.

However, the Super Regeneration Skill had one drawback that was hidden.

[Super Regeneration (Lv.5)]

Description: It dramatically increases the speed of wound healing. Stamina is spent in proportion to the healing speed.

It was the fact that it used stamina.

On top of that, it uses quite a lot of it.

My stamina points grew a lot since I started the Tutorial. Also, because I could use stamina potions when needed, I never thought of this as a big drawback.

Moreover, compared to the loss of stamina, the wound healing was highly effective.

However, I was almost at the bottom of my stamina, and I didn't even have any stamina potion. In this situation, it felt like a huge drawback.

I felt the blood being drawn out of my face. My view looked like it was spinning in disarray.

Ah... I have not felt this in a while.

I thought about the orangutan monster's meat that I threw away to the ground a while ago.

Maybe I should have just eaten it.

Perhaps I shouldn't have over-exerted myself and walk through the rain.

I used a skill as I thought about all sorts of regrets that came up in my mind.

Like that, I lied on the floor as if I was collapsing on it.

Things I need to do are coming to my mind, but I think I'll need to rest first.

* * *

I felt the presence of someone nearby. Out of reflex, I opened my eyes and lifted my head.

At a corner near the entrance, I could see the back of a lizardman who was keeping watch.

[Keruk. Are you awake already, Hubby? Get up. I prepared meals.]

Chapter 62

Tutorial 12th Floor (5)

[Keruk. Are you awake already, Hubby? Get up. I prepared meals for you.]

I could see the back of Idaltaru, no... Idy, sitting at the entrance to stand watch.

I felt around with my hand to find a small pebble. I picked it up and threw it toward the back of Idy's head.

The pebble struck Idy's tail.

"I told you not to call me by that."

[Captain, you are too shy, keruk.]

Um...

I still feel very weak.

Still lying on the ground, I tried opening and closing my hands as I asked Idy,

"How long was I asleep?"

[You slept for about three hours. Keruk. That's pretty long for you, isn't that right, Captain?]

If I did sleep for three hours, that really was long.

If I didn't summon Idy, let alone three hours, I probably couldn't have been able to sleep for even ten minutes.

I had been suffering from inability to fall asleep lately. Because of this, it is impossible for me to fall asleep in dangerous places where I can't put my mind at ease.

In times like that, I had to either put myself to sleep using a sleeping pill or wait until I just fainted.

I am thankful that Idy is here.

Dead Summoning was indeed an incredible skill.

It had limitations of only allowing five summoning and requiring objects with souls. However, it was still incredible.

Bringing back and summoning the dead is the kind of power that could not be obtained by anyone other than gods.

Its effectiveness would be even greater if I summon someone stronger after developing further at a higher floor.

Still, I don't think it was a waste at all to have summoned Idy here.

Before I could rest, to be certain of my safety, I needed her here right away. Also, in a situation like the 12th Floor where I have to stay inside the stage for a very long time, having someone besides me was a really big help.

I could make a better decision just from having a conversation with someone.

Also, it alleviates loneliness which rots away my mind.

It was at the Eighth Floor when I summoned her for the first time using the Dead Summoning.

I just needed someone to draw the enemies' attention, but she was far more talented than I expected.

Not just her combat abilities, but her calm personality, which was not

like the typical violent lizardman, helped.

Of course, she didn't look calm at all when she was burning with the focused desire to take me as her husband at the Fifth Floor.

We had been having conversations since then and developed understanding of each other. Now, we had become pretty close.

According to her, to the lizardman kind, the only thing that mattered in choosing the mate was strength, and stronger meant a better mate. This applied to both genders.

Because of this, to the lizardman's kind, being desired by someone stronger is obviously something to be happy about, and Idaltaru also added that almost nobody refuses such proposals.

She said the lizardman's kind as a whole pursue strength and hone their skills for the sake of mating with someone stronger. It was their most important reason.

Because of this, when I refused her mating proposal, she could not understand me and was infuriated.

Objectively looking at the strength, she was definitely stronger than me at the time.

Now that I have surpassed her in strength, the situation changed a little.

In lizardmen's culture, the right to choose the mate was held by the strong. Since I was stronger than her and I already refused her, she didn't obsess over it anymore.

Actually, other lizardmen that I met at the Fifth Floor had that kind of tendencies, so it was easy to understand.

I also explained to her about human kind's principles.

I explained that forcing someone to mate is a crime, and humans do not like the idea of mating with beings other than humans.

Actually, I don't think the whole species issue would matter if it was with gorgeous beings like elves from fantasy fictions, but...

For now, that's how I explained it to her.

Idy looked very disappointed, but I ignored it.

Since then, with her as my grunt, no... as a comrade, we had been doing well together.

She occasionally called me hubby or whatever, but it became an inside joke between us.

She came next to me and gave me a thinly sliced meat.

As always, I thought it was a meat jerky as I put it in my mouth, but it was raw meat.

"Uuuug... What is this."

[Just eat it. Think of it as tartare. Captain, you have poison resistance, so you cannot get sick from it anyway. Keruk.]

Fortunately, the meat was, perhaps because a lot of the blood was drained or it just was that kind of portion, not hard to eat.

Compared to the orangutan meat, this was far more edible.

[It is the meat from the baby Lamburu that was on the ground here. I prepared it right away, so it should be edible.]

It seemed that weasel monster was called Lamburu.

"Idy. You know a little bit about Ihaoi? I think that's what this place is called."

[I don't know. Keruk.]

Her voice was covered with disappointment, and that conveyed the

meaning of what she really wanted to say.

It was not that she didn't really know about Ihaoi. It was that she did not know if she once knew about Ihaoi or not.

Ever since I had Idy as my comrade, I had asked her a lot of questions.

I asked her how she ended up in the Tutorial, what is the Tutorial's purpose, what it was like before...

I asked her many questions, and Idy was not able to answer most of them.

She said that inside of her head felt like it was turning white whenever she tried to remember the answer, leading to nothing.

She said it was as if a white paint was pasted over her memories.

She looked sad and upset whenever this kind of condition happened, so I didn't try to uncover her past or the true identity of the Tutorial.

She could only tell me about the common knowledge and her skills that she used to have in her past.

Still, she could not remember in detail about anything related to Tutorial.

Um...

Since she knew the name of this monster, maybe she knew about this place in the past.

[Keruk. What's your plan from now on? First, I would like to know the clearing goal.]

I explained briefly about the information and the clearing goal that the message told me.

[In that case, if you just spend 25 days quietly in this cave, you will be

able to clear this stage safely. Keruk. I like this stage a lot. Keruk.]

What do you like about this stage?

[Keruk. Keruk.]

Idy moved her eyes all around the place and did not respond to my question.

“I will not be able to clear it right away. Because of the remaining time, clearing is simply impossible.”

[What do you mean it is impossible to clear?]

I explained to her about the time left in the round and the time I need to spend here to clear the stage.

[As usual, you have foul luck, Captain. Keruk.]

It almost sounds like you are saying I bring foul luck instead of saying I just have bad luck.

Anyway, now that it came to this, I plan to focus on growth and throw away my impatience.

I also explained the Focused Effort skill to Idy.

[I see. I think it would be a good idea to learn about the skill in detail. If you spend the time by focusing on your growth with that skill, this won't exactly be a waste of time. However, first, we need to secure your survival with certainty. Keruk.]

“Yes, right. We should set this area as our territory and hunt the ones living nearby one by one. As we do that, ones coming near the cave will start to disappear over time.”

Residents of this jungle are all wild animals or monsters.

High level predators probably all have their own territories and not go

past their boundaries.

[Keruk. There are bastards that occasionally go past their territories or try to take over another's territory. However, your plan is definitely a logical one.]

[However, if we are too active, high level predators who consider this area as their territories may come.]

I think it will be all right.

The usual bastards won't be able to survive the coordinated attack from me and Idy. In the worst case, we just need to run away.

The high level predators are very likely to be acting alone instead of being in groups like the orangutans.

Moreover, this jungle is vast. It is really, seriously huge.

When I was at the top of the cliff, in all directions, the jungle stretched to the end of the horizon.

Running into a strong predator that we have to run away from is probably not going to happen easily.

[Keruk. Well then, are we going to make the move right now?]

“No. The sun is down, so let's start tomorrow morning.”

Both Idy and I can move without being seriously hindered by darkness. However, that is about it.

I don't want to invite danger by fighting nocturnal monsters in middle of darkness in the jungle.

I also still feel tired too.

“Let's try out the Focused Effort skill. I'll be using the Mana Circuit, so please guard the area for me.”

[I got it. Keruk.]

* * *

I spent the time until the morning by operating the Mana Circuit.

However, there wasn't any noticeable growth. I didn't notice any response from the Focused Effort either.

I don't know if I need to focus longer or if the method is wrong.

Let's try again later.

[Keruk. I am ready. Hurry up and come out, Captain.]

Idy told me to hurry up, so I came out of the cave.

I saw that the scenery changed a bit.

What I saw were traps hidden here and there in the bushes.

There were traps made with vines and sharpened woods. There were also craters.

I don't know about other kinds, but I am excellent at finding those kinds of traps.

I had been tormented by such traps so much since I entered the Tutorial, so...

Besides the traps, there were ash like things spread at the cave entrance's floor.

"What is this?"

[I dried leaves called Kikimu and crushed them into fine powder. The animals in this jungle hate this, so they won't approach the place easily if you have this spread here. Keruk.]

What the, just when did you do this?

You crushed it into fine powder? You probably don't even have tools for that.

You dried it? You dried leaves in this humid jungle?

Also, just when did you make all those traps? Was it even possible given the time frame?

[Keruk. Keruk. There are ways.]

Idy smiled. Her smile was full of pride. Looking at her smile, I panicked a little.

I didn't expect this much from Idy.

Until now, her role was simply fighting along side me and standing guard while I rested.

I told her honestly how impressed I was and praised her.

Having heard my praise, her tail started to waggle left and right, but I ignored it.

[Keruk. Let's go try hunting.]

In a mysterious way, the back of Idy was dependable to look at. I followed her into the grass.

* * *

I kicked the dead body of a bizarre looking boar, which looked as if it was exposed to radiation and mutated. I said,

"Hey, how come you are also good at hunting?"

I didn't know we would succeed in hunting so fast.

It was not like we were hunting monsters inside a video game. We were in a huge jungle. It is not easy to find a prey of this size and track it.

Actually, running into one alone has pretty low probability of happening.

[Keruk. Because I was shunned by my own kind, I always had to hunt alone and procure food. Thanks to that, I have plenty of hunting experience. Keruk.]

Story of her dark, sad past came out of the blue. Having heard it, I praised her with a bit of exaggeration.

Idy made keruk keruk noise and acted happy.

[So, are you going to continue hunting?]

“We should.”

[In that case, what are you going to do about this one? If we take it to the cave, we will lose too much time.]

“Let’s just leave it here. Our plan is hunting all dangerous monsters nearby anyway. If more bastards come lurking around after smelling the dead body and the blood, that will make our hunting easier.”

[Keruk. I got it.]

Idy gave a brief response. She raised her trident, cut the monster’s body into pieces and brought out its intestines.

Certainly, doing that will make the smell of blood to spread more.

“Idy. I’m thinking about finding the prey myself from now on. I would like you to handle the battle.”

[Keruk. That won’t be a problem for me, but isn’t that inefficient assignment of roles?]

“It is, but I would like to earn skills related to search or tracking. That’s why.”

One thing that hanged over my head the entire time while I was being chased by the orangutans was that these bastards weren’t just tracking me simply based on my foot prints and smell.

Even when I crossed water or valley with the Talaria’s Wings, they somehow knew where I was and kept chasing after me.

I am thinking that one of the orangutans had search or tracking skill and used it to determine my location.

In that case, since it would be a very useful skill, I would like to acquire it here.

I had been simply using my sight or hearing to identify the enemy’s location.

With the enhancements from Sensory Strengthening and Amplification Skills, I never felt my senses were insufficient.

However, they didn’t work against enemies with stealth or invisibility skills.

If the orangutan that used the invisibility skill and the weasel baby that used the stealth skill to hide at the cave were stronger...

If they were strong as me even without skills, it would have been really dangerous.

I would not even have been able to notice their presence a little. I could have died at the spot.

I needed a solution against such skills.

The skill I’m trying to acquire this time could be the solution.

In the process of obtaining this skill, I should have Idy handle combat

and all other tasks besides tracking the prey which could benefit from the Focused Effort Skill.

First, I learned the basic of hunting from Idy.

She said it would be very inefficient for me to aimlessly look around for a prey. She recommended learning her knowledge and techniques first.

Things like selecting the hunting route, methods of confirming the prey's territory or movement path based on foot prints or excrements, how to hide my own presence and approach the prey, etc...

Idy explained in detail about hunting in a way that was easy for me to understand.

It seemed she was also skilled at teaching things to others.

After that, I tried operating the mana in the way that Idy advised me to do.

I practiced using mana to further increase the movement suppression to move more stealthily.

On top of this, I also learned how to spread thin layer of mana around me to feel the situation around me.

It was not easy at first.

When I tried to spread the mana around me, the mana's concentration was too thick.

In that attempt, not only did the mana became visible, I couldn't even spread them far.

It took quite a while until I was able to skillfully spread the mana and feel the situation around me.

This was a high level mana operation skill. It was to the point where

my Mana Circuit Skill leveled up once while I practiced this skill.

Like that, for two weeks, with the cave as my base of operation, I hunted the monsters around the cave and honed my skill.

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv.11]

[You acquired Detection Lv.3]

[You acquired Stealth Lv.11]

Chapter 63

Tutorial 12th Floor (6)

Kuuuuuaaaak!

Facing a giant monster charging at her with beastly roar, Idy calmly pierced the top of its head and killed it.

The monster fell before it even had a chance to struggle.

That was no ordinary attack.

The monster could not have fallen silent like that as if it was falling asleep without even having a chance to twitch unless that was the case.

Idy is growing. On top of that, she is growing fast.

Could it be that she is also affected by the Tutorial's growth effect?

I swallowed that suspicion for now.

In the end, it was yet another question that Idy herself could not answer.

“Keruk. I think there isn't any monsters left nearby that is worth tracking down to hunt.”

“Right. This one is probably the last one.”

For the past two weeks, other than the time spent on eating and excreting, we threw all of our time into hunting.

The result was significant because we continued hunting even after

the sunset ever since we became used to hunting in the jungle.

Not only did I earn the Detection Skill that I wanted, the Mana Circuit's operation mastery increased, and its level also increased.

Stealth Skill also leveled up by one.

Most importantly, we hunted most of monsters around the cave which we decided as our main camp.

There still were small animals, but they were absolutely not threats to us.

"What are you going to do now, Captain? Shall we go back home?"

She had been calling the cave as home.

Also, as if the place was really her own home, she carefully tidied up the place and made things like furniture.

"Okay. Let's go back. I think I just have to focus on training for a while at home."

"Keruk. Keruk. All right."

Idy lead the way. She walked as she cut away grasses that were blocking her path.

She seemed very happy for some reason. It was strange, but I assumed she must be happy because we were going home to rest. I just followed her.

* * *

"You want to learn my spear techniques?"

I quietly nodded.

It was something I had been thinking about since a while ago.

I would be able to develop faster and easier with someone teaching me the art.

Not only that, she might be able to find faults in me that I have not noticed.

All of sword and hand-to-hand techniques I mastered so far were something I thought of and trained by myself.

What I achieved were worthy of being proud of. However, I knew nothing of techniques that I have not thought of or faced against.

Of all that I have met in the Tutorial, Idy possessed the most superior fighting abilities.

At the Fifth Floor's boss room, before she lost her cool and went berserk, instead of simply using her strength and special skills to overwhelm me, she used her spear techniques to fight me.

Moreover, of all boss rooms I have seen so far, Idy was the only one that showed up by herself in a boss room.

After learning spear techniques from her, I would also like to obtain knowledge and methods on fundamental techniques about sword and hand-to-hand combat.

If the situation was like the usual, I would not have thought about spending leisurely time learning spear techniques from her because of the time limit on the Dead Summon.

However, because of the 12th Floor's special characteristic, I had to spend time here until the round ended.

I could go beyond the nearby area and hunt the monsters there, but I don't think that's as important as learning spear techniques from Idy.

"Is the idea no good?"

"Keruk. Wait here for a minute."

Idy said that and left the cave.

I panicked, but I decided to wait quietly in the cave.

Could it be that asking a lizardman to teach me fighting techniques is a serious sin or very rude thing to do?

I really want to learn the spear techniques from her while I have the chance here...

Since I have to wait for her, let's run the Mana Circuit quietly while at it.

I sat at the cushion that Idy made, closed my eyes and focused my mind at the flow of mana.

Lately, I had been running the Mana Circuit whenever I had the time, just like how I inflicted injuries on myself to improve my passive resistance skills.

I probably won't have to wait long, so there won't be enough time to activate the Focused Effort skill.

From what I have found out so far, I need to focus on one thing and train if I want to activate the Focused Effort Skill, and I have to for eight hours at least.

I could feel the skill being activated after eight hours.

It felt similar to Persistence Skill when activated, so it was easy to notice.

Also, even if I mixed in other activities such as finding the location of the prey, breathing, blinking, drinking water, listening to Idy's advice or having conversations and others that are related to the training, it was still possible to activate the Focused Effort Skill.

My development rate increased substantially ever since I figured out how to activate the Focused Effort Skill.

It brought out incredible development efficiency once activated.

Without it, I couldn't have acquired the Detection Skill and developed Stealth and Mana Circuit Skills further within just two weeks.

In particular, the Detection Skill was a high dimensional skill far beyond my imagination.

If I didn't have Idy or Focused Effort Skill, it would have been difficult for me to acquire this skill by myself.

I used the Detection Skill while running Mana Circuit.

Because the Detection Skill itself was about operating mana, it was good to train both at the same time.

Training became that much more difficult, but now, I could focus even better with increased difficulty.

Thinly spread mana searched the insides of the cave. It detected a small bug that was moving around on the ceiling.

If this was any other day, I would have been satisfied with that and try feeling the outside of the cave. However, I tried something different this time.

I focused on the bug that I detected already.

I could only feel the bug's presence so far. However, as I repeated focusing, I could feel the bug's shape in a bit more detail.

[Battle Focus]

I increased the focus and carefully managed the operation of Mana Circuit.

Afterwards, I focused on the bug once again.

The shape of the bug felt through the mana became even clearer.

It was as if I was doing a 3D scan. I could feel its mouth, antennas, legs and shell in three dimensions.

I tried to feel the bug's shape in even greater detail.

I noticed each of minuscule hair on the bug's legs, extremely small hair that could not be seen by a human being's naked eyes.

Puk...

With that sound, I suddenly got nose bleed.

Could I go further?

As soon as I thought that, my head felt dizzy and the Battle Focus was canceled.

It wasn't that I was at the limit on my ability to focus. It seemed that I was still lacking in my ability to manage mana.

My head is pulsating.

It feels stiff around my eyes, and these parts hurt every time my heart beats.

I had experienced the symptoms many times while I trained in Mana Circuit, so I didn't panic. Instead, I pressed on temples on my head and ignored the pain.

"Keruk! Captain! Come outside!"

Idy called me from outside of the cave.

Her voice sounded bright.

Is she going to teach me spear techniques?

I quickly wiped off the nose bleed and came outside. Idy handed me a staff that looked like she carved it out of a piece of wood.

Unlike my concern, Idy seemed quite excited.

It seemed she was very happy to teach me spear techniques.

“Keruk. For now, use this. I made it quickly.”

It looked like she had been looking around to find a suitable piece of wood and made this.

It didn't have an edge at the tip, so it couldn't be called a spear but a staff.

Still, let's call it a practice spear.

Also,

“From now on, I think I should call you Idyaamong.”

“Keruk. What does it mean? Is it something good?”

“Of course, it is something good. It means you are incredibly talented.”

“Keruk Keruk.”

As if she was embarrassed, she turned her head to the side and acted happy.

As I expected, Idy was exceptionally good at teaching something to another.

From the basic, step by step, she explained in detail. Because of this, I could understand with ease the basic theories of the techniques and their applications.

[You acquired Basic Spear Technique Lv.6]

[You acquired Mid-level Hand-to-Hand Combat Technique Lv.2]

[You acquire Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.4]

As expected, although I was mostly learning spear techniques, the training resulted in progress on hand-to-hand combat and swordsmanship.

In particular, the explanations about steps that Idy gave me as I learned spear techniques were very helpful.

The theory was very different from what I learned during middle school at a Kendo class. However, because I had the body of a super human and used skills that defied common sense now, Idy's methods were the right answer.

“Keruk. As I thought, you are amazing, Captain.”

“Geez. Come on.”

“You would have been perfect if it wasn't for you occasionally showing underhanded and dirty side. Keruk.”

Hey, do you have any idea how important being underhanded and dirty are to a professional gamer?

When it comes to a duel, wrecking the opponent's mental is half way to the victory.

“Keruk. I thought this when I heard this the last time, but so called professional gamer is really not something I would want to be.”

How could you say that in front of one, you rascal?

“Although this place is the Tutorial stage that helps the challenger's growth and you also have the power skill called Focused Effort, your growth rate is still very fast. This can only be explained by your talent. You are incredible. Keruk.”

“Come on. I know. I am pretty damn talented.”

Having heard what I said, Idy twitched her nose lightly and said,

“Keruk. Besides being underhanded, I found another fault in you, Captain.”

“What is it?”

“You are a bit of an arrogant jerk”

I know that.

I heard that a lot in my life.

While being in the 12th Floor’s stage, skills related to fighting were not the only ones I acquired.

I also earned something completely unexpected.

It was when I was at front of the cave and roasting the meat that Idy procured.

[You acquired Entry-Level Cooking Lv.1]

Um... What is this?

Could it be that thing?

In a fantasy game, the skill for unrivaled production professionals that occasionally make appearances?

Could I be able to obtain high level cooking skills, blow up my stats by eating the meals I cooked and have a whole bunch of enhancement effects on my attributes and passive resistances, becoming unsurpassed?

“Keruk, although this will be obvious, there are no such ridiculous effects included in the cooking skill.”

Idy said as she brought the salad she put on the dish she made by

carving a piece of wood.

“If there are foods that can have that kind of effect, then that would probably be the effect from the ingredients, not the skill of the cook.”

...That’s probably right.

I worked up my appetite and looked at the table where the dinner was ready.

There were salad, a stew of unknown origin, roasted meat and unidentified vegetable mix. Also, lastly, there was the salted smoked meat.

They were too substantial to be called a dinner inside a stage of Hell Difficulty.

On top of that, I had no idea what the ingredients were, let alone where Idy got them.

An even more important problem was that all of these foods were delicious, seriously delicious.

Other than the cake that I occasionally ate with Kiri Kiri, I always had been taking care of meals with meat jerkies. Perhaps that’s why.

Every time I ate meals prepared by Idy, I was overwhelmed by bliss.

Like that, I diligently focused on training, ate delicious food, and occasionally went out for a walk with Idy to hunt and patrol to spend the rest of the days.

The frustration I felt when I first entered the 12th Floor was now completely gone.

The life here is far smoother and more fun than being in the waiting room. The development is also going well. This is the best?

[Round 14, Day 27, 00:00]

[The day of the great harmony will commence.]

[The day of the great harmony will continue for 24 hours. Remaining time: 23:59]

[Please enter. Time remaining until forced summon: 5 hours]



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The Tutorial Is Too Hard

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- Part 3 -

**-Author-
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[Light Novel Bastion]

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튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



Chapter 64

The Day of the Great Harmony

(4)

[The day of the great harmony will commence.]

[The day of the great harmony will continue for 24 hours. Remaining time: 22:40]

[Please enter. Time remaining until forced summon: 3 hours 40 minutes]

“Idy, would you like to go too? If not, it’s fine to just hold the port. Again, there probably won’t be anything fun happening there this time either.”

“Keruk. Of course I will go.”

It would be boring there and there wouldn’t be anyone who would be able to understand her language either.

Still, I couldn’t just leave her here when she said she wanted to go, so I decided to go with Idy.

The day of the great harmony was held at Kiri Kiri’s green field again.

Of course, Kiri Kiri was not there.

Instead, what I saw there was Park Jung-ah beating the crap out of the people responsible for triggering the day of the great harmony.

Is it because I came in a little late? It looks like the situation is already wrapped up.

I just stood at a distance and watched.

There is no need for me to show my face now and cause confusion.

“Keruk. Humans have a violent side that I never imagined.”

That’s true.

The punishment lasted for another thirty minutes before ending as I sat in the corner of the field, waiting. By that time, I was extremely bored and my face was frustratingly contorted.

However, Park Jung-ah had no intention of finishing it yet.

Now, she gathered the members of the Order and started a verbose lecture.

The content of her lecture was pretty harsh.

Wow, did she serve in the military?

She is totally a top-notch at slapping around grunts.

I became suspicious of Park Jung-ah’s school days.

“Keruk. For how much longer do we need to just wait here? Captain?”

“...Let’s go.”

We walked around the back of the Order members who were listening to Park Jung-ah’s rough lecture. We were hoping nobody would notice us, but unfortunately, I locked eyes with Park Jung-ah’s.

Park Jung-ah was chirping away her foul mouth. However, as soon as she saw me, she slightly lowered her head to greet me.

The members of the Order, who were drowning in Park Jung-ah’s insults presently, also turned their heads towards our direction. We ended up receiving unwanted attention.

Tsk.

Hurriedly, I saluted to Park Jung-ah and quickly left the scene.

I moved to middle of the field and opened the inventory.

“Inventory.”

Wow... It's so great to meet my precious items again.

How have you been? My precious babies...

I brought out a magic tent, but it was no ordinary magic tent.

It is a reward item that I got after clearing none other than the Ninth Floor.

I tossed the magic tent haphazardly on the ground and the large tent set itself up, occupying about 50 square meters.

Kuuuu... All right.

I entered the tent with Idy.

The inside had a few small chairs and a bed.

‘I should have brought this into the 12th Floor.’

I thought that as I sat on the chair and yawned, stretching my arms.

As for Idy, the chair was not big enough for her, so she just sat on the floor.

“Well, the tent was upgraded. As I thought, points are great.”

Kim Min-huk entered the tent as he swept the tent's flaps toward the side.

“I didn’t buy this with points.”

“Your lizardman friend is here again? Hello.”

Kim Min-huk waved at Idy and said hello.

“Keruk Keruk.”

Idy also waved her hand back at her.

“What are you doing here? You were nowhere to be found when we were busy. Have you have been sitting around on your ass here?”

“We got here only a while ago. It looked like there wasn’t anything in particular that needed me. Park Jung-ah was slaughtering the kids, so I ran off instead of meddling.”

The topic turned to Park Jung-ah and her current situation.

“She’s overdoing it a little. Still, I think this is necessary at the moment. She is strict to others, but she is as strict to herself. Also, it is not like there are serious complaints about it either.”

Overdoing it a little?

That’s a type of mental illness.

Unable to escape the sense of anxiety because of an uncertain future and past regrets, she is forcing her perfectionist goals onto others

The first problem was that she was imposing such strict guidelines to others in addition to herself.

The second problem was that human beings simply could not maintain such perfection forever. One day, she will be forced to realize that she cannot live up to her own ideals.

Normal people would just console themselves about such failures and move on, saying things like it could happen or they performed well

enough.

However, Park Jung-ah cannot do that.

Instead of letting go, she will criticize and hate herself for being imperfect. She will only suffer further from such thoughts.

When that happens, the problem will really get serious because that's when people start to break.

I'm speaking from personal experience.

"You need to look after her. That woman is at the level of a runaway train. If you cannot get brakes for her, at least make sure she does not get derailed."

"You rascal. You always ask me to do the heavy lifting. You don't need to tell me. I've already been doing my best."

Kim Min-huk complained before sending a message to someone.

"I contacted the user of Blitz Skill that I told you about before. The user will come here soon."

Almost immediately after Kim Min-huk said that, the tent door was swept open.

"Ah... Hello?"

It was a young boy with seemingly shy and good-natured personality with a round appearance.

He looks like he is in middle school.

"He is a middle schooler."

"Excuse me... I... My name is Lee Jun-suk."

Why is this kid shrinking in front of me?

“Keruk Keruk.”

I looked to the side and noticed Idy looking at Lee Jun-suk.

“Idy. This kid is scared because of you.”

“Keruk. You are accusing the wrong person. That little human is shaking from looking at you.”

“Hey. Are you scared because of me?”

Having heard what Kim Min-huk said, I also felt wronged.

Seriously, I have a lizardman sitting next to me, but this kid is scared of me instead? Does that make sense?

“Hey, that’s not it, right? You are not scared of me, right?”

“N... No! I am sorry. It’s my fault...”

Lee Jun-suk was shaking as he apologized over and over. I felt conflicted inside.

When did my image become like this?

Lee Jun-suk was at Eighth Floor of the Hard Difficulty.

On top of that, he was a mage who mostly used Blitz magic in addition to being a member of the Order of Virtue in the Hard Difficulty.

I contacted Lee Jun-suk through Kim Min-huk because I wanted to improve my passive skill.

“Sit here. I just need you to use the Blitz Skill at my arm. If you run out of mana, just tell me. I have plenty of potions.”

“Pardon? Yes... Will it really be all right? It will hurt a lot...”

“Hey, that guy plays catch with heat stone to increase his fire resistance. Don’t worry and get started.”

Lee Jun-suk grabbed my arm and started to use the Blitz Skill, and making my arm twitch.

Looks like I’ll have to restrain my arm for this.

I asked Idy to tie my arm to the chair’s arm rest with a rope.

“Now, try it at a higher strength.”

“Pardon? Increasing its strength beyond this could be dangerous.”

“I’ll be healed automatically, so why does that matter?”

Lee Jun-suk was breaking a cold sweat and didn’t know what to do. Leaving him be, I turned my head toward Kim Min-huk.

“So, why did the day of the great harmony happen this time?”

“...Didn’t I tell you last time? At the 30th Floor residential district in the Easy Difficulty, someone formed a small syndicate, manufactured narcotics and distributed them. It seemed they were trying to bend the people to their will using the narcotics.”

“How did it get resolved?”

“I also told you that last time, you rascal. We had a member of the Order infiltrate the syndicate. Once our member rose to the ranks of management, we got a list of the syndicate members.”

“That worked? That must’ve been dangerous. People sure volunteer easily for things like that.”

It was always like that.

The Order of Vigilance always infiltrated said problematic groups and procured the information.

After that, as soon as the day of the great harmony commenced, the order ambushed the group and handled the problem.

They were no different from secret agents. They were literally 007s.

PR Note: This is a reference to Bond and how his identification as “Agent 007.”

The members of the Order who were active on the open were well known throughout the Community. However, the members who were hiding among regular users were completely unknown.

People didn’t know who they were or how many there were.

The only person that knew was Kim Min-huk.

So far, there was never a problem that didn’t get resolved after the day of the great harmony.

Their success rate was 100%.

Is that even possible? It is not easy for me to believe that people would go such great lengths to maintain public order.

“Responsibility, justice, goal, anxiety, danger... Do you have any idea how critical those things are to people? This is especially true in an extraordinary environment like the Tutorial. Everyone volunteers with just a little bit of encouragement. They are doing it because it can be handled.”

You are probably the only one in the world who can say it so easily.

“Actually, I don’t know how many secret agents there are. The operation is managed in a point organizations style. There probably are more than what people believe.”

“Looks like the Tutorial will get filled with secret agents later.”

“If that happens, I could not ask for a better setting. That would be

perfect. Everyone is in check against each other, and all individuals are protecting justice. That's no different from a utopia."

Are you sure? I don't think that would be the case.

At that moment, I could feel serious pain in my arm.

"I... I'm sorry. Are you all right?"

My arm's skin was burning black.

I waited for a moment and the healing effect from the day of the great harmony was activated.

The part that was burned to crisp was erased completely along with other less-heavily burnt parts.

"It's all right. Looks like this will also increase my fire resistance."

"By the way, didn't you say you had been focusing on the Mana Circuit instead of resistance skills?"

"I had been. Still, it looks like I'll need resistance against Blitz. My body movement is seriously hindered whenever I get struck by Blitz Skill. Also, there are so many bastards in my current stage that have this skill, so really need this resistance."

Kim Min-huk was looking at me as if he was curious. I gave a simple summary of how the 12th Floor in Hell Difficulty was like.

"Also, I am still running the Mana Circuit."

"What? Now?... Since when?"

"Ever since I entered here."

Kim Min-huk looked at my arm that Lee Jun-suk was shooting Blitz at. He then looked at my face.

“You are running the Mana Circuit in that state?”

“Yes.”

“You really are a fiend.”

I got electric shock massage for about ten minutes and talked to Kim Min-huk before the tent entrance was swept open by a muscular man.

“I was wondering where you guys all went off to. I see you were all here sucking on honey. Oh, hello Lizardman friend.”

It was Park Jong-sik.

If I was to say I was managing Hell Difficulty, Kim Min-huk was managing the Normal Difficulty, and Park Jung-ah was managing Easy Difficulty, it could be said that Park Jong-sik was managing Hard Difficulty.

“What do you mean sucking on honey, Big Bro Jong-sik? It was just that it didn’t look like there was anything that needed me, so I just politely left the scene on your behalf.”

“Yo. Jun-suk. You are here too.”

Park Jong-sik ignored my excuse and greeted Lee Jun-suk.

He then flipped a chair around and sat as he said,

“Things are almost wrapped up. Everyone will come here soon. We need to have a meeting, don’t we?”

As he said, a whole bunch of people came in through the tent.

They were the core members of the Order, including Park Jung-ah.

“Keruk.”

It seemed Idy was uncomfortable with having so many people

entering the tent at once.

I stopped Lee Jun-suk from using Blitz and I untied the rope on my arm.

After that, I corrected my pose.

There were too many people here; it was impossible to sit comfortably.

Even though they were the core members of the Order, I couldn't sit comfortably

Kim Min-huk and Park Jong-sik were about all who I felt I could be at ease.

It wasn't that the people made me feel uncomfortable.

It was just that I had a need to maintain a respectable image and maintain distance from the people.

That was helpful for maintaining the Order of Vigilance.

Actually, I had a similar experience when I was a professional gamer.

When I was at the top, I was showered by the gazes of countless people looking up at me.

Countless losers and competitors would focus their glares at me.

There was a time when I enjoyed it. However, because I also experienced a nose dive in my career, I was unfamiliar with my current position here where I was being looked up to by everyone else.

The tent was pretty big inside. However, the inside became quickly packed after more than a dozen people entered.

There weren't enough chairs either. Most people just sat on the floor

like Idy or just stood. Like that, we decided to start the meeting.

“Well then, we will start the meeting.”

The meeting started with Park Jung-ah’s words.

First, she went over the cause of the day of the harmony and current progress to the solution.

She then proposed a preventive measure against a similar incident in the future.

After that, brief reports from the managers of each difficulties were given.

Up to this point, the meeting was progressing as the usual.

It was not so different from the meetings we held through the Community messenger.

“Now, we have two very important things left.”

Kim Min-huk refreshed the atmosphere and said,

“First, Big Bro Chan-yong cleared 89th Floor.”

People muttered in awe.

Lee Chan-yong.

He was in the Easy Difficult, but he was the closest one to the 100th Floor.

He was the player who became increasingly active ever since the news about the outside world being in danger became known to the people in the Tutorial.

He was held up in an obsession to return quickly to the reality, desperate to return to family outside.

Many people said it is not like other people don't have families outside and wondered why he was acting like that. However, Lee Chan-yong demonstrated his resolve with his actions.

When he started to make strive as the top floor player, the Order of Vigilance also started to actively support him.

Not only did they support him with equipment and potions, but the information that he needed for the higher floors were also obtained by the Order and analyzed.

Clearing the 100th Floor was not just for him.

The first challenger to clear the 100th Floor and get out to the reality was going to be our messenger.

It was our message that we were still alive in here.

Also, it was our message to tell the people outside that we will get out of here soon, and that they need to hold out just a little longer.

Chapter 65

The Day of the Great Harmony

(5)

“Before Big Bro Chan-yong clears 100th Floor and leaves the Tutorial, let’s check the messages for him to carry to the outside world.”

This was necessary because communication between the Tutorial and the outside world was only flowing in one direction.

We could obtain new information from newbies arriving at the First Floor, but we could not deliver any information outside.

The people outside were not even aware of our existence.

If things were normal, they may have felt that something was off because people would routinely going missing. However, the reality outside consisted of monsters running amok.

The government and media were completely oblivious about the hundred people going missing every month.

“First, the list of names of the players inside the Tutorial and the messages for their families. These are must-haves.”

“Right. We had been making the list of names since a while ago. We will also collect addresses and messages too soon.”

Delivering messages to the families were going to be of great help to the people inside the Tutorial and alleviate their worries.

“Also, we need to inform the Korean government of our existence and have our authority acknowledged.”

That sounded a little out of the blue and unnecessary. Having heard what Park Jung-ah said, everyone's gazes focused on her.

"Authority?"

"The authority to make laws inside the Tutorial in addition to the authority to punish the people violating the law."

"I am not sure. Do you think the government would give us such authorities?"

It was unlikely.

The Order of Vigilance was already functioning as the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Also, they had firmly established themselves already.

However, would the government officially acknowledge our authority?

Instead of acknowledging us as an independent governing body inside the Tutorial, they'll probably try to absorb us into their own.

How? Will that be effective? There was no need to question such.

Such questions were not something the brass would think about.

"It won't be easy."

After Kim Min-huk, many people voiced their opinions.

What would the government do? How would they treat us? How should we respond?

The tent was full of people muttering until Park Jun-ah spoke up.

"People are invited to the Tutorial at random. It does not matter if the person is a kindergartener or 80 old elder. It does not matter if the

person is a senator or the president. There are no exceptions. Anyone who enters the tutorial has to follow our law. Otherwise, they will be punished just like others.”

Everyone thought about what she just said as the tent fell silent.

Um...

This is not just about being fair to everyone.

The rules of the Order had things like the following:

Those who do not acknowledge the Order’s law will be punished.

Those who make their own laws and force them on others will be punished.

Those who make and consist in political parties numbering members of ten or more will be punished.

Combining these rules and what Park Jung-ah just said, I think I can think of the following underlying meaning.

If the Korean government do not acknowledge us and force their ways to us, that is in violation of our law.

So, the government outside will be punished.

Most of the punishment issued by the Order was, other than a few warnings, executions.

In other words, if someone from the government entered the Tutorial when the government had not acknowledged the Order yet, the Order would kill that person immediately.

It didn’t matter if it was the president or some senator.

Um...

This is not a compromise. It was a threat using the Tutorial's special characteristic of random selection.

Personally, I think it may work out well.

People high up tend to be more serious when their own assess are on the line.

Still, this is too outrageous.

Everyone started voicing their opinions again, and the tent bustled with noise.

“Let's think about this problem later.”

Having heard what I said, the atmosphere calmed at an instant, and we moved to the next topic.

They didn't actually calm down from Park Jung-ah's declaration. It was just that they had no choice but to go to the next topic.

They could not ignore me, so they just shut the hell up and moved on.

Tsk.

“What about the starting weapon?”

That was a good topic.

The probability of survival changed depending on the weapon selected at the beginning.

I thought about the college girl I met at the First Floor.

I couldn't quite remember her name. She picked a katana that was half the length of her own height.

It would have been hard for her to survive even in the Hard Difficulty. It might have been difficult even if it was at the Normal Difficulty.

“We need healers. At the moment, compared to other classes, we have too few healers. In each floor, we have one at most if any at all. Most of the time, there aren’t any.”

This was definitely true, especially in easy and normal.

It was really, seriously bad.

After all, who was going to choose a skinny stick after getting kidnapped when told to choose a weapon to protect their lives?

It is no use even if we are to put a notification on the Community forum.

Most people get transported to the space to choose the weapon as soon as they see the message about it.

Like that, most people check the Community only after selecting the weapon.

If we tell the outside world about the existence of the Tutorial, tell them about how rare the healers are and how important they are, the number of healers may increase even if by a small margin.

“Of course, tell them not to choose healers in Hard and Hell Difficulties.”

It is difficult for someone to survive in Hard and Hell Difficulties during the early solo levels.

“Ah, now that we are talking about this, we need to make it so people cannot enter the Hell Difficulty.”

This was almost the end of the Round 14. However, Lee Hyung-jin and I were only two who survived through the First Floor.

Coming to the Hell Difficulty willingly after knowing about this place was no different from suicide.

I once thought about how it would be to have party members when I was at the Sixth Floor.

However, having thought about it for a very long time, I thought that having someone will only obstruct me instead of helping.

“That may not be a good idea in the long run.”

It was Kim Min-huk who spoke against the idea.

That was obvious.

He was the only one who would dare to speak up against me in this meeting.

“I am not sure. Even if we accumulate a lot of information and make a perfect guideline, the number of people clearing the Hell Difficulty will be extremely small. Entering the Hell Difficulty is no different than entering a slaughter house.”

“Um... Let’s think about this one later too.”

The meeting continued for a long time after that.

Everyone was noticeably tired from the long meeting.

Just when the meeting seemed to come to an end, Kim Min-huk brought up a new topic.

“I have one more important thing to talk about.”

Another one?

I’m exhausted.

Being trapped in a tent with a bunch of people mumbling and listening to conversations for hours is quite tiresome.

Idy was actually just lying on the floor, sleeping.

I envy her. I wish I could just sleep too.

“From the Manager of the Normal Difficulty, I heard that something is going to be held.”

We heard occasionally heard things like that from the Managers, so what he was talking about was not anything special.

“The problem is that this is not going to be another day of the great harmony.”

What?

“If it is not the day of the great harmony, then what is it?”

Until now, all information regarding something being held had always been about the day of the great harmony.

“I don’t know that yet. I need to find out for now. For a while, all members of the Order should focus on gathering information about this after clearing a stage.”

“What about information for Big Bro Chan-yong?”

“We should collect information for him and this.”

Oh my. This is going to be tight.

Of the members of the Order, only high-ranking players were exempt from information collection duty. This is because they needed to gather information of their own levels to progress.

Still, I should get information whenever I get the chance.

The conversation about this mysterious event went on for a while under speculation.

I didn’t usually speak much, but I started to frequently join in the discussions until my mouth was literally dry.

“Well then, we will conclude the meeting here. If you have additional comments or questions about what we discussed today, please let us know through the captain or vice-captain of each difficulty. As for all vice-captains, please do not forget the reports for the floors you are in charge of. All right. Thank you all for the hard work.”

Along with her declaration, the meeting was formally concluded.

The people heading outside had bright looks on their faces, probably because the strenuous meeting was over. It must be nice to be them.

However, the three Captains including myself and Park Jung-ah, who was the Commander, remained inside the tent.

“Well then, I’ll get going too.”

“Hey, Commander, please wait a bit. I need to talk to you.”

Park Jung-ah was getting up from her seat. However, Park Jong-sik stopped her from leaving.

There is one more important matter left.

I need to join the discussion regarding this matter.

Unfortunately that is...

“Yes, I understand. What is it?”

“Uh... Um. The thing is... Hey, Min-huk. You tell her.”

Park Jong-sik opened his mouth and tried to answer. However, as if he thought it was a bother, he handed it over to Kim Min-huk.

I understood his feelings very well.

When it comes to the job that involves opening one’s mouth, asking Kim Min-huk to do the talking is the most convenient way to handle things.

“It’s nothing special. Commander, we have something to discuss regarding the problem with your attitude.”

“Attitude?”

In actuality, there was no need to worry about her attitude when it came to how she dealt with people.

She was not rude to people, nor did she try to pressure people into doing what she wanted using her position.

She was just very stiff like a machine. She was cold to people.

She did give hell to the members of the Order occasionally. Even so, she was just yapping away about the faults and mistakes and didn’t use violence.

Although she did mix in some swearing in the process lately...

She never once criticized anyone without a good reason. Moreover, she worked hard to be considerate to the members of the Order. Considering those, her attitude was not to the extent of being a problem.

In fact, her approval rating within the Order was quite high.

To begin with, the Order of Vigilance was established by her and her supporters as the core members.

“I’m talking about how you treat Captain Lee Ho-jae.”

The problem was that Park Jung-ah, who was the Commander, treated me as if I held a higher rank.

Damn it. If this problem had nothing to do with me, I would have gone outside and rested for a bit.

Actually, I am higher ranked than her, in terms of age difference.

However, inside the Tutorial, we don't decide ranking on age.

There are a few reasons why the situation came to this.

First, when the Tutorial first appeared, most of the people who led the scene through the Community were in early 20s or late 10s; the young people.

Most of the communication were done through the Community.

Also, people were gradually becoming superhuman as they progressed through Tutorial, which made age meaningless.

Finally, the Commander of the Order of Vigilance, the organization that practically ruled and maintained the people inside Tutorial, was a young high schooler.

Time passed and Park Jung-ah was now 20 years old. However, that still didn't change the fact that she was young.

In addition to that, the Order of Vigilance forbid deciding the ranks based on age a while ago.

To be precise, the Order made a law to forbidding the usage metrics including age to differentiate people and rank them.

The Order fundamentally hated emergence of class differences among the people.

The Order wanted all people inside the Tutorial to be equal. Only the Order of Vigilance, the management group, and the executioners existed separately.

Given what the Order of Vigilance was and what it represented, it was a really big problem that Park Jung-ah treated me as a superior.

It could endanger the leveled social structure and create a power hierarchy, placing me on the top with the Order placed right below and the rest thereafter.

Even if it does not come to that, it could appear to be like that from an outside perspective. That alone would negatively affect the public opinion about the Order of Vigilance.

Besides this problem, there was the problem within the Order of Vigilance.

It is true that I took a big part in the establishment of the Order. It's also true that I am the strongest bastard.

If Park Jung-ah treats me as a superior, the organization's command structure will falter.

Even now, there probably are many people who think I have the highest authority, rather than Park-Jung-ah.

Whenever Park Jung-ah and I have a collision of opinions, there will be people who would see it as a power struggle between us and mumble about it amongst others.

If factions develops within the Order, it would be very bothersome.

“Um... Well. The bottom line is that you should relax when you are interacting with Captain Lee Ho-jae. Actually, it would be good too if you treated him as your subordinate.”

“Yes? Me? To Captain Lee Ho-jae?”

Park Jung-ah's face paled in panic. She had the exact same face as a servant who was asked to physically punish the emperor's son.

The root of the problem was that Park Jung-ah still saw me as a gracious brave hero straight out of some fairy tale.

Honestly, it is uncomfortable to the point of physical pain.

It's uncomfortable for me to keep my mouth shut and put up a serious, dignified face whenever she's around.

Her excessive expectations and respect make me uneasy.

Moreover, I feel like her tendencies are getting worse.

Kim Min-huk yapped away for a long time about why Park Jung-ah should be more relaxed toward me.

After his logical and boring lecture, Park Jung-ah soon agreed.

“Okay then. Try talking to him casually.”

Park Jong-sik, who was dozing off while the lecture was in full swing, casually tossed out the question.

“...Captain Lee Ho-jae... Sir?”

Why is her face turning completely red?

“Skip the formality. Try calling him more casually. Think of him as a town’s fool.”

Park Jong-sik tripped the conversation over with an uninterested tone.

Think of me as a fool? Isn’t that going too far?

“Captain Lee... Lee Ho-jae?... Please keep up the good work as always.”

“Don’t be so polite. Try again.”

Park Jong-sik snickered.

It was very strange to see Park Jung-ah’s face tomato-red and stuttering when she had always been calm and emotionless.

She once delivered a speech in front of several hundred people while drenched in blood, and she did so without shaking. Now, she was embarrassed to talk. Certainly, this was a rare sight.

Seeing her acting like this is... um... Adorable?

It seemed Park Jong-sik and Kim Min-huk had similar impressions. They were watching, quietly snickering at her expressions.

With great difficulty, Park Jung-ah managed to lock her wandering eyes, which were rocketing from the ceiling, the floor, and my face. She said again,

“Captain Lee Ho-jae... Keep up the good work... as always.”

The power of it all was incredible!

A pretty girl was looking at me in the eyes while blushing and saying a line like that. I was really feeling it in my heart.

It's making me embarrassed for some reason.

Park Jong-sik covered his mouth to pretend he was yawning, while while Kim Min hyuk laughed quietly at me while staying out of Park Jung-ah's field of view.

By any chance, is my face red too? It's not, right?

It better not be red.

“Keruk. Keruk.”

I thought Idy was asleep. However, she was making a “Keruk” sound from the side.

“You are still too polite. Again. Again.”

Now, this guy was just really excited about this whole process. Energetically, Park Jong-sik asked Park Jung-ah to try again.

Chapter 66

The Day of the Great Harmony

(6)

With that, all matters we had to address during the day of the great harmony were handled.

The meeting was concluded well, and it seems the thing about Park Jung-ah sufficiently resolved.

We fixed her attitude problem. However, having witnessed her human side alone was worth the trouble.

Honestly, Park Jung-ah treated people too stiffly and with a machine-like manner. There were times when she gave the creeps.

She was calm and unaffected when she blew up a criminal's head with a handgun out of vengeance.

As an organization's commander, being able to always maintain and iron-blooded attitude was definitely a plus.

However, if her attitude was approaching the point of inhumane, the people around her would not want to trust her and follow her.

Park Jung-ah decided she will consciously try not to treat me as someone above her.

She promised us that she will cut down on respectful language as much as possible and treat me like a familiar friend.

However, in reality, instead of relaxing her attitude, she started to act even more uncomfortably around me.

She was acting strange. She slowly turned her head to the side when our eyes met. She stopped halfway when trying to talk to me about something, and just muttered a few things then dismissed it instead of actually saying what was on her mind.

Also, like just now, she just ran away to avoid me.

She is acting this way because she is feeling awkward.

When she gets use to it, we will be able to get along more comfortably.

On a side note, Idy was pissed, which was a problem.

It seemed that I bored her too much during the meeting.

She was not capable of understanding what anyone else was saying.

She could only communicate with me.

When she was like that, I didn't tend to her at all throughout the entire day. I could understand why she was pissed.

To make her feel better, I went to talk to her for a bit. However, Idy turned her back on me and lied down.

She said she was going to sleep so I should stop bothering her.

It seemed she was very disappointed.

Only Idy, Kim Min-huk and myself were in the tent now.

Park Jong-sik left when Park Jung-ah left the tent.

I turned to look at Kim Min-huk, and he was doing something strange.

“What are you doing?”

“Can’t you tell?”

He had a piece of wood in one hand and a carving knife in the other hand.

He was making something by carving the wood with the knife.

“In the end, have you decided to walk the path of the Legendary Moonlight Sculptor?”

“What the hell are you talking about? I’m just doing it for fun. A hobby.”

A hobby, huh...

In the past, I had dabbled on knitting scarfs and socks and making gloves and outwears for fun.

Ah, I also made a hat too.

I opened the inventory, and the clothing that I made before were still there.

“Hey. Are you the sewing type? Sculpting is better. Sculpting Swordsmanship Skill is like a cheat.”

“That’s the main character’s special boost ability. From the common sense standpoint, a sewing skill is better. By the way, why are you sculpting all of sudden? Are you bored?”

I started sewing things when I was mentally cornered and exhausted.

I started when I was raising my resistance skills by purposefully inflicting harm on my body first thing in the morning.

Back then, I was all alone and unaware that I could meet other people through the day of the great harmony like this.

One day, the pain became the only stimulant in my life. I start to feel

something like pleasures through intense pain.

When I had been snickering as I inflicted harm on my body, I hoped my Pain Resistance Skill would not improve any further.

I was concerned my life would become dull as well if my ability to feel pain became dull.

I started to mumble on my own more often. I obsessively focused on causing self-harm.

It was not just for the goal of increasing my passive skills. I was making it more painful and doing it in more dangerous ways.

One day, I came to realize that my behaviors were excessively dangerous and the condition of my mind was not normal.

I was suffering from a mental illness.

I could not escape from Tutorial, so I came up with three options.

They were not anything big.

First, I decided to look at the Community regularly at a certain time every day.

Even when I was not curious about anything, I watched people have conversations.

Second, I decided to have daily routines.

The last thing was getting a hobby.

While I enjoyed my hobby time, I forgot about everything regarding Tutorial, skills, growths or levels. I just focused on sewing.

Now that I am thinking about it, all three were pretty effective.

“...You also went through a lot. No. What you went through goes

beyond that. My situation is nothing like that. I got a house at the 30th Floor's residential district, but I got nothing to decorate the inside, so I am making them myself."

It's expensive to buy things using points.

Kim Min-huk added.

A house huh...

I have heard that you could purchase homes and lands with points at the 30th Floor's residential district and use them as your private residence.

A house.

Um... Well. That's nice.

Although I am not envious of him.

"Just call that friend of yours named Lee Jun-sik or Lee Jun-suk again. I'm going to increase my passive resistance."

"All right."

Kim Min-huk responded, briefly yawned and opened the message window.

"By the way, are you not going outside?"

"What's the point of talking to the people outside? I'll just end up with more work to handle. I'd rather stay here until the day of the great harmony ends. What about you? Why aren't you going outside?"

"This is my tent, you rascal."

Honestly, I don't feel comfortable meeting other people outside either.

There are too many people who are afraid of me.

“Ihaoi continent?”

“Yes. Can you get information about that before the round ends?”

“Yes... I can, but...”

While we were taking a break, I asked Lee Jun-suk to gather information about the Ihaoui continent at the 12th Floor stage.

Lee Jun-suk was a member of Order who was exempt from information gathering duty.

The reason for exemption was to allow him to focus on gathering information for clearing stages.

He needs information for himself, so I cannot ask him to do an unreasonable amount of intelligence work.

“What’s your Mana Circuit Skill level now?”

“I’m at level three...”

That’s perfect.

He is exactly at the point where mana operation gets even more delicate.

“Here. Try wearing this.”

I brought out a bracelet and gave it to Lee Jun-suk.

“I got this as a reward after clearing the Tenth Floor. Its additional attribute increases your Mana Circuit level by one. This item is at a whole another dimension from items you can get from the store. Try it on first. I’ll explain afterwards.”

Just wearing this leather mana bracelet made the wearer’s Mana

Circuit level higher by one level.

A person's Mana Circuit level indicated how skillfully and smoothly the user could operate the mana.

However, the operation method is something that the user has to learn without other's help.

Things like swordsmanship or spear techniques are something that even non-experts can get a bit of sense for it.

Perhaps it should be swung this way. Doing it like this is making the stance better? Like that.

However, mana operation didn't have things like that.

It was like bashing one's own head to the floor all alone to learn.

Also, because of that, this Mana Bracelet was even more precious.

Even if it was through the power of the item, being able to experience the mana operation that's a level higher was still worth it.

"Like that, when you accumulate enough experience, your skill's level will go up to four in no time. After that, because of the bracelet's effect, your Mana Circuit will be at level 5. If you work a little harder after that, your skill level will rise to five. Like that, it will keep going up. Does it make sense?"

Lee Jun-suk repeatedly nodded.

"It's sick, right?"

"Yes."

"Deal?"

"Yes! Deal."

All right, that went well.

Actually, the Mana Circuit training won't go as well as I described.

Separate from the experience, he will have to work hard, very hard.

The bracelet is like reducing the effort required from 100% to 80%.

"I'm giving this to you because you seemed to be the most talented one of all kids out there. Ah, do not tell others about this."

Actually, I didn't know much about Lee Jun-suk before I met him today. However, I tossed this comment out just for the sake of it.

Lee Jun-suk's face looked a step brighter. He started to really focus on using the skill.

Meanwhile, Kim Min-huk stared at me as if he was accusing me of selling snake oils.

"Ah, I need to meet Hyung-jin too. Can you come with me later and talk to him?"

"The one who is in Hell Difficulty, Third Floor?"

"Yes. I don't think he is in a good condition."

I explained to Kim Min-huk about the conversation that I had with Lee Hyung-jin and the Third Floor in Hell Difficulty.

"I am not sure. I don't think talking to him is going to resolve this problem. I think letting him be is sufficient."

"Is that so?"

"You can only console him, but it won't really feel close to home for him since you got through the Third Floor with great ease."

I did.

I got through it in just two or three days.

“Instead, try letting him be for now.”

Okay.

I sent the thought of talking to Lee Hyung-jin far far away beyond the outer bounds of my mind.

When it comes to dealing with people, it is better to listen to Kim Min-huk’s opinion.

Actually, I wouldn’t know what to say to Lee Hyun-jin when I meet him. It’s a bother too, so...

Well then... What should I do now?

Kim Min-huk turned his gaze back and worked diligently on sculpting the piece of wood as I watched him.

“Hey.”

“What? Can’t you see that I’m focused on my work?”

“I’m bored.”

“...Hey. Jun-suk. Do you have a stronger skill?”

* * *

The day of the great harmony ended. The end of Round 14 was also right in front of my nose.

I grew fond of my home here through the past month of stay. However, it was time for me to say goodbye.

Home.

It's the cave that I had been using as the camp site in the 12th Floor stage.

I had been calling it home all this time, and now it really feels like home.

The grass outside the cave is well organized. It looks like a garden in front of a home. There is even an outhouse built at a distance from cave.

The home's inside is tidied up, with household items and cooking utensils are also well organized in a corner.

The trace of decorations and organization that Idy had done whenever she had the time could be seen here and there.

This place really does look like a home.

“Don’t you think so?”

“Keruk. I feel the same.”

I used to live in a studio room before entering the Tutorial. However, even that place didn’t give me this kind of sensation.

Back then, my home felt like a prison where I was trapped in.

Could it be that Idy also feel the same way?

“Keruk. I am a little different, Captain. To me, this place really is my first home that I got to have.”

She said it casually, so I wondered if I could ask her for a detailed story.

Would that be rude?

No. It is not a matter of being rude or not. It might be a memory that would hurt her if I made her think about it.

Before I could start worrying about her, she started to tell me the story about her past.

“I did not get to live with my kind. I always lived at a forest nearby, alone. Because of how things were there, I didn’t get to have a place like this cave with adequate necessities. Every night, I had to move to different places and sleep.”

...There is one thing that comes to my mind whenever I hear her story.

What exactly was the reason why she was shunned by other lizardmen?

I don’t feel comfortable asking though...

“Also, the Tutorial stage, the place which I am not even certain of my memories about, cannot be called my home. It was no different than a prison. You brought me out of that place. Captain, I am thankful.”

Brought you out of that place...

Is that the right way to put it?

I once asked Kiri Kiri.

If another player meets Idy at the Fifth Floor’s boss room, does that Idy know me?

Is that Idy that I have summoned before?

Kiri Kiri’s explanation was like this.

She said Idy that I summoned and Idaltaru at the Fifth Floor’s boss room are the same but also different.

She said that the Idaltaru that another player would meet at the boss room will not have the memory of ever meeting me.

She also said that it is not that Idaltaru lost the memoirs of me, but it is that she never met me.

Idy was confused when she heard that answer.

Ever since then, instead of calling her Idaltaru, I called her Idy.

I suddenly felt frustrated.

I wanted to say something to comfort her, but I could not think of anything to say.

The convoluted feeling persisted inside me. Meanwhile, many messages appeared in front of my eyes.

[You failed clearing the 12th Floor in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormalities and wounds will be healed.]

[An additional reward is given based on your play record.]

[You acquired Poison Lv.1]

I thought it would give me more points. However, I unexpectedly got a skill instead.

Save for me failing to clear the stage, my play record was perfect.

I secured my survival for 25 days of stay inside the stage during the beginning. I had been leisurely spending the time and training since then.

“Keruk. Are we going to be at the waiting room for the three days? It’s not bad.”

“No. We will be at the waiting room for nine days.”

To be precise, we will be at the waiting room for the three days and in front of the bonfire for the other six days.

“Keruk? Six additional days in the waiting room? If you do, you won’t be able to clear the floor, isn’t that right?”

“That’s right. I plan on challenging the 12th Floor multiple times. I don’t want to let this opportunity pass and just go to the next floor. A perfect training opportunity like this may not come again.”

I have plenty of time. Suitable prey for hunting roam around the jungle alone. I don’t have to bother with finding something, nor do I have to stop a cataclysmic event either.

More importantly,

“I should hunt those fake dragons before leaving.

Chapter 67

Tutorial 60th Floor (7)

Ujuk Ujuk...

Yong Yong was sitting on my lap and eating a cheese steak as I stroke Yong Yong's head and sigh.

"Yong Yong."

Yong Yong turned his head to the back and lightly tilted.

It means he was asking why I called.

"Instead of steaks, would you like to try this fairy worm? Hey, this is super good for your body. Your daddy will even apply honey on it for you."

Yong Yong shook its head and instead focused back on the steak.

This rascal isn't selective with food like an elementary school kid.

Yong Yong just wanted to try eating the steak that I was eating.

This rascal always mimics what I do, eating what I eat, sleeping where I sleep, sitting where I sit, sighing just like me and smiling just like me.

Sometimes, to mimic how I am looking at the Community, Yong Yong stares at an empty space and pretends to read something.

So, this was why Yong Yong was eating the steak lunch box that I usually enjoyed eating instead of the fairy worm.

What should I do...

I never thought that I'd agonize over Yong Yong being picky with food.

Ugh... You have no idea how much trouble I went through to prepare those fairy worms.

You have no idea how precious they are...

My solution was to eat the fairy worm.

If I eat the fairy worm, Yong Yong will eat it by mimicking me.

However, isn't that a little wrong?

If Yong Yong doesn't want to eat it, then that's that.

I sighed again and gently brushed Yong Yong's forehead.

Well, it is not like eating steak is going to lead to an upset stomach.

Yong Yong may be a puppy-sized baby, but a dragon is still a dragon.

I'm just upset that I'm unable to feed Yong Yong a healthier food.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Anything new?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: How could there be any? I spent the whole day putting Yong Yong to sleep and feeding and teaching him.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Wait... Yong Yong is that hatchling?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yeah. Why?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Oh my... What kind of lunatic names a hatchling Yong Yong!]

[TL: In Korean, Yong is the pronunciation for the word “dragon.” Saying it twice in a row like that sounds rather adorable than fearsome like a dragon should be.]

What do you mean? Here is one who did.

Besides, who else is going to name the hatchling?

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: If other dragons heard that name, they will try to kill you for insulting their kind. Do you understand, Big Bro?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It’s all right. I can beat them.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: No. That’s not the problem! Ugh, really!]

Hey, why are you getting worked up again?

Even though this is just a message window, her frustration oozes out as if this is a live, face-to-face conversation.

Her personality is getting rougher and rougher. She is one wild woman.

I think I’d totally fall for her wild side.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Instead of saying ridiculous things... Does the hatchling not hate the name? No matter how young the hatchling is, there is no way a dragon would like that kind of name.]

Of course, Yong Yong does not hate the name.

Hating one’s own name? Who would? Right, Yong Yong?

Yong Yong haphazardly swallowed the steak and closed the mouth. His teeth chomped down and made a noise.

The small wings that were folded on the back opened wide. The wings were still small even when opened wide.

After that, Yong Yong slowly turned the head left and right.

Hey, why are you putting on such a serious face and telling me you hate it?

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: See? I knew it. Before the dragon becomes rebellious after getting bigger, make a proper name. No, wait for a bit. Instead of letting you handle it, I'll just make the name. You said the dragon's color is silver, right?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Right. It's a silver dragon.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: By the way, how does this hatchling cry? Making the name similar to the sound of its cry might work too?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: This dragon does not cry.]

Really.

I was baffled by this.

I thought an adult dragon would roar like 'kurwara' and a baby dragon would cry like 'kulkulkul.'

This rascal didn't cry at all.

Yong Yong expressed itself most through body languages. Lately, Yong Yong had been speaking human tongue instead.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Your dragon can talk? Already?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yeah. The pronunciation is a little short-tongued, but...]

"I am not short-tongued."

Yong Yong was reading the message too. Having realized what I said, Yong Yong protested.

“Not short-tongued.”

Yong Yong’s eyes widened as if I just revealed the biggest secret behind his birth. I stroke his back as I continued to read the message.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Um. Now that I’m trying to come up with one, I can’t think of any. Please wait for a bit. I’ll go ask others too.]

Like that, a contest for making a name for Yong Yong was commenced.

The prize was a bottle of elixir.

The participants included everyone in the Korean server.

* * *

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Lee Shin. Lee is the family name and Shin is the name. It’s pretty good, right? It is distinctively Korean too.]

What do you think?

Yong Yong shook his head left and right.

“What do you not like about the name?”

“It’s too shot.”

[PR Note: The author’s trying to give onto Yong Yong’s short-tongued pronunciation, hence ‘shot’ instead of ‘short’. It appears a few more times in this chapter, so just use context.]

...I see.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: He said he does not like the name because it is too short. Try finding a longer name.]

So, he doesn’t like short, one syllable name?

In that case, simple names like Guri, Gyuri, and Khan are automatically disqualified.

I think those names are good for him because they sound cute.

“I am not cut.”

Is that so?

In that case, are you not cute but mighty and forceful?

“Yep.”

You sure are.

“All right. All right. My Yong Yong, you are not cute. You are mighty.”

I praised him, and Yong Yong happily nudged his head on my arm.

See? You are fricking adorable.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Raokones. How about that one?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Hey, that name... I think I've heard of that name from somewhere. That one is a little...]

[TL: 라오코네스, Raokones is the name of a dragon from a famous Korean fantasy novel, Polaris Rhapsody, written by the Lee Young-doo. He is the author of Dragon Raja, another famous fantasy novel.]

I sent the message and looked at Yong Yong. His eyes gleamed and looked at me expectantly.

“Yong Yong.”

Yong Yong energetically nodded.

“You like the name, Raokones?”

He nodded energetically again.

All right. He says he likes the name, so what can I do.

It is better than Amurtat.

[TL: 아무르타트, *Amurtat is the name of an evil dragon from Dragon Raja.*]

Like that, we renamed Yong Yong's to Raokones. I was in middle of showing Yong Yong how to write the name Raokones when another message came.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How about Nafplion? I heard the name means a sailor.]

I think I've heard this name from somewhere too.

I lowered my head to look at Yong Yong. His eyes were sparkling once again.

“...Of the two, which one do you like better?”

“Buth.”

* * *

...The whole thing made a strange turn.

Yong Yong liked any name that was lengthy.

The problem was that Yong Yong refused to give up the potential name candidates that came up.

He wanted to use them all as his name.

Hence, his name became:

“Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nistiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third.”

It was a very long name that was very difficult to pronounce. Having heard the name, Yong Yong was jumping up and down the table overjoyed.

Since he is so happy about the name, it does not feel right to cut it down short.

Still, what's the Third for? The Third?

Are you saying there is a First and a Second with that exact ridiculous name?

What the hell.

Now this name is definitely the kind that the dragons will get infuriated at and accuse me of trying to ridicule the dragons.

Still, well...

Yong Yong was rolling around overjoyed. Watching him being so happy warmed my heart.

Does having a name you like make you feel that happy?

He was in the state of pure bliss.

“Now, Yong Yong, open your mouth.”

While he was happy, I placed in a fairy worm inside Yong Yong's mouth.

Yong Yong didn't complain much. He smiled like a fool, chewed, and swallowed the fairy worm.

Ah, you are eating so well, my beautiful son.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Well, if the hatchling likes the name, then it is fine.]

This lass' personality used to be different...

Perhaps it was because she had known me for so long. She was now soaked in a lifestyle of mediocre satisfaction.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: What did he say? Do you have a moment? I have something I want to talk to you about.]

I checked the message and directed my gaze at Yong Yong.

Yong Yong was rolling around on the table while clutching his full belly.

He was widely grinning as if he was still very happy about the new name.

Well, Yong Yong just finished eating too, so...

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I have time. What is it?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: It's about Lee Jun-suk. It's about time for that rascal to leave the Tutorial, but he has no intention of doing so. You try talking to him. He listens to you the most.]

That's true.

Um... Actually, the matter with Lee Jun-suk is a little complicated.

It had already been many years since he reached the 90th Floor and he's since declared that he will repeat the 91st Floor to focus on growing further.

I could understand it back then.

He had the desire to become stronger than anyone before clearing the 100th Floor and going back to the reality.

I understood him back then.

I cheered him on and told him various know-hows when he stayed at the 90th Floor and focused on growing stronger.

Like that, a few years passed.

I was staying where I was because I could not clear the 61st Floor, leaving me no choice. However, Lee Jun-suk was staying at the 90th Floor voluntarily.

This rascal is definitely not normal either.

He was one of the greatest talents in Tutorial.

He is not from the Round One like I am, but he entered the Tutorial during its early days.

He is in the Hard Difficulty, and showed great proficiency in clearing stages, which was the reason why the Order of Vigilance provided him with support.

A guy like that had been staying at the 90th Floor for years, saying he wants to become stronger.

No matter how I look at it, he is already the strongest.

He would be the greatest masterpiece ever produced by the Korean Tutorial server.

He is unprecedented. Plus, another Awakened warrior like him will not appear in the future frequently.

However, Lee Jun-suk is still staying at the 90th Floor.

At this point, his goal is becoming obvious to me.

He is not just trying to become stronger. He has a specific goal.

Also, I am the only one who is likely to be the part of the goal. I am the only player who is stronger than Lee Jun-suk.

It is a stupid idea.

He cannot compare himself to me.

Um...

This is not just about Lee Jun-suk.

He is a part of the management in the Order of Vigilance.

Moreover, he has a contract with the Korean government.

The Korean government had been expecting him to come out of the Tutorial soon. However, this Hard Difficulty's Awakened warrior hasn't for years.

I think they must be pretty anxious.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I got it. I'll try talking to him.]

Um... What should I say to him?

The fact that Kim Min-huk left the Tutorial is making things difficult to a bone-cutting degree.

He took care of things like these on his own when we asked.

What should I do to convince him to leave willingly?

Let's think about this first.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How about telling him the nice things he will have when he gets out?]

You think he doesn't know about those?

He knows better than we do.

It seems Yong Yong became sleepy while I was talking to Jung-ah. He was sleeping on my lap. I gently brushed the top of Yong Yong and organized my thoughts. However, I suddenly felt my mana was making strange movements.

A part of my mana was out of control. It was leaking out of my body.

Damn it. I was fine for a while.

I'll have to acknowledge that I let my guard down too much.

I have thought about too many keywords repeatedly.

Outside, Reality, Power, Identity, Growth, Happiness, Kim Min-huk, Park Jung-ah...

I cannot suppress the mana flowing out from my entire body.

It is already out of control.

Instead of blocking the mana's path, the wiser course of action is directing the mana to a place and collecting it.

I cast barrier on Yong Yong.

After that, I raised my right hand that I was using to brush Yong Yong.

The mana that was violently shaking inside my body slowly collected toward my right hand, which was raised above my head.

Uuuuuuung...

The building's wall cracked and the ceiling came down.

The power was incredible. It could destroy everything around me just from having it collected on my hand.

The entire residential area at the 60th Floor was shaking just from the mana's movement.

To direct the power, I rotated the mana in a specific trajectory.

The mana collected on my hand slowly started to calm down.

It will gradually dissipate with passage of time.

I looked down, and Yong Yong was looking at me anxiously.

"It's all right."

Handling the mana that came out of my body is a simple task.

The problem is what comes next.

Just like mana, which shook off my control and exploded out, the emotions I had hidden underneath surfaced to my consciousness.

I do not like the current situation where I'm calmly sitting at a chair.

I do not like feeling happy looking at Yong Yong either.

I absolutely hate this damn waiting. It's making my body ache.

I want to move. I want to get up. I want to get out. I want to fight, destroy, win, lose, kill and die.

I don't want to be stuck here like this forever.

I closed my eyes and thought about my emotions.

There were numerous emotions in my mind. I turned them into images.

Boiling lava...

A nuclear fusion reactor at the brink of explosion.

[TL: I'm sure most of readers probably know this, but I'm going to say it anyway. Nuclear fusion reactors cannot have runaway reactions. As soon as the reactions become unstable, the reactions stop because it cannot sustain the condition needed to continue, shutting down the reactor.]

Anything will do.

My emotions were burning in red, boiling and on the verge of exploding. I poured cold water on to my emotions.

I poured another batch of cold water on them, followed by cement and then some more cement.

Like that, I closed the lid on my emotions.

Yong Yong was awake, but he fell back to sleep. It was around this time when I was able to finally close the lid completely.

After that, I sent my emotions back to a place far down below.

Although I cooled the emotions and sent them down, the icky feeling still remained.

I sang a song.

“Now... I cannot hold on anymore... With a big smile...”

I was singing off key. Because it was unpleasant to hear, Yong Yong was awakened again, and he complained. However, I could not stop singing at the moment. I could not afford to.

The inside of the building looked like an aftermath of a disaster. I sat inside the building and sang a song like that

Chapter 68

Tutorial 12th Floor (7)

[Can't you tell me about this first?]

[Ugh. I understand weapons and armors, but I should have packed some undergarments... If it is going to last a month, I'll have period to deal with too...]

* * *

[Round 15, Day 0, 00:15]

The first thing I did when I entered the waiting room was check my newly acquired skills.

[Poison Energy (Lv.1)]

Description: Endows materialized mana with poison; a status ailment effect.

It was a simple skill, but it was also a good skill. Very good, in fact.

Regardless of what I swing, let it be my hand or a weapon, as long as it is wrapped in mana, it is going to apply poison.

Isn't this too useful?

Its performance will vary depending on the poison's effectiveness, but... Wait, I bet the poison's effectiveness will increase with skill level.

Um...

There are so many ways to utilize this.

My greatest strength is my speed.

I have so many skills related to speed and my agility stats were on the high side.

Speed means being able to strike preemptively. Plus, with Blink and the Wind Spirit's Blessing, I can always run away from a fight.

Unless several hundred or thousand enemies surround me in a large formation like the 12th Floor's orangutans, catching me is almost impossible.

If poison is added to the mix of skills...

I just need to poison the enemy and run.

If the enemy does not have a way to eliminate the poison, the enemy will die from the poison.

Even if the enemy does not die, I should be able to kill it easily after the poison weakens the enemy.

Aren't the uses of this skill practically limitless?

Increasingly petty and conniving ideas kept on forming in my mind.

"Keruk. It would be good for you to not rely on such methods."

"What are you talking about? It's all good as long as I win."

"You are strong enough without having have to resort to such methods."

I get what you are saying, but...

Honestly, these underhanded methods and tactics really suit me.

I am like that when it comes to battles at least.

I was always like this since my days as a professional gamer.

Instead of a heavy-handed frontal duel against the opponent, I always preferred exposing a gap in the opponent's defense and shaking their mentality.

Instead of ending the game with a blazing and glorious battle, I liked winning safely even if it was through underhanded methods.

Of course, when I had the upper hand in strength, I would engage in an upfront fight.

Doing so had fewer variables.

“Keruk. Captain, if you correct that devious side of you in battles, you would really be perfect.”

Hey, like I said before, being devious is not a bad thing.

I think that's enough of checking skills. Let's think about what to do from now on.

Normally, failing to clear the stage gives you something like a small amount of points or ordinary items.

However, I received Poison Energy, a new skill, after failing to clear the 12th Floor.

It meant that as far as the play records are concerned, I practically cleared it.

It might actually mean my play record was even better.

I went beyond just surviving in the jungle. I established a clear territory for myself and perfectly secured shelter and food.

I spent the remaining time on improving myself, so this could be

considered as having exceeded floor's objective.

If that is the case, will I be able to obtain more skills easily from each round by repeating the 12th Floor?

Skills I get as additional rewards are usually handy.

Most of the power skills I have are from additional rewards.

This is an intriguing possibility.

If I can gain ten useful skills from the 12th Floor, I don't think I'd be having hard time clearing future floors.

Moreover, I really liked the lifestyle of 12th Floor stage.

The place was optimized for focusing on growth. Also, the foods that Idy cooked were delicious.

The cave was comfortable to stay in, and it was far better than staying inside the desolate confine of the waiting room.

I could lead a refreshing lifestyle; even better, I could even comfortably obtain skills while at it.

Isn't that just perfect?

"Keruk. Captain. Do not forget the time limit on the Dead Summon."

Um... Certainly, Idy does disappear when the time limit is up.

Also, I only have three more chances left for the Dead Summoning.

Without Idy, I wouldn't be able to guarantee my comfortable lifestyle at the 12th Floor.

My bones ache at the thought of it.

Still, it is fortunate that the Dead Summon's duration is quite long.

At minimum, the summoning will last through the next round, guaranteeing a smooth clear of the 12th Floor.

Let's just try it out first.

I have to try hunting the bogus dragons anyway.

It does not matter if I don't acquire any more useful skills from this.

Making a place to stay at the 12th Floor and comfortably spending time on development is more than good enough on its own.

"Keruk. As for me, there is nothing bad worth complaining about. I even have a home on the 12th Floor."

When we go there again, that home will no longer be there.

The cave will still be there, but it will just be a cave where that weasel monster lives.

"It does not matter. I just need to create another one."

That's true.

It looked like Idy really liked that home.

Now, well then.

I don't have anything in particular to do until the waiting time expires, so let's try the poison skill.

It's been a while since I inflicted self-harm.

* * *

"Captain, you really are insane."

“You aren’t hesitant about saying that. Others would be hurt from hearing that kind of words.”

“Still, it is the truth, Keruk.”

It hurts even more because it is the truth.

Violence through facts... Don’t you know?

“I don’t know. Keruk.”

During the nine days of the waiting period, I tried many experiments.

How to apply poison energy on mana...

How to use the poison energy afterwards...

After completing experiments on how to use the energy, I tested its power.

Well, this is obvious, but the subject was my own body.

Because of the Great Poison Resistance skill and the waiting room’s auto healing effect, I struggled through the experiment.

The Poison Energy’s skill was at level 1. Using it to break through the poison resistance skill and the waiting room’s healing effects to cause harm on my body was no easy task.

I tried to find a way, but I couldn’t think of a good idea.

So, I went on grinding as usual.

Throughout the day, I used mana wrapped with poison energy to poke at my palm as I sat down.

I had the Focused Effort skill, which increased the growth rate of the skill, allowing the Poison Energy skill to grow quickly.

[You acquired Poison Energy Lv. 4]

[You acquired Great Poison Resistance Lv.3]

These definitely were significant results.

It was not like I was inside a stage that accelerated the skill growth. I got this kind of result from inside the waiting room.

Although I had been very diligent about harming myself, this result would have been absolutely impossible without the Focused Effort skill.

After the period of three days in the waiting room ended, as I got to spend time at the bonfire, the growth rate increased exponentially.

As I thought, the growth rate at the waiting room is noticeably slower.

The growth rate at the bonfire room is also by far lacking in comparison to being inside a stage.

Anyway, dear God of Slowness, you are the best.

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

It seemed someone was complaining somewhere. However, I ignored it and stretched as I yawned.

I feel satisfied.

As I thought, a human being needs to live diligently and productively.

I should test the level 4 Poison Energy skill's power when I enter the 12th Floor's stage.

“Keruk. Inside the 12th Floor stage, there will be plenty of prey you could catch and experiment on. It will be easy to test its power.”

What are you talking about? Experiments should be done on my body.

“Keruk... Captain, are you really insane?”

“I need to grow the Great Poison Resistance Skill too. It is like killing two birds with one stone.”

“You will really die if you keep this up, Captain. Keruk.”

“I won’t die. You think I have been doing self-harm only for a day or two?”

Having heard what I said, Idy raised both of her arms and double face palmed.

She sighed deeply. I grabbed her arm and pulled as I got on the portal.

Now, shall we get going?

[Round 15, Day 6, 03:30]

* * *

[Kyaaaaaooooo-]

Two giant monsters the size of huge buildings, were jumbled up in a struggle.

The two monsters that appeared immediately after we entered the stage...

This is the same timing at the same exact spot.

Idy and I were already hiding at a place far away from the battle and watching their fight.

“Captain.”

“Yeah? What is it?”

“The bogus dragons that you told me about before, are you talking about those?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“They are size of mountains. How do you plan to hunt them?”

Kwwwuaaaaang-

Destructive sound echoed through the area, shaking the surroundings.

One of the monster used its fire breath.

Wow...

Last time, I was so busy running away, I didn’t get to see it well. Now that I see it, it really is powerful.

We are very far away. From this distance, it looks like just a flame that’s coming out of the mouth, but to see that such shockwave is emanates from it...

“Captain.”

“It’s all right. I won’t pick on them during this round. I’m thinking about hunting them during the next round.”

“To me, you sound like you are going to purposely get yourself killed during the next round. Keruk.”

It’s all right. I won’t die.

I am going to run away if it looks like I’m going to die.

Idy still looked very anxious as she looked at me. I decided to bring up something that would cheer her up.

“Let’s go home first.”

“Keruk.”

As I expected, she quickly wiped away her anxiousness and smiled. She looked happy.

* * *

We found the cave that we used as our primary residence last time. From that point and on, we started our life at the 12th Floor for the second time.

The first thing to do was checking the Poison Energy Skill's power, which had become level 4.

I had antidote potion ready and started experimenting on myself with the mana wrapped with poison energy.

After a few repeats, I felt symptoms of poison infection that I had not felt before.

The Poison Energy Skill finally broke through the Great Poison Resistance. It was finally having an effect of noticeable pain.

I could feel sharp and stiff pain at the site of the wound.

Um... The poison is spreading a little slowly.

Oh, good.

It's hurting my stomach too.

After a while, my respiratory track started to swell, making breathing difficult.

I could feel a strong headache. It was getting difficult to maintain clear vision.

It looks like my lung is still fine.

Now, the wound area is paralyzed. My senses are dulled there.

It's not bad.

There are quite a few symptoms happening.

It's just that the poison is spreading slowly.

Also, it is lacking in lethality.

There are many symptoms, including paralysis on the wound area, but this is not enough to cause death.

It's only to the extent of being in extreme pain for a few days before recovering little by little.

Of course, I have the Great Poison Resistance. Still, even with that under consideration, I am a little disappointed.

When it comes to poison, nerve poison seems to be the most effective.

That is from the personal experience of having been afflicted by it many times in the past.

After confirming the Poison Energy Skill's power, I handled the hunting all by myself.

It was to develop the Detection and Poison Energy Skills by utilizing them in the hunting.

Idy, who had to recreate the home from scratch, gladly agreed to this idea.

Around the time Idy almost completed remodeling the cave, I completed my work.

My Poison Energy Skill became level 5.

Now, the Poison Energy Skill acquired a certain degree of lethality.

Next, I focused on Tracking Skill.

To lean back and chase after the prey that was infected by the poison, I needed tracking-type skill.

I thought my Detection Skill will cover this, but Idy said that it will be lacking in efficiency. Heeding to her advice, I acquired Tracking Skill and developed it.

Tracking Skill was not like the Detection Skill where it was all about operating the mana.

I pursued the prey by noticing its trace, footprints, excrements, hair, smell and etc. as clues to predict the path.

Idy said that mana operation will be required when the Tracking Skill's level increased. However, I was not there yet.

I released a prey that was wounded and infected by the poison and tracked the prey afterwards.

Like that, I caught the prey and released it again.

As I repeated the process, my Tracking Skill developed quickly.

My skill's mastery increased, but I also gained experience. With them, I gained a bit of confidence in hunting and tracking inside the jungle.

Like that, I spent the days diligently focusing on developing my skills. Before I realized, the preys around home were all gone.

It was not a problem in particular.

I already had plenty of food.

Not having any prey around home halted my growth, but I already more than succeeded in achieving the desired skill growths that I planned in the beginning.

Now, let's put aside developments for a moment and really try making a move.

Let's see. It's been 11 days since I entered the 12th Floor stage.

Rain... won't fall for an entire week.

As for the wind, it will be consistent until the rainfall a week later.

I could be certain because I thoroughly memorized the daily weather from the last time.

Kuuu. I'm so diligent about preparing.

"Idy. Starting tomorrow, I'm going to try going to farther places."

"Keruk. Are you going to hunt further away?"

"Yes. I probably will have to go this far."

I opened the 12th Floor stage Ihaoi Continent's map that I got from Lee Jun-suk and explained the location to Idy.

"Keruk. Isn't that too far? It will take over nine days just to get there."

"I need to go that far. I plan to go for some serious hunting this time."

"Serious hunting?"

"Yes. First, I plan to set fire on this jungle with this."

From the dimensional space backpack, I brought out a large bag of heat stones and explained.

I was aware that the inventory becomes inaccessible at the 12th Floor, so I placed all of necessary items in the large capacity dimensional space backpack beforehand.

I had 800 heat stones. Tossing in just one was enough to sustain a fire for an entire day.

They were enough to burn down the entire jungle.

Chapter 69

Tutorial 12th Floor (8)

What's so attractive about fantasy genre?

Isn't it all about getting vicarious satisfaction from hearing or seeing amazing experiences that are beyond our wildest imaginations?

Everyone has a fantasy or two.

When people find novels or movies that can satisfy their desire, they indulge in them quickly. I think it is obvious why they would.

I also have such a fantasy.

The characters who occasionally appear in fantasy novels, such as griffin riders, wyvern riders, or dragon riders...

I'm talking about those.

The knights who ride on the backs of flying monsters and soar to the sky...

When I was a kid, I read fantasy novels and wondered how great it would be to have that kind of experience.

Standing on the top of the cliff and facing the fresh wind, I sighed.

It is the moment where my lifelong dream is about to come true.

I should be happy...

Although I became the mounted instead of the mounter.

“Here, get on my back, Idy.”

“Keruk. I never thought I would become the first human rider in the lizardman history.”

The strange class title lingered at my ears.

A human rider, a lizardman who is riding me, a human...

What a horrible mix...

* * *

[Talaria's Wings]

From the edge of the cliff, I spread the gigantic wings and lowered my body to take a stance.

“All right. Get on, Idy.”

“Keruk Keruk.”

She found it amusing for a moment. She then carefully got on my back.

“Keruk. I never even dreamed I would become the first human rider in the lizardman history.”

“I also never even dreamed I would be flying in the sky with a lizardman on my back. I always dreamed about what I'd be riding. I never once thought about me being the ride.”

“Keruk. Keruk. Captain, if you want, you can always ride me.”

What am I going to do by riding you?

Are you going to give me a piggy back ride?

Wait, hold on here...

Are you speaking in innuendoes?

“Hey!”

“Keruk. Keruk.”

I can hear Idy’s laughter from the back.

Unlike earlier, her laughter sounded lewd. It was raising goosebumps on my neck and face.

I knew that she was teasing me, but it was still giving me the creeps.

“Hey! Don’t fiddle with my arm! You are going to get in my way of flying!”

“Keruk. Keruk.”

Oh my, you are having so much fun here aren’t you?

I think I should start flying right away so she won’t play around.

I’ll show you the true meaning of motion sickness from flight.

I’m going to have you go through an extreme course of the pain from flight motion sickness.

I took steps and jumped from the cliff.

Talaria’s Wings’ flight effect was activated. Like that, our flight begun.

The weather was completely clear. There wasn’t even a single lump of cloud.

It was perfect for flying.

The jungle stretched to the horizon. It was a great sight to behold during flight.

“Keruk! Keruk!”

Is it fun?

Is it exciting?

Soon, I'll show you hell.

* * *

“Keruk. Captain, I think I'm going to throw up.”

“...Hold it for a bit. I'll slow down.”

To show hell to Idy who had been making fun of me, I performed a few aerial acrobat flight moves, and I regretted it immediately.

Unable to endure the motion sickness, Idy vomited.

She threw up right on my back.

Because it happened due to my overdone flight moves, I can't even complain to Idy...

...Ugh, seriously...

In the end, we landed and found a water stream. We were able to fly again after I washed my body and changed clothes.

Since then, I had been flying really quietly in low altitude.

I was no different from a fancy taxi service with exemplary driving.

Damn it. Damn it.

“Captain... I am really sorry. Are you very angry?”

“It’s all right... It happened because I was acting out. Don’t mind it.”

Who would I blame this on?

I am the one who is the dumbass.

Gosh.

There were a few reasons why we could comfortably fly through the sky on a clear day like this.

First, there was the information about that Ihaoi Continent that Lee Jun-suk sent after obtaining it from a Hard Difficulty manager.

Perhaps it was because the continent was covered in lush jungle with tightly packed trees. There weren’t many large flying monsters living here.

Secondly, from the last round, while I spent 24 days in the jungle, I figured out the levels of most of the monsters here.

The situation now was different from the last time, when I didn’t even know what kind of monsters were here.

Finally, while Idy and I are combined like this...

Combined? That sounds kind of weird.

With Idy on my back, we could fight off ordinary monsters with ease.

Because I’m flying with Talaria’s Wing’s flight effect, I don’t need to use my body to fly.

I don’t need to mind the flight control so much, hence moving my body and making decisions are that much easier.

In addition, there is the Wind Spirit’s Blessing and Blink Skills.

Idy is also on my back, wielding a long spear. With her in charge of attack and checking the rear view, this is perfect.

There probably isn't anyone who could beat us on aerial combat, at least on 12th Floor Stage.

Because of these reasons, I was certain about the safety of the flight, so I decided to fly to the destination instead of walking on foot.

Besides the speed, covering several hundred kilometers through lush jungle is no easy task.

It is not just hard. The mental exhaustion from crossing several hundred kilometers is no joke.

We need to constantly cut away grass and tree branches getting in our way as we walk through narrow spaces between trees.

We also need to watch out for tree roots underneath.

There are countless bugs and poisonous plants.

Also, the environment is hot and humid

Although I like things tough, that's only when I'm grinding for the sake of developing skills.

When possible, I like comfort. Is that too obvious?

I focused on flying as I thought about a lot of things, but Idy carefully started a conversation.

"Captain. I think we had been flying for quite a while now. How about we rest for a bit while eating packed lunch?"

"Okay. Let's do that."

Her voice still felt apologetic. That was bugging me.

I think I should at least compliment her by telling her how delicious the food is as I eat it.

Her motion sickness will be gone too if we spend an hour or two on the ground as we eat the lunch.

* * *

Although I made up my mind to compliment her cooking to make her feel better, the thought was unnecessary.

The packed lunch was delicious anyway. I would have only compliment her on the food anyway for how delicious it was.

It is the best, Idy.

“Keruk. Eat heartily, Captain.”

Idy looked pleased. She smiled like a doting mother as she watched me eat.

Wow, this is super tasty.

Seriously...

I think you could even open a restaurant.

Actually, in the past, I assumed lizardmen would eat raw food. I was completely wrong.

Maybe Idy was extraordinarily skilled in cooking. Regardless, her cooking was far tastier than the food I used to eat in Korea.

“Keruk. Why did you think lizardmen would eat raw food?”

“Because lizards do that.”

“Even monkeys eat raw food too. Keruk.”

Um... You got me there.

“Keruk. You should be mindful of this from now on. I’ve heard that humans are the only intelligent beings in the world that you came from. However, that is not the case in other worlds. You will meet various beings as you progress through the Tutorial. If you step out of bounds with your words carelessly, you could hurt their feelings, so you need to be careful.”

She was right.

I was careless and rude.

At the Fourth Floor, I treated goblins as just mindless monsters. I was astonished when I learned otherwise. To think I became complacent about this fact again in such a short period of time.

“Your tendency is probably influenced by the fact that the other beings you met so far were all enemies you had to defeat. Overthinking about the enemy’s culture or showing respect could occasionally come back to hurt you as poison. You could think the way you do unconsciously. However, from now on, most likely not all beings are going to be your enemies.”

I should be careful and remember Idy’s advice.

It is a worthy advice.

Where would I go to get advice like this?

“Thanks, Idy. I’ll remember it well and be careful from now on. Also, if you are upset because of what I said, I apologize.”

“Keruk. Keruk. It’s all right. You take my nagging seriously. I’m thankful.”

‘You worried for nothing’ was what Idy essentially said. I looked at Idy and smiled quietly.

This rascal is good at talking too.

I suddenly felt that I was fortunate to have met Idy.

It was a very unique fate that lead to our meeting and what came after.

I met her as the enemy at the Fifth Floor's boss room. Who would have thought that I would be spending time like this with her and become close with her?

I thought about when we were standing on guard against each other with weapons pointed at each other and when she suddenly made mating proposal confession to me.

Our relation started with that, and it came this far.

It's very interesting.

Now, Idy became my friend and only comrade.

She is my advisor, supporter and even teacher.

I think it would be also fine to call her my family.

She is different from the people at the Order of Vigilance.

This is different from my relationship with the Order's members who I communicate through the community and meet in person once every two or so months.

When it came to the members of the Order, even when I got close to them and got to know them well, the relationship felt very business-like; it was more for just the social structure.

We were close because it was necessary and convenient for each other.

In comparison, when it came to Idy...

Our relationship was not like that. Instead, we had a closer, intimate,

and supportive relationship.

Our relationship was not out of necessity.

What would I do if Idy could not help me in progressing through the stage anymore?

I would still want to be with her.

I like being with her.

When she is around, I feel comfortable and supported.

We understand each other easily and can smile together.

The fact that I have a friend like her, and the fact that someone like her is with me through the Tutorial when I had been alone for all this time...

I am thankful.

[God of Adventure has satisfied smile on the face while watching you.]

[God of Adventure is very satisfied with your revelation.]

[God of Adventure is very impressed and sympathetic after having read your thoughts.]

God of Adventure's Test [Completion Rate: 39/224]

* * *

We finally arrived at the destination.

It took two days of flight.

I put my hand out and felt out the empty air.

I could feel an invisible wall.

I tried operating mana, but even mana could not penetrate the wall.

I'm guessing even fire won't work.

This is the edge of the 12th Floor Stage, the eastern edge.

This was the destination that I wanted to get to.

It has not rained in the past few days, so it is relatively less humid today.

It won't be raining for the next five days.

The wind is blowing from the east to the west.

Kuuuuuu... It is perfect.

“Now, let's get started, Idy.”

With Idy riding on my back, I flew up to the sky again.

From the large bag we had prepared earlier, Idy brought out a heat stone.

Keruk. Just toss it like this?”

“Yes. Think of it as throwing it to shatter the heat stone. Throw it toward trees or ground.”

The heat stones will do the rest.

Small fires ignited wherever Idy threw the stones towards.

Heat stones are able to exude fire continuously for half a day once they start.

Their effectiveness is proven.

There were plenty of trees and grass around.

In an environment like this, a small seed of fire, even ones from a freshly tossed cigarette, could burn down the entire forest.

Actually, it would not take 800 heat stones. Even 20 would be enough to cause a huge firestorm.

“Keruk. Captain, the air is too hot.”

When Idy tossed about a dozen heat stones, because of the spreading fire, the temperature around the place increased rapidly.

Lizardmen were cold-blooded, so they were sensitive to temperature change.

I flew pretty far away from the flame.

“Keruk. Now it is a little better.”

We watched the fire spreading from a distance. It was incredible.

Wow...

Burn up, by experience points!

“If you are going to play with fire, you should do at least this much, haha.”

“Keruk... Keruk.”

This is strangely exciting.

Something is odd.

I’m feeling pleasure from burning down a forest using a manmade fire.

The flame was slowly burning everything and expanding. I watched it quietly, and it was just fun.

It felt like my chest was opened up completely. It was fun and exciting.

I think I'll set more fires later whenever I get the chance.

Hahaha.

"Now, Idy. Throw a heat stone over there too. Let's raise up the fire faster. More, more!"

Chapter 70

Tutorial 12th Floor (9)

[Level Up]

[Agility increased by 2]

[Mana increased by 1]

[Heat Resistance Skill increased by 1]

[Tracking Skill increased by 1]

* * *

All right. This is perfect.

The level up speed is no joke.

I already knew that it was possible to gain experience from causing fire.

It was a small amount, about a quarter of the amount that I could have got from defeating the enemy directly.

A Normal Difficulty player discovered this before we even got to the Round Ten, although that player did not think about causing a large-scale fire like this.

A red devil of flame engulfed the jungle. Black smoke completely filled the sky.

[Kiiiaaaaak!]

I can hear the screams of the monsters from all over the place.

Most monsters chose to run away from the fire.

That's a wise choice.

They could either lose their life by staying or lose their habitat. It was obvious which one was the bigger loss.

However, my plan is to burn down the entire stage.

They can't escape from the fire indefinitely by running.

After all, this is not a natural disaster.

Running from the fire that started from the east, countless monsters arrive in the west.

The scale of the herds of monsters on the run is incredible.

We are looking at it from the sky. It is a sight to behold.

I see they are not fighting in this situation.

Some of them were pushing, shoving and running over one another, but none of them are standing around and fighting each other.

They were all diligently running away from the fire.

Flying animals were flying toward the west in orderly manner like a flock of birds' seasonal migrations.

However, there are some monsters who are trying to subdue the fire instead of running.

They are mostly ones with water-based skills who don't want to leave their territories.

Of course, they are not a huge, coordinated group. They are individually acting, so I don't think they can subdue fire this large.

However, because of bastards like them, the fire is spreading slower.

We need to personally kill these volunteer firefighting monsters.

[Keeek!]

Idy's spear pierced a monster and it died instantly.

Her attack was at a whole another level from a western knight's lance charge attack.

It was a death blow that benefit from the speed of a dive flight move.

Having killed the monster, I flew up into the sky again.

Idy was going to suffer from being near the fire too long.

To help her against the heat and motion sickness, I gave her a bottle of elixir. However, there was no need for us to be inside the heat continuously.

There were countless monsters running away from the fire, but there were a few that tripped while running and got injured. Unable to move, those monsters were swallowed by the fire.

It seemed there were a few that hid inside caves and were roasted to death.

Good, good.

"Keruk. I am a little uncomfortable with this. Perhaps it's because I lived in forests before. I am a little afraid of a large fire like this."

"It's all right. This area is someone else's home anyway."

"If it keeps on heading west, the fire will reach our home too. Keruk."

“It’s all right. It won’t be our home anymore once we clear the stage anyway.”

“Keruk...”

[Buuuuoooo!]

From a distance, a humongous monster appeared, roaring.

It looked like brachiosaurus.

Of the two bogus dragons, this one has barrier skill.

It would’ve been better if this one ran away from the fire too, but this bastard was using its huge body and barrier skill to try and stop the fire.

It’s a huge prey to hunt. Let’s try.

“Keruk. Are you really going to attack that monster?”

“Of course. Get me my sword from the dimensional space bag.”

Idy found the savage warrior’s backsword and handed it to me.

I had been using this weapon for a really long time.

I bought it when I cleared the Fourth Floor.

It does not have any special attribute. However, it is very sturdy, and does not bend; hence my fondness of this weapon.

I wish I had a good spear to use.

Against a huge enemy like this, a longer weapon would be better.

I happen to have learned spear techniques from Idy earlier, but I wouldn’t be able to use it without a spear. It’s too bad.

I should buy a spear as soon as I clear the 12th Floor.

We circled around the bogus dragon.

We didn't get too close.

We have to stay away from its range and dawdle.

Like a fly...

However, we are no ordinary fly.

[Soul Steal]

It was going to deteriorate the enemy's vitality. It could lead to death of the enemy if the effect continued for a long time.

The skill also returned stamina to me if I killed the enemy affected by the skill.

It really is the best skill.

It's also perfect for drawing attention.

So far, although the monster noticed me, it was more focused on the fire. Now, the bogus dragon looked at me and roared.

[Buuuuuoooooooo!]

What are you going to do by screaming at me? You rascal.

You think you can catch me when I'm flying around?

Also, if you chase after me, your home will burn away completely.

I screamed back at the bogus dragon.

Because of the effect from the knowledge of the time before babel,

that bogus dragon clearly understood what I said.

“Captain, as I thought, you become too underhanded when you are fighting.”

The bogus dragon glared at me for a moment. It then turned its gaze back to the flame.

“Get ready, Idy. Let’s attack by taking advantage of this.”

“Keruk.”

I flew to blind spot of the monster on its back.

“Now!”

My backsword and Idy’s spear were both swung at the same time.

Both weapons precisely aimed at the monster’s back.

Kwwaaaang!!

However, our attack was blocked by the monster’s barrier skill.

Isn’t that response too fast?

I turned to look, and the monster turned its head. It was glaring at us directly with its giant eyes.

I performed a few aerial acrobatics to dodge the monster’s tail swinging at us. I put distance from the monster.

I didn’t think it could respond so fast to the ambush attack coming at its rear.

Especially when that monster is so huge...

It’s pretty agile.

“Keruk. What do we do now, Captain?”

The monster is now ignoring the fire and steadily glaring at us.

“Well, we should keep trying.”

It will work eventually if we keep on trying.

The situation is overwhelmingly in our favor.

The monster wants to protect its habitat from the fire.

Its habitat is currently being lost to the fire.

The monster has to kill us quickly or just ignore us. It needs to choose one.

However, if it does decide to come after us, we can just run away by flying.

Meanwhile, its habitat will be decimated by the fire.

If it ignores us?

Then we just need to repeat the attack.

That barrier skill is not a passive skill, meaning that it won't sustain itself indefinitely.

It is an active skill that the monster needs to cast just before being attacked.

We will be attempting our attacks from its blind spots.

As long as we succeed just once, that will be the end of the monster.

The area has become a sea of flame.

The monster is also subject to the deterioration effect of the Soul Steal.

If it gets poisoned on top of this, well...

Its movement will become dull. It will keep on allowing more attacks to hit and will eventually die from the poison.

It's perfect, right?

"Keruk. I somehow feel sorry for that monster. Keruk."

"Hey. Should you say such things?"

"I know. I was joking. Keruk."

Now, shall we go for another try?

The monster, which was glaring at us, gave up chasing us in the end. It turned its attention towards the fire.

It is still occasionally glancing at us.

You have huge moving eyes. You think I won't notice?

I increased my flying speed and then used the Wind Spirit's Blessing to accelerate further to approach the monster.

As I thought, the monster was wary of our movement. It swung its tail at us.

[Blink]

I used the Blink to dodge the tail and blinked closer to the monster.

Clank!

Again, our attack was blocked by the barrier.

Isn't this bastard's reaction time really is incredible?

I continued to fly along the body of the monster and tried more attacks.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

I used the Blink again after that.

We moved toward the lower end of the monster, toward its legs.

Because of the monster's large body, it could not clearly view its legs.

Slice...

The backsword and the spear's tip cut through its skin.

Chuuuuuuk...

I swung my weapons again and deepened its injuries.

Clank!

The third attempt was blocked by the barrier.

We moved out of the way and dodged the monster's leg swing.

[Buuuuuooooo!]

With the monster's roar behind us, we ran away for now.

Hahahaha.

The monster chased after us for about five minutes. After a moment, it stopped.

The monster's eyes were blood shot. Its gaze remained concentrated on us.

I think it is mad to the core.

Still, what could it do now?

The poison energy has already infiltrated its body.

The wounded area will slowly paralyze.

The monster will start to suffer from all sorts of pains.

Its movement speed will slow substantially once the paralysis reaches the leg muscles.

Unless this monster has poison resistance, great poison resistance at least, it will be pretty painful.

Since it is so huge, the poison won't be fatal, but...

At least it won't be able to ignore Idy's attacks.

Idy couldn't explain exactly how it worked, but her spear technique killed most monsters with a clean, single blow.

"We won. Keruk."

Now, the monster has to give up on its habitat.

Unable to hold its anger, it chased us for five minutes while its habitat went up in flames.

Its options now changed.

It can either chase us or run away from the flame.

Either way, it will end in its death.

Although this is obvious, running away from us is not a possible option for this monster.

[Buuuooooo!]

Its loud roar pierced the area. The roar was full of anguish and frustration.

Is it not able to feel even anger anymore?

Its legs were full of wounds.

Also, every time a new wound was inflicted, more poison energy infiltrates the monster's body.

Now, the monster didn't even have any strength left to move. It just plummeted to the ground and cried out.

"Let's go. We should finish it with our own hands."

"Keruk."

If we let it be, the monster was going to die by from the fire.

That wasn't a bad thing, but we spent half a day fighting it. It was a tough fight.

We should end it ourselves.

There is the matter of the experience points.

I pierced my sword right between its eyes. Several messages appeared in a row in front of me.

[Level Up]

[Strength went up by 1]

[Stamina went up by 1]

[Agility increased by 1]

[Mana Circuit Skill increased by 1]

[Sensory Amplification Skill increased by 1]

Oh, all right.

Mana Circuit and Sensory Amplification Skills don't rise easily. They leveled up.

[God of Slowness is satisfied with your exploit.]

[God of Adventure is satisfied with your exploit.]

[God of Battle is interested in you.]

[God of Light is very intrigued by you.]

[God of Duel is disappointed by the unacceptable result.]

It's been a while since I've seen so many gods showing interest.

It is expected. What we are doing right now is not something that happens very often.

I am certain that these bogus dragons are not there to be hunted.

Compared to other monsters at the 12th Floor Stage, these dragons have excessively higher specs.

Their size is at a whole another level, and the skills that they have are directly useful in combat.

If I could not fly, and if I could not corner it into a disadvantage by setting the fire, it would not have been possible to hunt the monster so easily like this.

The bogus dragons are more like a message to the player who enters the stage. By showing the two fight as soon as the player enters the stage, it is sending a message that the place is dangerous like this so the player should be careful and focus on survival for 25 days.

To go a little further, they also serve as a clue that the monsters at 12th Floor Stage each have a skill.

Still, it was totally worth overexerting ourselves and killing it.

I think I will get plenty of additional awards after this.

Idy was having a hard time because of the heat. I flew up high and flew away from the heat for her.

I also breathed in too much smoke while fighting the monster.

“Keruk. Now, what are you going to do?”

“First, we should go somewhere far away from the fire. Let’s rest there. We should eat the packed lunch too. If we could find a safe place, I think it would be also good to take a nap.”

The fire had already engulfed east side of the jungle. I am sure it will continue to spread even if I left it be.

“After that?”

Why are you asking the obvious?

We need to set more fires.

Chapter 71

Tutorial 12th Floor (10)

“Keruk. Keruk. Our home is burning, Captain.”

Um... I see.

In the end, the cave that we had been using as our base also got swallowed by the fire.

Contrary to my expectations, the fire is spreading too easily.

It is too much.

It had not rained for a while, so the weather is dry. Plus, the wind is still blowing westward.

In addition, there is no civilization here that formed a cohesive group. The rapidly spreading fire is the result of these three factors.

At the Ihaoi Continent in the 12th Floor Stage, each and every monster possessed powerful and unique skills. However, they didn't have a large scale civilization beyond the size of a small tribe.

At best, the biggest one was like that of the orangutans.

The orangutans chose to run to the west after realizing the intensity of the fire.

They might try to fight the fire when it spreads too far. However, as long as I interfere, the flame will not get extinguished.

The plan is working out too smoothly.

There aren't any unexpected enemies getting in our way.

Monsters either ran away in chaos or tried to stop the fire on their own. We just needed to hunt them down.

I actually feel anxious because things are rolling along too smoothly.

This is Hell Difficulty, it shouldn't be so easy.

“...Keruk.”

Huh? Idy's voice is strange.

“Hey, are you crying?”

There was no response.

Instead, I felt some light movement on my back.

It felt like Idy just raised her hand to wipe off tears from her eyes.

What should I do?

I ended up making Idy cry.

I took Idy's sentiment about the home that she made too lightly, which was burning right now.

Should I console her?

How?

I can't turn this situation around either.

The fire is now at a level that I could not stop even if I wanted to.

The home has already been swallowed in the blaze.

Wow... Really, what should I do?

Should I send a message to Kim Min-huk and ask?

When it came to relationships, he was better than Doraemon. If I got advice from him, it would work out somehow.

However, Idy is on my back right now.

Idy won't be able to read and understand the message, but I don't think it will be good idea for me to seem like I was ignoring Idy at this moment.

I'm facing a dilemma with no easy solution.

I'm facing the greatest danger ever since I entered the 12th Floor.

I think I should say something to Idy...

Time is ticking.

“Ah... Um.”

Damn it. I was anxious, so I opened my mouth, but I could not think of anything to say.

This is driving me nuts.

Am I too late?

Could it be too late to say anything?

The awkward silence and uncomfortable atmosphere was making my head swim in circles.

Thankfully, a person came to resolve this difficult situation.

No, it was not a person.

It was a monster.

[Kiiiaaaaoooo!]

I see. It came out!

The other bogus dragon!

This isn't just a large sized monster.

It is a real bogus dragon with a fire breath skill.

It sounds weird to call it a real bogus dragon, but anyway, I am really glad to see that monster right now.

“Idy! Let's kill that one first and think about it later!”

“Keruk. I got it.”

Idy quickly erased her gloom and responded with grit.

I used Blink several times in a row to get out of the fire breath's range that was directed towards us. We flew to get closer to the bogus dragon.

* * *

[Kwaaaaoooo...!]

Obviously, the result was our victory.

Its fire breath was a powerful attack. However, this one was actually easier to fight than the monster earlier which had the barrier skill.

When it was shooting its fire breath, its signs were too apparent.

Hey, I'm going to shoot the fire breath now!

It was practically attacking after telling us that. I just needed to use Blink and dodge them.

If there was anyone in gaming world who could not even dodge that, they must have one shitty hand. I bet he could not even be in a WOW Raid.

Ah, of course, one has to be able to fly and have mobility equaling Blink Skill.

After dodging the fire breath, I stabbed it thoroughly with sword a number of times while it was catching its breath; the fight was over just like that.

Just like the monster that used the barrier, after being affected by the deterioration from Soul Steal and the poison from the Poison Energy, the monster lost strength where it stood and plummeted.

All that was left to do afterwards was piercing its head and ending the battle.

Thump...

When the monster collapsed to the ground, the monster's gigantic body triggered a massive shockwave.

Hmm, it didn't cause me to level up this time.

No. This is not important right now.

"Kuhum. Idy. The thing is... Our plan is too effective, so..."

"Keruk... I know."

"Actually, I was planning on burning down just the eastern area. I never predicted that it would spread to the west so fast."

"Keruk. Keruk."

Now that it has come to this, it cannot be helped.

Since our home burned down too, let's just burn the entire jungle and clear the stage, Idy.

"I got it, Captain. I am aware that it could not be helped. I won't complain anymore, so tell me about the plan to go forward."

She still looked down, but she asked coolly.

To clear the stage, the condition is to survive for 25 days. However, if I burn everything and conquer the stage, then I should be able to clear the stage instantaneously.

* * *

[Kiiiiiaaak!]

[Kaaaaak! Kyaaaak!]

My ears hurt.

Several hundred thousand monsters are at the same place roaring.

The fire spread through the entire stage in the end. It eventually progressed to the end of the western boundary.

To the west... The monsters had been running and running to the west. Now, blocked by the invisible wall at the boundary of the stage, they were trapped.

This place was literally no different from hell.

At one end, there were countless monsters using skills in attempt to stop the fire somehow.

As I thought, these bastards are quite intelligent.

They are recognizing the dire situation. They are setting aside their

differences and cooperating with each other.

At one end, there are monsters with burns that are crying out in pain.

On another end, monsters are running amok, shoving and stepping on other monsters in attempt to get a little closer to the west.

There are even monsters who were fighting each other in middle of this chaos.

Numerous monsters are being killed from being shoved and stepped on by other monsters as well.

Their few types of responses were all desperate and terrifying.

The screams of the monsters... I think I understand them.

The knowledge before the time of Babel is clearly delivering to me the fear, anguish, despair, sadness and longing that are echoed in their screams.

This place is hell.

“Keruk. Captain, here it is.”

I drank the heat resistance potion that Idy handed to me.

I had been drinking one every six hours.

I felt like I was wasting this pricy potion, but it could not be helped.

The heat from the fire which was burning down the entire jungle could not be avoided easily anymore.

Now, without the potion, Idy's movement became very sluggish, and she suffered from dizziness and headaches.

Now, shall we get going?

With Idy, we flew to the area where it was packed with monsters.

The monsters saw us, but they were too busy to respond.

Are they thinking that we are just two of them that ran here to avoid the fire?

That's not bad for us.

Idy and I moved quietly so we won't draw the monsters' attention.

To where the monsters are all gathered, to the middle of the area...

There were several hundred thousand monsters there.

The west was blocked by an invisible wall, and there was a huge wave of flames coming from the right.

Isn't this perfect?

This is where I wanted to be.

This is the situation I wanted to happen. These are the enemies I wanted to face.

Instead of finding and hunting one or two monsters at a time at snail-like pace, I prefer this, being surrounded by countless monsters and fighting like a madman.

The adrenaline from my excitement heightened my senses.

"Now, shall we begin?"

"Keruk."

Idy also quietly nodded.

Slowly, wielding the backsword, I cut off a monster from the back.

Also, I stabbed the sword into the heart of a monster that was looking at the fire in the distance.

Because of the fire in the distance, all the monsters crawling at the area washed in anxiety and fear, there were monsters that didn't notice us, and we killed them one by one with a single blow.

We did it quietly so it wouldn't cause a large commotion.

However, not all of these monsters were in complete disarray.

As we increased the number of monster corpses, other monsters in the area started to be wary of us.

They quickly took battle stances when we approached them. There were some that ran toward us from a distance to attack.

However, they were not coordinated.

There probably are over several hundred monsters fighting each other in this hell hole.

Most of the monsters ignored us, thinking we are just more of such monsters fighting another.

Like that, for a long time, we cut and stabbed monsters and killed them. The situation changed little by little as we proceeded.

Now, all monsters around us were glaring and growling at us.

“Keruk. I think they all finally noticed us.”

You mean they noticed that we had been indiscriminately attacking all monsters in our sight?

“It won't matter even if they realized it.”

[Soul Steal]

I used the skill at a narrow range.

The monsters' eyes harbored intensified animosity as they were affected by the skill's deteriorating effect.

Now, all of these monsters are staring at me and recognizing that I am definitely an enemy.

With all of their murderous gazes focused on me, I felt an electrifying thrill.

Hahahaha.

That's right. This is it.

This is it.

“What are you glaring at! You little monster bastards!”

I shouted and charged toward the monsters in front of me.

Although there are hostile monsters are surrounding us, in the end, they are only an extremely small fraction of the total.

Most of the several hundred thousand monsters gathered here are not even aware of our presence.

Like that, I am going to kill the monsters little by little.

From the outer edge of the west, the spreading wave of fire will continue to swallow up the monsters. Meanwhile, from the inside, we will kill the monsters disoriented by the chaos one at a time.

It is a perfect master plan.

[Kyyyyyaaaaaak!]

I thought that as I stabbed a knife to a screaming monster who lost its legs by my backword.

I thought it was perfect.

* * *

“Keruk.”

Idy was making the sound out of frustration. Having heard her, my head tilted lower even further.

“Keruk. Captain, so... what happened to that conquest clear?”

“Um... that is... I... I don’t know!”

The only thing I could do was to yell confidently.

I don’t know, so what could I do?

We burned the entire jungle to ashes. We killed all monsters that used to be alive. Despite all that, the conquest clear was still not accomplished. How should I know why?

“Keruk... Captain, I need to rest for a bit now. I was exposed to the heat for far too long.”

While we were killing the monsters one by one, there was a sudden change in the situation.

There were monsters that were putting up valiant fight against the spread of fire. However, their defensive line against the fire collapsed.

Riding the wind, the flame started to spread to the west again.

In state of panic, the monsters swarmed toward the west and pounded on the invisible wall.

Of course, the wall remained unyielding.

That wall must be made by the system to contain the space inside the stage.

At an instant, several tens of thousands of monsters died from being trampled upon.

With monsters running amok, I could no longer be certain about our survival while being in midst of it.

We stopped hunting and escaped from the area.

We moved to the area that had been completely burned to ashes and was no longer burning. However, in the process, we had to go through the sky above a wave of flames.

I had Idy take heat resistance potion and low-level elixir. However, it her condition didn't seem well.

I brought out a tent from the dimensional space bag and had her go inside.

Fortunately, I had a tent that had the temperature control function.

This time, I brought out freeze potions from the bag and spread the freezing water around.

I spread them like a farmer spreads pesticide to the farming field. The heat coming off from the ground cooled a little, although it was still like a sauna.

I crunched down to the ground. I looked around.

Ugh...

What should I do.

Am I supposed to hold out until the round ends?

In this place where everything is burned to ashes?

...How many meat jerkies did I have left in the bag?

Chapter 72

Tutorial 12th Floor (11)

After burning the monsters at the western edge of the stage, Idy and I had been aimlessly flying around the stage to pass the time.

As we flew around, we could occasionally find monsters that survived the fire.

We spent our time hunting down the survivors.

Now, Idy was completely used to flying. She didn't completely hate the new daily routine.

It wasn't that she liked flying. She didn't like touching down on a barren ground.

I felt the same.

There were just black charcoals and white ashes. The desolate field was uncomfortable and an unpleasant environment to stay in. Also, it was icky from mental health perspective.

There was an old saying about how one who hurt others won't be able to sleep, and the one who was hurt will be.

Those wise ancestors were completely right.

I was the one who caused the fire, and I couldn't even walk around the ground without feeling awkward and leery. On the other hand, the ones who were hurt were sleeping soundly.

Although technically, they were all sleeping because they were dead.

“Keruk. Captain, we don't have water anymore.”

I came to my senses at her alarming words.

Damn it.

The huge fire completely evaporated all streams and ponds that could be seen occasionally in the stage.

We don't have water.

On the large lake on south west region, a bit of water was left. However, because of monsters who jumped into the water to escape the fire and drowned there, the water there was contaminated.

“Let's try enduring it...”

“Keruk...”

We were no different from the stranded survivors.

Damn it. I gained substantial experience points from burning down the jungle, but what I lost was greater than what I gained from this.

We lost the vacation life and became stranded survivors.

We are also almost out of food.

To begin with, I didn't bring a lot of food in the dimensional bag.

There were little bits of meat jerkies and spices that I placed in there long time ago.

After all, why would I pack any food when Idy cooked delicious meals every day?

Damn it all.

With everything burned away in the jungle, finding food was fucking difficult.

There were corpses of monsters everywhere. However, they were all burnt to black crisps.

There were other corpses in better conditions, but it already had been a while since they died.

Their flesh was rotting. It was impossible to cook anything out of that.

We occasionally found live monsters and obtained meat. However, it was incredibly rare.

It was hard to find a single living monster after flying around whole day.

Ah, I should have just continued training at that cave instead.

“Keruk. It’s too late to realize that now.”

* * *

Idy disappeared.

The Dead Summon’s duration had expired.

Because I did not have the moment to spare to think about the duration at the time, we ended up parting ways before I even had the chance to properly say goodbye.

Should I summon her again?

Um...

Let’s do that next time.

I should summon her again if I need to challenge the 12th Floor again or when I need her in some other floor.

Even if I summoned her now, there is nothing she could do here; she wouldn’t like it here either.

With Idy gone, my life here became harder.

Even when I found a monster that was alive, I didn't know how to carve its meat out. I didn't know how to cook it either.

I figured I should know how to make a fire and roast the meat. However, I didn't think it would taste this bad.

The barbeque that Idy cooked did not taste like dirt water.

Just what's the difference between Idy and I?

While I spent days with Idy, my senses opened to delicious meals. This was coming to haunt me now.

In the past, just eating meat jerkies were more than enough for me. Now, I wanted to eat tasty meals.

Whenever I closed my eyes, I could see the cooking that Idy prepared.

UUUUUuuuuuaaaaaaaaaa!

Like that, for the first time, I learned just how fearsome the desire for food was.

A new problem surfaced.

I no longer have anything to wipe my bottom with after taking a dump.

The leaves, which I had been using as toilet papers, were burnt away. All of them.

I don't even have water.

Kuruk Kuruuuuk.

My stomach was making noises. I searched the inside of the dimensional space bag as I held my stomach.

Is there anything I can use to wipe?

Tissues... I don't have any.

Papers... There isn't any.

Armors... That's not appropriate.

Ugh!

I felt a sudden pain. I urgently tightened my sphincter.

[PR Note: Sphincter is, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, an annular muscle surrounding and able to contract or close a bodily opening. In this case, he's just clenching his ass super hard.]

Ugh... This is crazy. I had been holding it for so long. I feel dizzy.

I want to go take a dump soon and relax.

Like that, I was searching the bag, and what I found was the muffler.

It was the handmade muffler that I knit for myself while I was at the 2nd Floor's waiting room.

Looking at the fluffy fabric, I agonized over the idea.

Could I use this lovely muffler as toilet paper?

This is no ordinary muffler.

Back when I was mentally cornered, I made this muffler to find peace and comfort in my heart.

To me, this is no different from Wilson.

[TL: He is referencing Wilson, the volleyball, from the movie Cast Away.]

Actually, this muffler even has a name.

Its name is Hororong.

For my convenience, could I sacrifice Hororong?

I really could not decide.

[Lee Ho-Jae, 12th Floor: Hey, between a human's dignity and a precious memory, which one is more important?]

[Kim Min-huk, 30th Floor: I'm busy.]

You heartless rascal.

Ugh... I cannot hold it anymore.

I have to make a decision now.

It was like Hororong was looking at me and crying. I tightly held the muffler in my hand and firmed my heart.

At Tutorial, 12th Floor, Hell Difficulty, Hororong was killed in action.

* * *

[Congratulations. You are the first one ever in the history to clear the 12th Floor Stage by conquering it.]

I buried Hororong on the ground and even placed a partially burnt piece of wood that was a half-charcoal as a replacement for a tombstone. I was in middle of a prayer when the message appeared.

It was a conquest clear message.

Now?!

Why? All of sudden!

I just sacrificed Hororong and even made a grave!

If clear condition was met just 10 minutes sooner, Hororong didn't have to die!

Damn it.

I can think of one thing as to why the conquest clear was accomplished now.

Despite the large fire that burned down the entire forest, there were quite a few monsters that survived.

They either had fire resistance skills or quick movement skills similar to flight. They were the extreme few that survived.

I thought such monsters were the last hindrances to the conquest clear, so I had been going around and hunting them down.

Just now, the last surviving monster died.

Although I was not the one who hunted it.

The life system inside the stage was completely decimated after the fire.

In the end, this jungle is just a stage inside the Tutorial.

It is a sealed environment surrounded by invisible walls.

Along with this special characteristic, the fire completely obliterated the life system inside.

Even I had been struggling to find food.

When I, the one who could fly around the entire stage, was struggling like this, how would the other monsters fare in this situation?

They didn't even have meat jerkies packed inside a convenient

dimensional space bag.

Considering the time frame, it is about time when all monsters would have died from starvation.

In the end, only Hororong suffered needlessly.

[You acquired Fire Element Resistance Lv. 1]

[Heat Resistance Lv.6, Burn Resistance Lv.12 were combined into Fire Element Resistance Lv.1]

[You cleared 12th Floor, Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormality and wounds will be healed.]

[You acquired 3000 points as the clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 5100 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 4900 points.]

[You will be given additional reward based on your play record.]

[You acquired 4400 points.]

Usually, that should have been the end of the messages. However, it was a little different this time.

Numerous messages continued to pop up.

[All gods in the White Holy Temple is watching you.]

[God of Slowness is greatly satisfied.]

[God of Duel is hating you.]

[God of Death is showing interest in you.]

[God of Life is looking at you negatively.]

[God of Forest is criticizing you.]

[God of Pain is smiling toward you.]

[God of Devotion is looking at someone with saddened face.]

[God of Games is entertained from watching you.]

One by one, numerous messages about gods' responses showed up.

There were exactly one hundred messages like that.

This was the first time for me to see something like this after clearing a stage.

I actually think the Sixth Floor's clear was a more meaningful achievement than 12th Floor's clear, yet this happened.

The number of gods who were interested in me steadily grew since.

Could it be that the number had grown to one hundred, resulting in such long list of notifications?

It might be that there are total of one hundred gods in the Tutorial.

I don't think I can gain anything from this information.

For now, I should ask Kiri Kiri... Actually I don't think I can ask her.

Information about gods are expensive.

Let's set my curiosity aside for later.

More importantly, I should check the rewards.

First, let's look at the additional reward.

Instead of skills or items, I got points.

During the last round, I got the Poison Energy Skill even though I failed to clear the stage.

Because of that, I wondered if I could get more skills from here and even thought about repeatedly challenging the 12th Floor.

I cleared the stage in quite a grandeur way, yet I only got points.

As I thought, instead of repeating the stage, aiming for the conquest clear was the right choice because I honestly thought this might happen.

Now, regarding the Fire Element Resistance Skill that I got as the reward for the conquest clear...

When I was at the Second Floor, I got Mental Corruption Resistance Skill from the conquest clear. It could be considered as a high-level skill among all passive skills.

It was the only immunity skill that I had. Also, it was a great skill that affected my overall mentality.

Considering that I got it at the Second Floor, I could even say that it was like a cheat skill.

Because I had received such a great skill in the past for the conquest clear, I had high expectations for the reward.

[Fire Element Resistance (Lv.1)]

Explanation: Provides resistance to fire element.

What is this?

Why is the explanation so short?

Resistance to fire element...

The skill is not limited to just heat or burn. This skill encompasses all afflictions related to fire element.

I think it is a pretty high-level skill in comparison to the Heat Resistance and Burn Resistance.

I had level 8 Heat Resistance and level 12 Burn Resistance, yet I only obtained level 1 Fire Element Resistance.

When I obtained the Great Poison Resistance, the level 4 Poison Resistance Skill was combined into the newly obtained skill, resulting in level 2 Great Poison Resistance. Considering how that played out...

I think I should check out its effectiveness when I get the time.

Now, it is time for me to go meet Kiri Kiri.

Hm Hm... I know this, but I am not a person with a great character.

Honestly, I am petty, and I hold grudges for a long time.

That's how I am honestly.

I looked at the grave in front of me and thought about the vow I made when I entered the 12th Floor's Stage.

For one last time, I paid respects to Hororong's grave. Afterwards, I stepped into the portal.

Farewell... Hororong.

Goodbye. I'll miss you.

I'll definitely avenge your death.

“It’s been a long time! This time, it has been a very long time!”

As soon as I teleported through the portal, I could see the green field and Kiri Kiri.

Kiri Kiri was hopping and busily yapping away.

“Hooowwwjae... Are you not going to cry this time either? It’s all right if you cry! Ah hahat.”

I didn’t say a word. I merely opened the store window and purchased a cake.

* * *

“Ahhhhhang! Give me! Don’t take what I was eating!”

Kiri Kiri’s face was soaked in sorrowful tears. I looked at her face and put up devious smile.

You rascal. ‘Ah hahat’ you say?

“Hey! You should have at least told me to pack some toilet papers! Where’s your sense of common decency?”

“Ahhhang! It would have been no fun if I told you that!”

I, the judge, found no ground for mitigating factors, hence I shall execute the sentence.

To make sure Kiri Kiri could not chase me, I used the Talaria’s Wings and Blink to fly up to the sky.

Kiri Kiri hopped from her spot and raised her hands toward the cake that was flying away from her. Kiri Kiri shouted,

“NOOOOOOOO! I am sorry! I was wrong! Please don’t fly away! Give me the cake and then fly away!

Chapter 73

Tutorial 13th Floor (1)

[Don't overdo it. If you recklessly go a step further than the limits of your abilities, you may end up seeing your own blood.]

[Yes, I understand. Mister. How far did you go?]

* * *

Kiri Kiri threw tantrum in tears for a great long while. In the end, she fell on the floor on her stomach and cried her eyes out. I calmed her down and got her to sit in front of me.

There was a candy stick in Kiri Kiri's mouth.

Although it is called a candy stick, I guess it could be also considered as a calming medicine.

Ah, of course, this was long after the cake had disappeared into my stomach.

To tease Kiri Kiri some more, I was planning on leaving one bite worth of it still, but I ended up eating the whole thing because it was so tasty.

Perhaps it was because I had been only eating tasteless meat jerkies and dirt-water like monster meats recently. The cake was so delicious, so I ate it all.

This fact was important, so that's why I'm stating it twice.

"Are you going to do that again, or are you going to stop doing that?"

"I won't do it again, Hiiiiing."

I thought this was enough. I decided to forgive Kiri Kiri.

Despite her appearance, Kiri Kiri was the Hell Difficulty's Manager.

Although... in comparison to the Managers of other difficulties, she was different in many ways.

I opened the store window and purchased jawbreaker candy set.

You must work harder and more diligently from now on.

You must not omit information for your entertainment.

I made her promise on those two things and handed the candy set package to her.

Actually, Kiri Kiri had been carrying out her task diligently as well as she could.

The whole thing about fun or whatnot was probably just to tease me.

Kiri Kiri was always lighthearted in spirit. However, when it came to conversations about information, she maintained very serious attitude.

“Heeeeng. Last time, Hooouuujaee told me I should be weary of an old man who gives me candy.”

...This rascal?

“I am not an old man, so it's all right.”

“Heeeeng.”

By threatening her on possibly taking the candy away from her, I managed to make her clearly recognize the irrefutable truth of the universe regarding the fact that I was not an old man.

“Magic?”

“Yes. I felt something when I was at the 12th Floor.”

Monsters shot fires, created walls of ice and generated bone spikes in mid-air.

The monsters each had a skill. I could call their skills as magic.

That’s true, right?

Of course, Kiri Kiri did not answer.

The monsters did not understand the fundamentals of the magic that they possessed.

Perhaps that was the reason. There were extreme few that knew how to utilize the magic properly.

Only the monsters like the orangutan monsters were able to utilize their abilities in various applications.

Other monsters just used their skills and only understood the effects that they could observe.

It was like us. It was like how we, the players inside the Tutorial, learned Skills and used them.

“I cannot tell you things like the activating mechanism behind Skills.”

“Is that also expensive?”

“Besides the expense, the information about magic has too many things jumbled up in convoluted way. There are far too many different subjects I need to touch on just to explain one thing. I can tell you if you pay a very high price for it, but it will not be efficient.”

I thought she would simply say that it is a precious information, but...

Um...

“Anyway, that’s why I felt the need to learn a bit more about magic.”

“You won’t be able to learn Skills related to magic theories yet.”

“Instead of those, if you have things like books related to magic, I was thinking about studying myself by purchasing the books.”

Kiri Kiri thought about it hard for a moment and said,

“It will be really hard to study them. Still, you can purchase the books for now.”

Is that so...

In the store window, I never could find any books related to magic.

I was not the only one.

No player in the Tutorial ever found anything remotely similar to an educational magic textbook in the store window.

Could it be that such could be purchased only through the Managers?

It seems magic textbooks are treated as being on the same level as combat items.

With Kiri Kiri’s help, I purchased two magic textbooks.

One book was about basic magic theory. The other one was about area effective enclosure and skill sealing.

I became interested in the enclosure and sealing because of the skill sealing that the leader of the orangutans used.

The ability to seal a skill...

There was no need to explain the critical importance of the main Skill used in the combat and how much impact it has in a fight.

At the 12th Floor's Stage, all monsters each had a Skill, yet that monster could seal a Skill in the opponent.

Considering the size of the orangutans' group, their intelligence, and the sealing skill demonstrated by their leader, the orangutan group was virtually the ruling class of the jungle.

Actually, fighting the orangutans were more difficult than the bogus dragons.

"These will be difficult for you. You might be able to perform enclosure magic somehow through a medium. However, sealing magic will be really difficult."

"How difficult?"

"To begin with, it is not something an ordinary human being can master. Also, sealing magic is not something a human being can use."

It cannot be used by a human...

"A human being using one's own power to use sealing magic is virtually unheard of. No, it was never done before? When it is used, it is done by borrowing god's power."

"Borrowing god's power? That's possible?"

"When you become a god's apostle and obtain skills related to sealing, then you will be able to do it."

Um... power skills from gods...

It seems like sealing magic is a high difficulty magic, beyond what I initially thought.

Still, I decided to have the books ready for now.

I had points to spare. Also, it may not help me now, but it might help me later as I continue my study.

“Still, you have the knowledge before the time of babel, so you will be able to read the texts at least. I am not sure if you will be able to comprehend it though.”

Is it that hard?

Kiri Kiri had been maintaining her negative stance on magic study. I was feeling a little rebellious toward her opinion.

Actually, when it comes to studying, I have confidence in myself.

“Heeeng. Magic theory is not just some study.”

I’ll know when I try.

Let’s get to the next topic.

“I’ve heard something was going to be held soon? Can I get some information on that?”

Recently, the Order of Vigilance obtained information that an event was going to be held inside the Tutorial.

They also learned that this was not going to be another day of the great harmony.

“Aaaang. To tell you information about that...”

“I don’t have enough allowances left?”

Kiri Kiri nodded. She then said to wait for a bit.

She crunched down on the ground and thought hard about something as she fiddled with her fingers.

“Actually, I am not supposed to tell you this, but I’ll tell you because

you bought me delicious cakes so far. You need to work harder from now.”

Having heard what she said about working harder, I realized what Kiri Kiri was saying.

Before, as I bought her a cake, I had told her that she needed to work harder.

It seemed Kiri Kiri was mimicking what I did back then.

“All right. I’ll buy you cake more diligently.”

Kiri Kiri quickly covered her mouth with both of her hands and acted casually. However, I could hear loud noise of her breathing through the nose, which reflected just how excited she was.

“Heehing. Listen carefully because this is short. Foreigner, second.”

Foreigner, second.

What could they mean?

I was thinking it was going to be something similar to the day of the great harmony, but foreigner?

For now, let’s just inform Kim Min-hyuk later.

Once we gather up all information that were obtained so far, we will be able to get the big picture.

Finally, I purchased a suitable spear, several emergency foods and a huge quantity of toilet papers.

Toilet papers were, just like potions, treated as combat items, so they could not be purchased from the waiting room.

“Hee hang. I can even sell toilet papers. Hoooouuuwjae, you are toilet paper rich.”

Watching me purchasing a huge amount of toilet papers, Kiri Kiri made fun of me.

More the better, you rascal.

Do you have any idea how desperate one gets without toilet papers?

Having finished purchasing items, I got on the portal that lead to the 13th Floor's waiting room.

“Have a safe trip! Buy me a cake next time!”

As always, she mentioned cake as she saw me off. I waved hand toward Kiri Kiri and activated the portal.

* * *

[Round 15, Day 18, 23:50]

Kim Min-huk is... probably sleeping right now.

Looks like I'll have to tell him about the clues I got from Kiri Kiri tomorrow.

I opened the inventory and checked the magic textbooks.

Let's read these first.

I brought out the book that she said was about the basic magic theories.

The cover doesn't have anything written on the cover.

Let's read it anyway for now.

Like that, I opened its first page. I could not help but to panic.

The book only had one sentence written on it.

‘To bring change to infinite time after death and finite time during life, what is the most important material that must be prepared? Find the answer.’

There was just that one sentence on the first page.

The rest was all blanks.

It appeared the book had over 200 pages, but there is just one sentence written on it...

What the hell.

On top of that, the sentence was a subjective question.

The most important material to bring change to time?

How would I know that?

For now, I decided to think hard about the answer to the question.

It said I should try to find the answer, so let’s try finding it.

It could be that the empty space on the book will fill when I find the answer.

It is a magic textbook after all.

It was going to be boring to just think about it, so I decided to also test the newly acquired Fire Element Resistance Skill while at it.

I got out of the 13th Floor’s waiting room and moved to the bonfire room.

I placed my hands on top of the bonfire and started thinking hard about the question. It was at that moment. A message came.

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: Big bro! I cleared the Third Stage!]

It was from Lee Hyung-jin.

He was hung up at the Third Floor, unable to try entering the boss room.

Honestly, regarding the Third Floor's boss room, the traps underneath the cloud bridge to be precise, even I didn't know much about them, so the situation was that I could not help him.

It seemed he somehow overcame them on his own.

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: The traps were like having all traps from first, second and third floors combined. There were no patterns. The arrows had poisons applied to them. The temperature got hot and cold repeatedly. Also, there were quite a few tricks mixed in too.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: You got through them still. Well done. Congratulations. You have accomplished something really amazing, kid.]

I was always worried about him because of the Third Floor's boss room.

Unlike other people, I obtained the Blink Skill, which was a power skill from the gods, earlier in the floors. Because of Blink, I was able to go through the Third Floor's boss room with relative ease.

Because of how I got through the room, I didn't know exactly what kind of dangers were there underneath the cloud bridge.

I was worried that, other than myself, all challengers of the Hell Difficulty will not be able to go past the Third Floor.

However, Lee Hyung-jin cleared the Third Floor's boss room and obtained information about underneath the cloud bridge. This was a monumental accomplishment.

It was also great that Lee Hyung-jin successfully got past the Third Floor alive.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Organize the information about the Third Floor's boss room later and put it up on the community. As for conquest walkthrough, let's try making one together later.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: Yes, Big Bro. I'll get it organized around tomorrow noon and post it.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, Fourth Floor: Big Bro, how is it like at the Fourth Floor?]

You will have a bit of trouble through the Fourth Floor too.

Lee Hyung-jin's combat style was closer to assassin or thief.

In boss rooms, he could apply his style to his advantage using his ability to make decisions. However, inside Stages, he will have to kill goblins in combat somehow.

Especially the goblin instructors are... Um.

I think they will be pretty tough.

I explained things about the Fourth Floor to Lee Hyung-jin and got up.

I put the magic textbook back in the inventory.

Let's study about the magic during the three-day waiting period when the round ends.

Perhaps it was because I just got the news from Lee Hyung-jin. I was a little excited.

I want to move.

I also want to challenge the 13th Floor soon and clear it.

Although I just cleared the 12th Floor, I cannot be satisfied with this.

I brought out weapons and armors from the inventory and wore them.

I went straight to the 13th Floor's stage.

I was already burned at the 12th Floor once.

I wore the weapons and armors and carried the dimensional space bag on my back, which contained essential items. Like that, I entered the Stage.

Going past the bonfire room, I arrived at the 13th Floor Stage. It was a dark stone walled room.

[The 13th Floor's trial will start.]

Chapter 74

Tutorial 13th Floor (2)

Going past the bonfire room, I entered the stage where long message opened in front of my eyes as soon as I entered.

[The 13th Floor's trial will start.]

Explanation: At the west of the Akan Continent, at a nameless volcanic island in middle of the ocean, there is a hidden temple of the monks who worship the God of Duel.

This temple is a secret place where monks trained to perfect their arts since ancient times.

Challenger, the one who belittles their life long dreams and talents and proclaims yourself as the true master of combat, achieve victory against the monks and prove your words.

[Clear condition]

Achieve victory from at least 15 rooms.

It looks like the 13th Floor is not that complicated.

The theme seemed to revolve around a main character of the story pissing the hell out of the monks and fighting the duels against the monks to prove his words.

The setting about the main character belittling the monks could be the result of the God of Duel's negative impression about me.

It also means the challengers who had been receiving positive responses from the God of Duel would receive a large welcome here.

I think that's very plausible.

This is the first time for the theme of the Stage to have a story related to a god from the Tutorial.

From this Stage, I think I might be able to get some information about the gods of the Tutorial.

In this Stage, I need to achieve victories from at least 15 rooms.

I wonder how many rooms there are in total.

Let's go find out.

I looked around dark stone room.

There was nothing.

It was a dark space. There wasn't even a single candle light.

Silence.

It feels strange to not even hear the slight whistle of wind.

My senses already had surpassed that of human being. Still, I don't hear anything.

Does this room have sound proofing?

Towards the front, I can only see a small wooden door.

Besides that door, there was nothing here; it was as if the room was a prison cell.

The door had '0' written on it.

Does it mean it is the room number 0?

I opened the door and got out of the room number 0.

Like the stone room, a dark corridor continued.

I walked for about five minutes, until I reached a wooden door at the end of the corridor.

The door had the number '1' written on it.

It is the room number 1.

The setup's theme seemed to be the stone room and corridor repeated with the difficulty of the trial increasing with the number.

I opened the room number 1's door and entered it. A monk who was sitting in meditating position greeted me.

As if it was supposed to be obvious, the room was dark without a single candle light. However, the monk glared into my eyes.

[So, it is you, the arrogant one that the temple master spoke of.]

The monk got up as he said those words to me.

His hospitality to the guest is terrible.

I brought out a small lantern from the inventory and held it on my hand.

Although I had the effects from the night vision and eye light skills enabling me to maintain vision inside darkness, this was our first meeting. I found the lack of proper lighting to be unacceptable.

I slowly observed the monk's appearance.

He was about two meters in height.

He was a hardened muscular man. He did not appear to be armed.

His clothes reminded me about monks from Tibet.

He didn't have any armors either.

One thing unique about him was that his fangs were reaching below his chin.

He is not human.

He had protruding facial features and red skin.

He looked like a demon from Japanese legends.

"I don't know who the arrogant one is. Anyway, don't you need weapons or armors?"

[As I thought, you are arrogant. Just what are you asking to a monk who is seeking the ultimate height in art of fighting. Relying on such petty tools will only get in the way of the training. They will not help in true growth.]

This one sure likes to spew out nonsense.

I can understand the idea of not using weapons for a while for the sake of development.

However, weapons and armors should never be regarded petty tools.

Weapons were created and improved upon by humans to emerge victorious in wars and battles. They were the pinnacle of technology.

In this Tutorial, there were many things besides weapons made by humans. However, their purposes were all same.

Weapons were developed to attack and kill opponents.

How is anyone supposed to challenge the ultimate height in the art of fighting by excluding such weapons?

The ultimate height in the art of fighting; the meaning of the words is clear.

In the end, the only purpose of conflict is victory.

Achieving victory, one after the other... The destiny of certain victory could be said as the ultimate goal of any art of fighting.

[You are unenlightened. Victory is just one of the effects of the art.]

He is really stuck up. I don't think we can communicate.

Victory is everything.

Developing one's fighting ability is just a method towards victory.

Do you not understand why the name of the god that the monks, the ones who wishes to complete their art of fighting worship, is called the God of Duel?

[...How unpleasant. I won't listen to your ridiculous words no more. Wield the weapon that you think is so great. I shall start the test.]

"Why don't you just tell me the content of the test?"

I put the lantern back inside the inventory as I spoke.

[You just need to either defeat or kill me and go to the next room.]

That's simple.

I had a knife on my waist. I threw the knife toward the monk's face.

I quickly threw it. Because the knife was thrown so suddenly, the monk was not able to respond properly.

He managed to quickly swing his arm and sweep away the knife. However, the timing was too late.

The center of his weight was moving toward his back.

His back was further behind his knees. His shoulder was even further back.

As soon as I threw the knife, I charged forward and brought out the spear from the inventory.

Because of the spear's length, the monk quickly came within the striking distance.

As soon as the monk came inside the striking distance, I succinctly stabbed him with the spear.

The spear tip precisely pierced the monk's heart.

That was the end.

The monk bled from the hole in his chest and perished.

Monk, it looks like you won't be able to obtain things like the ultimate height in art of fighting.

I know this is the first room, but I am a little disappointed.

Hoping the second room would be able to satisfy me better, I opened the door and left the room number 1.

* * *

At the next room, and at the one after that, I was able to defeat monks with ease.

They were not able to catch up to my speed, so the results were obvious outcomes.

Finally, when I arrived at the fifth room, I was able to meet a monk that could somewhat catch up to my speed.

However, it was not enough to endanger my life.

Suuuguk...

Bleeding ferociously from his neck, the monk quickly fell back.

Was the cut a little shallow?

No, it wasn't.

I thrust my spear after considering the monk's movement.

Hm... If I didn't make a mistake, then...

Let's just go and check.

I approached the monk again and stabbed him.

This time, the tip of the spear definitely pierced the monk's neck.

I tried pressing hard on the monk's body that collapsed on the floor.

As I thought, the skin is tough.

Actually, I don't think calling it tough describes it well enough.

The skin is solid.

They're like iron plates.

Not just the skin, but the muscles underneath the skin and the bones were not like organic bodies. They felt like sheets of iron.

It was not like his body was really made of metallic parts, rather his body was simply as hard as metals.

Even his intestines had a surprising sturdiness.

It didn't seem like his body was made this way through training.

He was probably born with such a body.

This is intriguing.

I had been killing each of them with a single blow wrapped in mana by striking them at the critical points. Because of this, I had not noticed until now.

It is a great advantage to be born with such a sturdy body.

It can be overcome with skills, abilities and magic.

However, that's only when I am at a greater level than the opponent.

Against an opponent with similar levels in combat abilities, the one with superior basic stats will always win.

If two boxers of same skill levels fought, but one was a heavy weight and the other was a panther weight, it was obvious who would be the victor.

These bastards are born with such ridiculous bodies, yet they are ignoring the effectiveness of weapons as they are talking about completing their art?

It was completely illogical.

[God of Duel is doing a fake cough.]

It looks like that god is agreeing to some extent.

I sat there and observed the monk's corpse.

I don't know what the name of their kind is, but I should learn about their special characteristics.

As I pass each room, the monks' skill level increase noticeably.

The minimum clear condition is achieving victory from 15 rooms.

Around 15th room, a monk who is my equal in combat prowess might appear.

These are opponents I should be cautious against. I should collect more information to ensure my victory.

I performed an autopsy in detail and observed to determine if they had critical points on locations different from human's body or if they had different joint structures.

[God of Duel finds this unpleasant.]

[God of Slowness is sending wrath to someone.]

Even without the message telling me who it is, I think I know who the God of Slowness is angry at.

I don't care if you find it unpleasant or not. Just don't get in the way of someone's work.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Are you busy?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: I was until a moment ago.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: When did you get to the 13th Floor? Do you have a moment to talk?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Yes. What's up?]

Lately, Kim Min-hyuk really had no time, not even to catch a breath. So, he didn't have the time to have a proper conversation.

The last time we had a long conversation was when we met during the day of the great harmony.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I found out some rough details about the mystery event.]

Oh... Already?

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: I also found out a little about the event.]

I was talking about the information I got from Kiri Kiri.

I gave him the clues, the foreigner and second.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Why are the clues so short? You... You got all other information first and used your leftover allowances to get them, didn't you?]

Tsk. This is why I hate bastards who are quick to notice things.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Still, they are new clues. I'll keep finding more about the event. Ah, I posted what I found about the event on the community, so check there.]

You already released it?

I think it might have been better if you released it after gathering more information.

I brought out a towel from the inventory and haphazardly wiped off the blood from my hands and arms. I left the fifth room.

I sat the corridor between the room number 5 and 6 and read the community forum while quenching my hunger.

First, I brought out a wide heat stone and a mug.

I poured milk into the mug and spread chocolate powder inside.

When I was in elementary school, they gave us milk in which I would put chocolate powder in it and drank it. I am not sure if it would taste similar.

I placed the mug on the heat stone and warmed up the milk.

Finally, I brought out a pack of dry bread crackers.

Until recently, I was fine with eating just meat jerkies. However, perhaps because of the memories from the 12th Floor, I want to eat something tasty.

Of course, it was not like I could recreate the delicious meals that Idy made.

To make something like that, I'll need skills related to cooking in addition to the ingredients.

Still, I don't want to keep on eating tasteless nutrients either.

In the end, this was what I came up with.

I decided to cook as much as I can within the bounds of being able to cook successfully.

I am not sure if I could call what I am doing right now as cooking, but...

I can at least pour the chocolate powder into milk and heat it on the heat stone.

Next time, when I summon Idy, I should really learn how to cook from her.

I sipped on the milk as I thought that.

It is not as sweet as I wanted it to be, but it is all right.

I tore opened the bag of crackers and opened the community forum.

[Notification. This is the information regarding the new comprehensive event, the 'competition.']

It seemed the name of the event was competition.

The notification contained all the information obtained by the Order, neatly organized.

It will be held before the Round Five ends.

All challengers can enter the competition.

It is possible to not enter the event.

It is possible to forfeit during the event.

There is a prize for the winner of the competition.

The reward is estimated to be some kind of a skill.

We have not yet obtained any information about the competition's rules.

The information were the ones that were obtained by the members of the Order by asking the Managers.

Because of the problem with the allowances in information, the information had constraints or were summarized.

Still, they collected almost all of the information they needed.

They just need to find the rules about the competition.

It should be possible to obtain information about the rules before this round ends.

There are quite a few members left who should be able to clear their stages before the round ends, so...

The community was busy with people talking about the competition.

Many were worried. However, because it was possible to not attend or forfeit, and because they believed the Order of Vigilance will handle things no matter what happens, there were quite a number of positive

responses.

The mood was similar to the responses before the very first day of the great harmony.

Everyone was excited like children on the eve of a picnic.

It was at that moment that a new piece of information came up at the community.

It was not from a member of the Order. It was from some other challenger.

[Lee Chun-hye: Regarding the competition's rule, I've heard that it will be in the format of individual or team battles. I just heard it from a Manager.]

The community lit up in flames again.

No, it was already up in flames, but now it was burning with even greater intensity.

Soon, people's interest turned to the prize of the competition before the topic shifted to people's prediction on who would be the winner.

Of course, the name that attracted the most attention from others was mine.

Other rankers of the Hard Difficulty were mentioned often as well.

Even though I was at the Hell Difficulty, since I was only at the 12th Floor, there were quite a lot of people who theorized that I would be weaker than the players at higher floors of the Hard Difficulty.

There were people fighting over who was right. Watching them made my head complicated.

Seriously, why are they fighting like that? Some were praising me, and some were even severely dissing me in the process.

In the end, these people have nothing to do with me, yet they are going at it.

Ugh.

Of course I will win the competition.

Chapter 75

Tutorial 13th Floor (3)

“Huuuuuuuu...”

The monk collapsed to the floor. He was not making even the slightest movements. I wiped off the blood from my cheek.

Now that I’m at the 15th room, the monk is definitely super strong.

[You have cleared the 13th Floor of the Hell Difficulty.]

[Would you like to continue?]

The message asked if I wanted to continue with the trial inside the floor.

This was my first time to see such a question.

The message appeared after I achieved the minimum condition for clearing the floor, which was 15 wins.

“Continue.”

Of course I should continue.

I have no idea when would be the end of the 13th Floor Stage, but let’s try going as far as I can.

If possible, I should try going to the very end.

There weren’t any new messages to my response.

There was no response as if they were telling me to do as I wish.

Now, if I want to stop challenging the floor and go get the reward, what am I supposed to do?

Would another message with the choice show up only after I clear a different room?

I brought out a potion from the inventory and applied it on my shoulder and arm where I had wounds. I opened the community while at it.

There was a message that arrived while I was in middle of the battle.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Oh, what is it? Did something happen?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, it isn't because something happened. There was more information that came in about the competition.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: The information this time is that the competition will be held several times. We have not found out about how many times it will be held to conclude the competition.]

It will be held many times...

Perhaps it is not that the event is something that has to be held regularly. It could be that it is a time consuming event, so it was divided into several events.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: About what you found out last time, they were, foreigner, second, right?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Right.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: During the second competition, I think we might meet foreigners.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: So there really was Tutorials on other countries.]

It was a question that came up in the community quite some time ago.

Why is everyone in the Tutorial Korean?

Of all countries on Earth, why just Korea?

Could it be that Tutorials are happening in other countries as well?

There were questions like that.

Because they could not confirm the answers, those questions were also the kind that people buried in back of their minds.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: I got it. I'll continue to find more information.]

I already cleared the 13th Floor. So, no matter how late I end up being, I should be able to get new information before the round ends.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Looks like you will be busy for a while, even more so than now.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I probably will. I'm saying this because of that. When the competition happens, can you command the guys at the normal difficulty?]

What? You want me to fill the role of the kindergarten teacher?

That's a little...

No, I hate it.

I clearly told Kim Min-hyuk that I hated the idea.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: No. I will not do it.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Hey, we are super busy. It is really serious. I am so busy that it is to the point where I wonder if I would die from overworking if I didn't drink potion.]

[Lee Ho-Jae, 13th Floor: No. Setting aside the fact that it is such a

bother for me, the people will be afraid of me. Have you thought about that?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: If you are that concerned, why don't you ask Park Jung-ah for help?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Even Park Jung-ah will be afraid?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Ugh, I don't know. You handle it.]

With that as last words, he didn't send any more messages.

Frustration was creeping up, but I squashed it.

Kim Min-hyuk probably was busy like crazy.

His head was probably about to explode from preparing for the competition, and now there were too many new information coming in.

Now that we have confirmed the existence of Tutorials in other countries, this fact was going to be a big variable.

First, we have to acknowledge that the Tutorial's architects, managers and gods are recognizing the boundaries of the nations on Earth.

Depending on this, the reason behind Tutorial's existence and setting the goals for the players will be affected as well.

Kim Min-hyuk will try to organize all variables and try to write down the plans and operation methods for the Order of Vigilance.

He is the kind of man who won't be able to let things be unless he did.

Also, we need to be prepared for the time when we meet the challengers from the foreign countries.

Not all of them will try to follow the rules made by the Order.

Also, the Order will insist on the rules to everyone without exceptions.

As always, the Order of Vigilance will not make compromises.

Um... No. Now that I think about this, in situations like this, the Order's method of handling it had always been making threats with me as the vanguard.

Damn it. It looks like things will get annoying for me again.

If things get tangled up, just demonstrating our power was not going to be the end of it. It could even lead to collisions with the challengers from other countries.

I think there might be a reason why Kim Min-hyuk is asking me to take command of the people at the Normal difficulty.

All of the bosses of the Order, including Park Jung-ah, belonged to the Easy Difficulty.

Even the guard members, who were made up of rankers from Normal and Hard Difficulties, will all follow around Park Jung-ah.

As for the Hard Difficulty, Big Bro Jong-shik will take care of it on his own.

As for the Hell Difficulty... What kind of lunatic would pick fights with challengers of the Hell Difficulty?

On the other hand, in the Normal Difficulty, many of the rankers were busy with Order's work.

Kim Min-hyuk is saying that there will be gaps in their strength, so I should make up for that.

Even if that's not what this is about, there is nothing for me to lose from doing as Kim Min-hyuk asked.

I don't have a reason to think hard about this and get headache.

Ever since the first day of the great harmony ended and the Order of Vigilance was established, Kim Min-hyuk always worked hard to prepare for the uncertain future.

He was not satisfied with doing just that. He was showing the level of obsession that could be stated to be coming from paranoia.

If I was to explain that I was obsessed with my own growth and Park Jun-ah was obsessed with fighting and punishing criminals, I could say that Kim Min-hyuk was obsessed with making various measures prepared against all kinds of situations.

For now, I should take the command of the people at the Normal Difficulty as Kim Min-hyuk asked.

As for the detailed plan...

Let's think about that later.

I don't really need to think about this right now.

I got up from where I was sitting and headed to the 16th room.

While walking through the corridor, I thought about the weaknesses of the monks that I discovered so far.

There weaknesses were nothing extraordinary.

It was like simple negative side effects from having such tough bodies.

Their ability to make decisions and react quickly to rapidly changing situations declined severely in certain instances.

When they are shocked on their heads or when their visions are shaken, for a moment, they show gaps in defenses.

It seemed they were not used to being stunned like that because they had such sturdy heads.

They were also not very good at improvising and reacting in such situations.

They had one other weakness. They were rather lacking in experiences.

Even at a first glance, it seemed they had plenty of experiences in fighting against other monks, but it looked like they had no experience in fighting other beings.

Even just now, the monk complacently exposed his neck when we were close to each other.

I bit off his neck, obviously.

I wrapped my teeth with mana. I was able to bring out predator-like power with my teeth.

Of course, my mana had poison mixed in.

Like that, the duel was decided.

Of course, as I progressed to higher rooms, the monks' levels improved, and their weaknesses also got supplemented.

However, overall, the monks still showed such tendencies still.

As long as I keep these things in mind, I should be able to achieve victories from the rooms beyond.

* * *

Kwaaaang!

With great intensity, enough to collapse the ground, the monk stepped and rapidly approached me. I swung my spear toward the monk.

The monk lightly angled his head and dodged the spear.

Damn it. He is charging at me in such speed, yet he dodged my spear by looking? What nonsense.

When I swung it with all of my might...

Let alone dodging it, ordinary eyes should not even be able to follow its trajectory. This monk leisurely looked at it and dodged it.

I spun the spear once and stepped back.

The monk charged in to pursue me. I swung up the spear toward the monk's chin.

Again, the monk turned his head just enough to dodge the tip of the spear.

This is insane, seriously.

By the monk's kick, the spear left my hand and flew up toward the ceiling.

As soon as I lost the grip of the spear, I brought out the knife from the inventory and swung it toward the monk.

The monk's fist moved in bizarre pattern. It struck my wrist and stopped the knife. He then leisurely stepped back to gain distance.

Damn it. The monk was dusting off his hands as if he had a lot to spare. Watching him made me feel infuriated.

My chin feels numb.

Just now, at the moment I was bringing out the knife from the inventory, I was struck by a clean shot.

If the monk was not empty handed, if he was holding something as simple as a piece of a metal chopstick, I would have been critically wounded.

Actually, if the monk wanted to wound me critically, then regardless of having weapons or even Buddha's hair, I might have gone for a sightseeing on the Jordan river.

Ever since the 15th room, the minimum requirement for clearing the Stage, the difficulty was rising like a crazy bitch.

All plans I thought of as I walked on the corridor beyond the 15th room, which relied on monks' weaknesses, were disposed of.

Since the 15th room, the monk's level changed completely.

Their physical abilities and skills were noticeably stronger.

They used quick speed to minimize unnecessary movements to the extreme and dealt precise strike.

I'm giving up the spear.

I brought out the shield from the inventory.

It's been a while to use the shield and knife combination.

Still, I am far more used to this than the spear.

In the past, I choose the gladius and shield as my starting equipment, and I did so to prepare myself for situations exactly like this.

Against opponents who can ignore the threat of the blade and fight casually...

Against opponents who can control the distance at will using their superior speed...

When I first entered the Tutorial, I had ordinary, or perhaps less than ordinary physical abilities, so I needed to be prepared for such.

Regardless, against an opponent like this monk, I have to harden my defense with the shield and bring him within the range of the knife. I

need to finish the battle in a single strike by piercing him in the critical point.

Against an opponent who is faster than me, this is the only method that works.

[Challenger... Will those be enough?]

The heavy and dignified voice of the monk echoed through the stone room.

Fuck. Why is his voice so cool for no reason?

That pisses me off.

These are not enough.

There is such a great difference in speed. Just changing the weapon couldn't possibly make up for the difference so easily.

[Challenger... You probably should demonstrate your full power. You must not ruin this duel with your foolish pride.]

“Why are you being so considerate? I don't get it. Are you saying that while being aware of the fact that the 18th room's monk is unconscious on the floor after saying the same thing you were saying?”

If I was him, I would not have shown useless consideration toward the opponent who was having his weakness exposed. I would have persistently bit on to the weakness and end the duel.

[Challenger... He had done nothing wrong. Also, I am merely making the same choice as him.]

“...Because being victorious is not the important part?”

[That's right. Instead of the desire for victory, what's more important is getting closer to the completion of our art through this duel, even if

it is only a little bit further.]

I don't understand at all.

I've heard this many times already.

Every monk I have met so far said something similar.

However, I don't understand.

I spat out the blood collecting inside my mouth.

I really don't want to acknowledge this fact, but it is about time I did.

This is as far as I can go with my abilities.

With my abilities, I cannot handle that monk's speed.

I looked at the number written on the wooden door once again.

19th room.

This place is the limit of my abilities.

I should remember this.

[Perseverance]

[Your combat abilities are increased by a small margin in proportion to the strength of the opponent.]

[Your combat abilities are increased by a small margin in proportion to your exhaustion and injuries sustained.]

I activated the Perseverance Skill.

Actually, this skill was originally a passive skill that activated automatically when criteria were met.

However, Idy claimed that the caster should be able to control the skill no matter how great the Perseverance skill is.

While I was at the 12th Floor's Stage, by repeating duels against Idy, I was able to succeed in determining a method to activate and deactivate the Perseverance Skill.

Having realized how to do it, I was able to control it with ease ever since.

The control method was a matter of will regarding the skill's activation.

[Battle Focus]

[Soul Steal]

I also activated both the Battle Focus and Soul Steal.

“Now, let's try this again. As you want, I'll demonstrate my best.”

[I was waiting for this. Come.]

On the monk's face, he didn't just have moments to spare. He was even reflecting emotion of joy.

[Blink]

I used the Blink and moved to right in front of the monk's nose. I tried to stab his neck with the knife.

The monk responded still despite the fact that it was an approach using the Blink.

The monk dodged the knife's edge and came in for the counter. I focused on the monk's fist.

With the Battle Focus' effect, I was inside slowed down world.

I can clearly see the monk's fist flying toward my face.

However, judging from the speed of the fist, I won't be able to dodge it perfectly.

In that case, I need to think of the next move.

I confirmed the trajectory of the fist and moved my head.

I let go of the shield on my left hand and positioned my body forward.

[Iron Wall]

Clank!

My cheek was instantly fortified by the effect from the Iron Wall Skill. The monk's fist scratched past my cheek.

Just like how one could deflect an enemy's weapon by positioning the shield at an angle instead of causing a direct impact, I succeeded in deflecting the monk's fist by having it graze my face.

Although the fist and my face merely grazed past each other, sound of metallic screeching could be heard. Also, sparks were generated from the scratched surface.

The monk's fist went past my face and continued on far beyond the back of my face.

The monk tried to quickly retrieve his fist and back out, but it was too late.

Unlike the monk, who was trying to respond too late, I already predicted the situation will lead to this ever since I saw his fist coming at me earlier.

My left hand, which had let go of the shield, was grabbing on to the monk's clothes.

My right hand, which was holding the knife, was moving toward the monk's heart.

Chapter 76

Tutorial 13th Floor (4)

[19th Room]

[That was a great duel, Challenger.]

I don't think I can agree to that.

The duel ended in just ten seconds after I started to use Skills.

Could this really be called a good duel?

[I have learned a lot from fighting this duel. I think I'll be busy for a long while.]

The monk was breaking into laughter as I looked at his face, dumbfounded.

Unbelievable...

The monk collapsed to the floor, gushing blood from his chest.

Although the knife went halfway into his chest, it seemed that he was not having any trouble carrying on a conversation.

“You will be busy for a long while you say? Is there a reason why you are certain I won't kill you right now?”

[I do not. However, that won't be bad either.]

What a crazy bastard.

“What a crazy bastard.”

I mumbled curses as I walked past the monk.

The monk already acknowledged defeat and no longer wished to fight. It does not feel right to kill him.

If I was like my usual self, I would have killed anyone and anything on sight, saying it is for the experience points.

It's strange. I'm making a different decision than the usual.

Is it because the monks looks similar to humans?

I remembered Idy strongly advising me not to judge others based on appearances.

Someone's life was not more or less precious because of one's resemblance to a human being.

However, I don't think that's why I'm feeling like this.

It is not the first time that I met enemies who look like humans.

I already had killed some of the monks in the 13th Floor Stage as I progressed to the higher rooms with 19 wins.

I think I killed about five of them.

I am not sure.

It didn't feel right. I walked past the monk. I opened the door and was about to leave the room; at that moment, the monk said,

[Challenger, you should be careful from the 20th room and beyond. Let me give you an advice. I recommend that you close your eyes.]

...Seriously, geez.

“In the middle of the battle, try predicting the opponent's movements and thoughts. You guys are too obsessed with perfecting the form of

the moves. However, in the end, isn't your art of fighting built for the sake of fighting the opponent?"

[Uuhuhuhu. Thank you for that reply. I am grateful for the advice. Unlike the Master Monk's words, you are not completely lacking in manners.]

I left the 19th Room, and the message appeared again.

[Would you like to continue?]

Yep.

I closed the 19th Room's wooden door and took a moment at the corridor to think.

Am I insane?

Was I attacked psychologically?

I felt around the wall and checked the response from the mana.

The ceiling, walls, floor... There was no response.

This place was a Stage inside the Tutorial.

Everything was going to be reset when the next Round began.

The dead monks would be revived, and they would also lose all of their memories from the last round.

So, why am I doing something so meaningless?

I had told myself this before.

I told myself that I would not treat life carelessly even if they are monsters and that they are going to be revived after the round restarts.

I told myself that I should not enjoy killing them like a video game.

My vow was not about being a pacifist.

If it was for clearing a Stage or for further developing my power, I have been killing enemies without hesitation plenty of times.

Many times, I repeated the challenges and killed the same enemies over and over.

Back then, when I was fighting and slaughtering them, I never felt any sense of regret or sympathy toward them.

However, what was that earlier?

[The God of Adventure is paying attention to you.]

[God of Slowness is paying attention to you.]

...I don't know.

Perhaps I am simply being whimsical.

Damn it all. I think I should go find a player who used to be a psychologist.

* * *

[20th Room]

[Welcome, Challenger. You must have gone through a lot to get this far.]

The 20th Room's monk welcomed me.

The further the room, the monks seemed to be stronger and more welcoming.

Could it be that this Stage's theme calculates increases in strength and politeness in conjunction with the room number?

[Sit for a while. It will take you some time to get used to this as well.]

As the monk said, I just plummeted to the floor.

The 20th Room's environment was very strange.

The rooms so far were all enveloped in utter darkness without a single candle light.

However, the darkness inside the 20th Room was a little different.

This is no ordinary darkness.

Something is blocking my view.

Is it magic? I don't sense any magical energy response.

This is as if... It feels similar to the sensation from a Power Skill.

This is my first time experiencing such extreme darkness.

I rubbed my eyes and looked forward.

The monk must be within a few steps, yet I cannot see him.

I focused on my sight and stared for a while, but I couldn't see the monk at all.

Let alone the monk, I couldn't even see my hands very well.

This must be why the last monk said I should just close my eyes.

I tensed my mana.

I activated the Detection Skill, allowing me to see the monk's

appearance and location.

It would be hard to fight him with just this.

[You don't need to cringe so much. I am in the same condition, aren't I?]

“You must have stayed her for days. How is that the same condition?”

[Uuuhurhur. That is the fate dealt to you, Challenger.]

Did I say something funny?

I thought about how I carefully observed the surface of the target of the detection with mana when I was training on the Detection Skill.

By doing the same thing, I could see the monk's location and appearance, and even the fine detail of his clothing and facial expressions.

I was quite used to the mana operation now, so I was able to do it without difficulty after focusing my mind for a moment.

The problem was that carrying out a combat while maintaining this was a whole other matter.

I got up.

[Will you be all right? You are probably not used to this yet. I can wait a little longer for you. I want to have the duel after you have completely adapted to this room's environment.]

“I am sorry, but let's cut the chit-chat. I need to maintain focus.”

Having heard what I said, the monk got up silently and took a stance.

I focused on the monk's appearance and brought out the backsword.

I think this will be tough.

Too much of my mental focus is being spent on the mana operation for the Detection Skill.

I need to finish this by focusing on using Power Skills, which do not drain my mental focus.

First, I closed my eyes.

I can't see very well with my eyes at the moment anyway, so it is just disrupting my focus.

It would be better for me to close my eyes and focus on things being detected through mana.

I felt somewhat angry at the 19th Room's monk's advice, which was frustratingly correct.

[Soul Steal]

As soon as I applied the deteriorating effect of the Soul Steal on the monk, I used Blink, emerging next to the monk's side.

Because I couldn't be certain about the distance measured, instead of the front, I chose the side.

I swung the sword, aiming at the monk's neck. The sword cut through the air.

Damn it. In a space like this, he can sense my movement which was done through Blink?

Through the mana operation, I focused on the monk who lowered his body and dodged the sword's edge. Watching it gave me severe dizziness.

Desperately holding on to the mana operation, I squeezed out all of my mental focus.

The monk's knuckles were flying in.

It was too late to dodge it.

I raised my shield and blocked it.

Kwang~

It sounded like a cannonball drop. My body was thrown against my back and collided with the wall.

Kuuuuuhec...

I was shocked again when my body collided with a wall.

As for my shield... I cannot see it, but it was probably shattered.

[Challenger...]

The monk opened his mouth again.

He is probably going to say something like we should fight after I got more used to this darkness.

I put the shield and backsword in the inventory and raised my mana.

[Talaria's Wings]

I summoned the Talaria's Wings and motioned them to surround my entire body. I raised my arms and crossed them to protect my head.

[Blink]

Like that, I used the Blink and collided with the monk.

Talaria's Wings absorbed the initial shock. However, I had to withstand the secondary shock in full when my body collided with Talaria's Wings.

Damn it. I don't remember when the last time I resorted to this kind of

suicide method was.

I was shocked, but it was far better than what the monk must have gotten.

I got a grip first and threw the knife at the monk who was thrown off to the distance.

Surprisingly, despite being in middle of all this, the monk precisely struck the knife with lower edge of his hand.

[Blink]

However, he was not able to block my hand which I thrust at him after using the Blink again.

The mana, which was surrounding my hand like a sharp knife, tore through the monk's skin.

The monk twisted his body and kicked.

This is dangerous.

[Battle Focus]

Damn it. I even used the Battle Focus... Let alone dodging it, I cannot even block it.

I saw it too late.

It appeared to be a reverse kick.

I didn't even get to see most of his motions.

Because I was trying to sense such twisting movement through mana, I was unable to immediately identify the target point and respond.

It was not that there was a problem in operating mana. After I successfully attacked the monk, my mental focus faltered.

Instead of using both arms offensively, I am going to use the left hand, which is wielding the knife, as a replacement for shield.

I am an expert at this.

There probably are only few people out there who can use an arm as the broken shield as well as I can.

[Huuuuuaaaap!]

Shouting, the monk was charging at me. I thought about trying to get used to this space as I watched him run toward me.

* * *

Huuuuuuu.

As I thought, this is the best method for getting used to things.

Once the situation has been created in that being unable to adapt would result in certain death, the body will always adapt to the condition in order to survive.

Infected by poison, the monk was running amok and charging at me to end the duel before the poison could be fatal.

To block and parry his attacks, I had to adapt to this space somehow and accurately detect the monk's movements.

Of course, I succeeded.

“With this, the duel is decided, right?”

[That's right. It was a great duel, Challenger.]

Do you think so?

You were poisoned, and your opponent was gutlessly avoiding and blocking your attacks to draw out the fight. You were chasing me like

a madman, and now, you ended up in a pathetic state of being unable to move.

If I was that monk, would I accept this as a good duel?

Thinking that, I put the empty potion bottle back in the inventory.

The monk coughed and threw up blood.

The poison is probably quite strong.

I brought out an antidote from the inventory.

“It’s an antidote. If you answer my questions, I’ll give this to you.”

[If it is something I can tell you, then...]

You are in that state, yet you are adding a condition while sitting around?

Wait, you are lying around.

“How many rooms are in this place?”

[There are 33 rooms. The Master Monk will be at the very last room.]

33...

That’s more than I thought.

[Is that the end of your questions?]

“No. I have one more.”

Actually, this is the reason why I’m putting the antidote up as the reward.

“How do I adapt to this space? Tell me.”

[Challenger, it seemed you were already pretty well-adapted?]

“Not as well as you have. I want to hear your method.”

[In other words, you want me to summarize the fundamentals of my art and hand them over to you.]

“If you don’t want to, then fine. In that case, no antidote for you.”

[Uuhurhurhur. I’ll tell you. If you are intending on challenging the next room, then you will have to learn this properly.]

I poured in antidote to the monk’s mouth.

Before long, having drunk the antidote, the monk sat down and checked his body.

You sure recover quickly.

Your body really is unbelievable.

[Now then, shall we start?]

You want to start right away?

“Let’s start after resting for a bit.”

[Won’t it be better to move right away? It would be easier to master this while you still have the same sensation you felt during the battle.]

I know what you are saying, but...

I can’t right now.

“It’s time for me to eat.”

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 12]

[You acquired Detection Lv. 7]

[You acquired Battle Focus Lv.20]

Chapter 77

Tutorial 13th Floor (5)

[20th Room]

“How far could I go?”

[Probably up to about the 25th Room.]

25th Room?

I was overestimating a higher number.

I got pretty used to the space already. I also have learned a lot in the process too.

[The height you will face from the 26th Room and beyond will be different.]

“Are you talking about the environmental challenges or the power of the monks?”

[The latter. If you do overcome the 26th Room, then you probably will be able to get to the 29th Room.]

“What’s the problem with the 30th Room now?”

[Environmental challenge.]

Ugh.

What a filthily hellish difficulty.

I’m getting frustrated all of sudden.

This Hell Difficulty does not know the meaning of enough.

I complained by myself and got up, followed by the monk.

[Are you going to go now?]

“I should. I have a long way to go.”

[First, I must say that the canned soup that you made was very delicious.]

That’s good.

I was slightly concerned that it would not suit his tastes.

[Also, I want to say that I enjoyed talking to you. I will look forward to the day when we will meet again.]

We won’t ever meet again.

I already beat the 15th Room and cleared the Stage.

Even if this round ends, I’ll be moved to the 14th Floor’s waiting room because the clear condition was still met.

I won’t have the chance to challenge the 13th Floor again.

Also, even if I could challenge the stage again and meet this monk again, he wouldn’t remember me.

When the round resets, it will be as if he never met me.

“Well then, I’ll get going.”

For some reason, I had a sudden loathing to say goodbye and leave.

Did we get close already?

It was worrying.

For some reason, I was anxious. So, I hastily got out of the room and closed the door without even looking back.

[Will you continue?]

Of course.

The monk said the 25th Room or the 30th Room would be my limit. However, I do not agree with his words.

You never know until you try.

It's not like I got this far because I was overflowing with confidence for victory.

* * *

[24th Room]

[Challenger, you were still not used to the reach of the spear. Abandoning the spear's advantage and throwing your body to force damage on both sides is not quite a good method. Also, you have the habit of putting your left foot first when you are making that choice.]

I was about to leave the 24th Room when the monk advised me with his back turned.

That was valuable advice.

They were so important that I felt awkward about just leaving without a word.

For a moment, I contemplated a suitable reply. However, I dismissed the thought.

“Thank you.”

[Uuhurhurhurhur. There's no need.]

[Would you like to continue?]

Of course.

There's no need to ask anymore.

Regardless of my chances, I intend to go all the way to the 33rd Room.

As I walked toward the 25th Room through the corridor, I organized my thoughts.

Numerous problems still bothered me.

They were important problems. Adding onto their importance, depending on how I resolve them, many things could change.

However, this is not the time for me to hold such troubling thoughts in my head.

All monks I have met so far said that the 25th Room will be tough.

I need to focus on fighting the monk at the 25th Room.

I eradicated the distracting thoughts and focused my senses to prepare myself.

When I became certain that my senses focused and ready, I opened the 25th Room's wooden door and entered.

[Welcome, Challenger.]

I entered the room, and the monk greeted me. I looked at the monk thoroughly.

Appearance-wise, he didn't look very different from the monks earlier.

“Shall we start now?”

[Now? Um. I guess that would be fine. Challenger, it seems you are pretty used to this space.]

“It’s been the same since the 20th Room, so it is about time I got used to it.”

[Uuhurhur. Usually, getting used to it so fast is not possible. Also, there were dense ones who needed to get adapt to the room’s environment again after walking through the corridor which does not have the darkness.]

“How dense does one have to be to do that? Do people like that need to adapt again each time after entering the room?”

[That’s right. Actually, most challengers are like that.]

Other challengers...

He is probably not talking about the Tutorial Hell Difficulty’s 13th Stage. He is most likely talking about the temple at the west of the continent that worships the God of Duel.

I suddenly feel curious about this place’s story.

What kind of history and memory do these people have? Why do the challengers come? What do they gain?

I was about to open my mouth to satiate my curiosity. However, I changed my mind.

I closed my mouth again and asked myself.

Am I really that curious about them?

What happened to the promise I made to myself to I will focus on the duel against the monk earlier?

Could it be that I am not actually curious about their story, but...

I just want to have a conversation with that monk?

[Um? Are you all right? Challenger, you don't look so good.]

It felt like my sanity was crashing down.

I had been thinking that my behaviors lately were strange. I have been acting like that because I was too lonely.

So, I was feeling joy from the act of having a conversation with someone.

Out the blue, I was facing my fragility. It concerned me.

I had been aware that I was not that healthy mentally.

I was also well aware that I was suffering from loneliness.

I knew I like Kiri Kiri, Kim Min-huk, Park Jong-shik and others who are willing to have a conversation with me and smile because of that reason.

However, I didn't think I would take interest in the enemies and find joy from feeling connections because of my loneliness.

I didn't think I would show myself so thoughtlessly unguarded toward the enemies.

I wonder how many times I would have died so far if the monks were not so friendly toward me.

As I thought about this, I remembered the incidents of near death. I should have died in those moments.

I felt like I just wanted to scream.

[Challenger, are you all right? Take a seat and calm your breathing.]

Instead of doing as the monk said, I brought out my backsword.

I won't be able to subdue this chaos in my mind when I have that monk in front of me, I thought.

"...No. I'll finish this duel and then either talk or organize my thoughts."

[Uuhurhur. It looks like you are confident about winning. Well then, go ahead.]

[God of Adventure is cheering for you.]

[God of Slowness is watching you.]

The reactions from the God of Adventure and God of Slowness came as always.

I knew they would show up.

There was a time when I thought the two gods wanted the same things from me.

However, now, I am aware that they each want the opposite things from me.

The choice I'll make in the future... I wonder what kind of choices I would make and which god I would please with my choices.

At the moment, I am not sure.

For now, I should focus on the task at hand. I'll think about that later.

[Soul Steal]

* * *

Pang!

This is insane.

I think I finally understand why the monks I met in the past all said the 25th Room will be hard, repeating the same line over and over.

The monk was calm and had his hands flat together. He then moved the hand and punched the empty air with his knuckles.

After that...

Kwang!

The shockwave of mana erupted out.

I quickly threw my body to the side to dodge the shockwave.

What is this, a palm blast?

Was that a palm blast?

The shockwave collided with the wall with a loud noise.

Pieces of rubbles from the wall poured down.

I even thought that perhaps the wall might collapse and cause the entire room to cave in.

It was incredibly powerful. Getting hit by it directly once probably will send me to my grave.

I think I might die instantly if I get hit the wrong way.

The monk was discharging shockwaves by the bucketload.

Using the Blink to dodge the shockwave is a waste.

I'll just get exposed to another shot afterwards.

I should use the Blink for attacks and dodge the shockwaves with by moving.

I moved after I saw that the monk was taking a stance again to launch a shockwave.

Let's make this a battle of speed.

Pang!

I threw my body to the side and dodged the incoming palm blast.

Like that, I hastened my speed and ran around the monk in a circle.

With vision being useless, the monk and I had to rely on the detection through the mana in this space.

Let's see if the monk's detection skill can follow my speed.

As my speed increased, the Wind Spirit's Blessing Skill's acceleration effect was applied.

Now, it became harder for me to run around in circle inside this small room because of my increased velocity.

Pang!

Again, the palm blast was launched.

It seemed that he shot it while predicting my trajectory. However, the shockwave only passed by my back.

I squatted then jumped up.

I landed on the wall perpendicularly, my feet on the wall.

With the momentum I had with my speed earlier, I can stay on the wall in this stance for a moment.

I focused on my leg and back.

I need to squeeze out all of my mana and muscular strength.

Like a spring expanding after compression, I kicked the wall and launched myself toward the monk like an arrow.

The monk was not able to follow my speed completely. However, he did respond by raising his arms to guard against the direction I was flying towards him.

Kwuang!

The backsword I swung and the monk's arm collided.

It was a collision of mana, generating a shockwave.

My body was being pushed back by the shockwave.

Damn it.

As soon as I landed, I raised the backsword again and aimed it at the monk.

I knew that the monks did not attack in a situation like this.

However, that did not mean I could just take it easy and remain defenseless either.

I have to always stay focused and stay sharp.

I had survived that way, and I could survive this only if I did.

Again, I ran around the monk in circle and threw my body towards a wall.

I kicked the wall and charged at the monk just like the last time.

The monk tried to stop my attack using the same stance.

Perhaps because this was the second time I tried this, it seemed the monk's stance looked a little more stable.

[Battle Focus]

Because I had to raise mana as a replacement for my vision, I cannot maintain the Battle Focus for long.

I have to make this attack count.

I was inside a world that was so slow that it felt like the time actually stopped. I was flying toward the monk very gradually, slowly at a snail's pace.

Meanwhile, I could check my stance.

I was flying through the air like an arrow.

It was obvious that my sword swing stance was ruined.

Maintaining the Battle Focus, I made a miniscule adjustment to my stance before I collided with the monk.

At the moment the sword and the monk's arm collided, I focused on the moment when the shockwave was generated.

It was about grasping a split-second moment.

Using the Battle Focus, I forcibly raised my focus to the extreme. With this, it is possible to grasp that single moment.

Kwuaang!

With the sword and the monk's arm as the center, I saw that the shockwave was being generated. I immediately used the skill.

[Blink]

I used it twice in a row and got to the monk's back.

Blink Skill was not just a quick movement skill.

One special attribute of this skill was that all momentum was extinguished once the movement was complete.

Therefore, the shock from the collision became nullified with the Blink's special attribute, and I was currently holding the position behind the monk. I can attack the monk's back without any hindrance.

On the other hand, the monk is getting the shock from the collision up front.

I thrust the sword into the monk as deeply as possible, and the strike tore the monk's back skin.

I was intending to pierce through the monk if possible. However, all it did was tear his skin.

Because of the shock from the front and his attempt to quickly turn his body to dodge the stabbing attack from the back, the monk lost balance.

He was in middle of the collision, yet he turned his body after detecting my movement to the back and the attack.

Just what kind of a fiend is he?

The monk stumped on the floor hard, generated loud noise, and flew away before stopping only after running into a wall.

Surprisingly, the monk got up as if that was nothing.

He was bleeding on his back from the tears in his skin, but other than that, he was the same as he was when I first met him when entered the 25th Room.

It seemed the monk was examining his body. He was standing still for

a moment. The monk said,

[Is it poison?]

“That’s right. It’s poison. If you leave it be, you could die in five minutes. Ah, I guess it may not be fatal if it is you. Still, you won’t be able to continue fighting regardless.”

[Uuhurhurhur. It is interesting. This is my first time experiencing a duel like this. I will lose if I don’t defeat you within the time limit. However, if I rush around without making any progress, the poison will spread faster.]

“That’s right.”

[Uuhurhurhur. This is quite enjoyable.]

“All other monks said the same.”

The monk was laughing about it once again. Watching the monk, I reminisced.

The monk who I met at the 20th Room said the monk at the 25th Room will be a great challenge. He also said that the 30th Room will be the next challenge if I got past the 25th Room.

If I can hold out just for five minutes, it looks like I won’t have problems until the 29th Room at least.

[Well then! Since we don’t have time, let’s get started right away! Looks like I should be the one to attack now, uuhurhurhur!]

While laughing with deafeningly loud voice that filled the room, the monk was charging at me. Reactively, I corrected my stance.

Chapter 78

Tutorial 13th Floor (6)

[25th Room]

It's to the right.

I quickly raised my arm and blocked the shockwave that was emanating from my right. I was pushed far to the back.

Fortunately, I didn't end up falling and rolling on the ground.

My arm was also safe because I used the Iron Wall Skill.

Pang!

I moved my body immediately and dodged the trajectory of the palm blast.

I need to force the battle into close range if I am to fight that monk.

When there's distance, the monk throws his fist around in the air freely without any hindrance while I have to dodge an endless barrage of shockwaves.

If this continued, I will eventually get hit before the monk collapses from the poison.

I could probably win if I draw the fight out, but I still have to charge into that monk and close the gap to ensure my victory.

I charged toward the monk's chest and swung my fist.

All of my weapons were either broken or scattered on the floor

somewhere.

All I have left is hand-to-hand combat.

The monk has superior body in comparison to mine.

He also has greater reach.

He is also a lot more used to this darkness than me.

I am disadvantaged in three different ways, but the monk is infected by the poison.

So, I will win if I just hold out.

The monk's movements are too rigid.

He is not being flexible in his responses to the opponent's moves.

He does not try to hide the intent of his moves by doing strange things either.

He just thoroughly executes the fighting art form that he knows.

So, if I recognize the monk's stance and miniscule movements in his muscles, I can predict the angle of his attack and respond to it accordingly.

I have two advantages.

[Sensory Amplification]

I approached the monk and used the skill.

In a moment like this, even if it is just a miniscule buff, I should raise my senses further and predict the monk's movements.

Usually, I do not use this skill often because its duration is too short.

However, it is extremely important right now.

I looked at the movements of the monk's shoulder, waist, knees and right arm's muscles, eventually discerning the monk's intentions

I have experienced his move several times already.

It's a knuckle strike aimed at my heart.

I quickly lowered my body and adjusted my left hand to block his fist from the side. I closed in the gap.

Pang!

A shockwave was generated from the left side and struck the side of my head.

I think my eardrums are going to burst.

For now, I ignored the damage and attempted to execute my plan.

My right fist jolted forward to strike the left side of the monk's stomach.

This is the stomach, the opposite side of where the poison wound is on the back.

The monk instantly changed his stance and stopped my fist.

It was not that he saw my prior moves and predicted this. He didn't predict my plan either.

He merely saw the fist flying at him and then moved his stance to respond.

No matter how I think about it, that was an insane reaction speed.

The monk snatched my arm and threw me to the ground like a Judo practitioner.

[Blink]

Just before I collided with the ground, I used Blink to the same spot.

With this, although I won't be going anywhere, I wouldn't experience the impact because of Blink negated momentum.

I raised my body in that state and smacked the monk's face with my left hand.

I didn't take a proper stance. I just swung my fist. Still, it hit his face square.

This was the first time to successfully hurt the monk with a direct attack.

The monk has weakened a lot.

The poison is running through his body, so it is obvious.

Because of the shock on his head, the monk was not able to take a proper stance. I charged at the monk and pushed his body over.

Because the monks had such sturdy bodies, they had a tendency to be slow in response when their head experienced trauma.

The monk fell on the floor. I became certain as I mounted his body.

I won.

* * *

[30th Room]

[Welcome, Challenger. It's been a long time since I've seen anyone coming this far.]

As I listened to the monk's greeting, I checked the change in senses.

It was the tactile sensation.

Since the 20th Room, the rooms had a strange darkness that completely blocked my vision. Now, it even paralyzed my sense of touch.

It is really strange.

Is this how it feels to being completely anesthetized yet able to walk around somehow?

I raised my hand and felt around my face.

My senses were effectively nulled; my face, hand, or the arm and shoulder that supported the hand did not seem to exist.

This strange lack of sensation generated unfamiliar fear in me.

It felt like I was swimming in deep sea.

[Are you alright, Challenger?]

Having heard the monk, I got a grip of myself.

“You said it’s been awhile since seeing someone making this far, right?”

[I did, Challenger. Is there something you are curious about?]

I was so glad that I could still hear him.

I can still talk properly.

“Ah... ah.”

I tried making noises again.

Although I could not feel my lips, tongue, neck and vocal cords from

moving, I was making proper sounds through my voice.

That fact felt mysterious somehow.

“How many... challengers... challengers were... were there before me...”

Damn it.

[Uuhurhurhur! You sure talk funny. First, try getting used to this place a little more.]

When I talked without thinking about the room's mysterious effects, I pronounced the words as my body remembered. However, when I tried to talk while being conscious about the room, the pronunciations got tangled up.

I feel so embarrassed.

[Experiences like this are probably not common. Enduring the conditions of this place is great training by itself. First, I recommend that you take time and wait until you get used to this place.]

As the monk said, I quietly went to a corner of the room and sat down.

I cannot even feel the floor.

With my eyes closed, I can't even tell if I am sitting down or lying down.

Actually, since I can't see anything even with my eyes open, it is the same.

As I spent the time to get used to the place, I decided to organize my thoughts.

That monk is not attacking me.

He has made a strange decision, but it is a definite fact.

I have confirmed this several times as I sat in the 30th Room.

I should have plenty of time to peacefully organize my thoughts.

This place paralyzed the sense of touch, which created a good environment for me to focus my thoughts.

I slowly thought about the actions I took since I entered the 13th Floor's Stage.

At first, my attitude was more or less the same as before I got here.

Like I always have, I had desire for experience points and growth. Also, I was curious about new Stage.

However, as I met the monks and conversed with them, my attitude changed little by little.

I laughed at their philosophy in the beginning, but that was only for a short while. I was intrigued from having conversations with them. It was interesting to learn new things by exchanging ideas with them.

I reminisced, recognizing that I was feeling very lonely at the moment. With that in consideration, I realized that my behavior was not all that weird.

It was not weird for a lonely person to become close quickly with someone who he could have conversations about a topic of mutual interest and enjoy it.

The problem was that the monks were the enemies in this stage that I had to defeat regardless. Also, the other problem was that I had inadvertently lowered my mental guard.

I guess there are about two problems.

I don't need to worry too much about the first one.

These monks are definitely very welcoming toward the challengers, and they seem to enjoy having conversations with the challengers.

On top of this, they never attack the opponent by taking advantage of the moment when the opponent's guard is down.

Again, this is something I confirmed from meeting many different monks.

Also, I am maintaining enough alertness to respond should the monk attack me suddenly while having a conversation.

Of course, I think it would be a serious problem if I became this lax even when facing enemies who are not monks.

I should not let that happen.

The second problem crept up to me because I never diagnosed myself accurately.

I have two weaknesses. I am currently extremely lonely, and I am opening up too easily to the ones who seem accepting.

At first, I was not aware of these weaknesses.

I cannot fix them right now, but now that I am aware of it at least, I won't have to worry about being too close to them and panicking afterwards.

I should watch out from now on.

This should be enough.

I have not organized all of my thoughts, but I don't feel as uneasy.

Now, I should focus on what to come.

First, let's try adapting to this space.

[32nd Room]

[Challenger, then try going to the next room. The Master Monk will be waiting. I hope you pass the final trial.]

The monk was saying words of farewell. I looked at the monk and expressed my sincere gratitude for his match.

[Would you like to continue?]

Of course.

I opened the 32nd Room's door and entered the conjoining corridor. My vision and sense of touch came back alive.

Surprisingly, I felt burdened by the senses. How strange...

First, I checked the time.

[Round 15, Day 27, 07:30]

I had been worrying about the time, but I was not as late as I thought.

I was able to pass the 30th Room to the 32nd Room with far greater ease than I anticipated.

It was not anything special.

It was just that the monks in those rooms were not well-adapted to the conditions of their own room.

The monks focused on maintaining their art form to the perfection and executing their movement.

Because of this, not being able to sense their own body's movement became a huge penalty.

On the other hand, I didn't give a damn about the perfection of my movements. I only cared about charging in and attacking successfully.

I was able to move more freely than them.

Also, after some time passed, I was able to adjust to the conditions with greater ease than the monks.

Eventually, I was able to get through the rooms from 30th to the 32nd Room.

In fact, I felt that the rooms that came before them were harder.

I grabbed hold of the door handle ring of the 33rd Room.

Finally, this is the very last room.

As soon as I entered the room, I could not help but panic from my senses being paralyzed.

Of course, I was aware that my senses would be paralyzed.

However... I didn't know all senses would be paralyzed at the same time.

Vision, touch, smell, hearing, and taste...

All senses were paralyzed.

[Welcome, Challenger. I am this temple's master.]

Instead of having my body's nerves removed, it felt more like I lost my body itself. I was panicking. At that moment, the Master Monk's voice echoed inside my head.

How is he able to communicate to me?

Also, how did I hear that?

[Little by little, you will find out. There is no need to be in such rush. Try looking around.]

As the Master Monk said, I spread my mana wide and poked at the surroundings.

It was fortunate that I could at least feel things through mana.

I used the mana to check my body as well, and I realized that there were goosebumps on my arms and face.

It seemed my body was quite surprised.

I have a mountain of questions.

I have so many things I want to ask, but I am not sure if I will be able to talk properly in this place.

I am not even sure if the Master Monk will be able to understand me.

[It's all right. I can understand you.]

How?

[It's a part of the Power Skills that I received from a God.]

Power Skill?

[That's right. I am currently going through the trial to become a God's apostle, just like you.]

I was not surprised about the fact that the Master Monk knew I was going through the trial to become a God's apostle.

I was also speculating that he might have something similar to Power Skills.

He gives off a sensation similar to when I use the Power Skills.

Likewise, the space emanates the same feeling.

Could it be that apostles can recognize each other?

[To be precise, you are sensing the holy power. Because of the holy power, the priests can tell amongst themselves naturally that they are servants of a God. It is also a form of identification. Were you not aware of this? You are quite in the dark when it comes to the common knowledge.]

You are able to communicate meanings to me. Is that also by a Power Skill?

[No. That's a technique manifested through the mana. More importantly, have you calmed your agonizing thoughts?]

Agonizing thoughts? Are you aware of even my troubling thoughts?

[I was watching everything since you entered this temple.]

How?

[Using the same method you are using to look at me.]

You are saying that you spread mana and watched me through the detection.

You are at the 33rd Room, yet you could see all the way to the very first room.

I get to witness such a ridiculous fiend.

I think I might die here.

[You have such rude thoughts.]

It's the fault of the one who looked into my mind.

My troubling thoughts were resolved to some extent.

The root of the problem was that I was unaware of the problems in the first place.

[The first step in resolving a problem is identifying the cause.]

[Well then, I'll tell you the details of the trial.]

[The final trial will begin.

Description: Be acknowledged by Armout, the temple's master and the one is blessed by the God. Prove that your proclamation is not just empty words.]

[Clear condition:

Endure both of Armout's trials and earn his recognition.

Chapter 79

Tutorial 13th Floor (7)

[The first trial is surviving this place for 24 hours.]

[The second trial is lasting 10 minutes in a duel with me.]

Look at this insane difficulty.

It is no joke starting, even with just the first one.

Although all my senses were paralyzed, I can at least maintain perception through the mana.

From that perspective, it's not that hard, but...

The mana is being spent too fast.

[That is also a special attribute of this space.]

I wonder how long I'll be able to hold out with my mana capacity?

Four hours? I think I might be able to hold out for a little over four hours.

After that, I will be trapped inside a world without any senses, a world where only my consciousness exists.

A world where I cannot see, hear or touch.

I'm certain even my sense of time will be anesthetized too.

Instead of it being a trial, it is closer to an ultra-high-tech single cell with the purpose of driving a man insane.

[However, there will be something you will gain from going through this process.]

First, let's try to conserve the mana as much as possible.

While I was at it, I suppressed the output of the mana so that I was using the bare minimum to just recognize a part of my body.

I have no reason to maintain detection of that monk.

Not only is it for certain that the monk won't attack me, the monk is overwhelmingly stronger than me.

The second trial will be another problem.

The Master Monk is too strong.

Way too strong.

It is not right to be so discouraged and falter even before challenging the monk. However, I can already see the end result clearly.

Beating the Master Monk and achieving victory is most certainly impossible.

I should just focus on surviving his onslaught for 10 minutes.

[Well then, would it be all right to start the first trial?]

About the first trial...

Can I get a reward for surviving longer than 24 hours?

[A reward? Tell me what it is that you want first. I'll think about it after hearing it.]

I'll endure it for 48 hours. In return, teach me the technique.

[What technique are you referring to?]

The technique you are using right now to talk to me.

The monk pondered deeply about it for a moment and said,

[Very well. If you endure this space for 48 hours, you have the qualification to learn it. You can always change the trial duration. Tell me at any time if you will be satisfied with enduring for 24 hours and giving up the reward instead. Well then, I'll start the trial.]

No. Wait.

Will it be all right if I started the trial after eating a medicine?

[Um. First, I'll have to ask what kind of medicine it is. You won't be able to consume the kind of potions that will directly affect the mana's recovery rate.]

No, this one is not like that.

It is the kind that prevents me from pooping.

[What kind of medicine did you say it was?]

It is a medicine that prevents me from pooping.

[...]

This was not some shabby medicine that induced constipation. That kind of medicine was considered as a poison, so it didn't even have any effect because of my Great Poison Resistance Skill.

This is a fantastic medicine that destroys the things inside my intestines.

I suppose it can be seen as a form of enema, although this is different since the medicine destroys the things inside instead of getting things out of the inside.

[PR Note: An enema, for those that don't know, is the injection of a liquid into the rectum and colon by way of the anus. Basically shooting stuff up your butthole.]

[This is so unexpected.]

Hey, do you have any idea how important this is?

I need to hold out here for 48 hours, in this space where all senses are paralyzed.

In this place, I won't be able to feel if I need to poop or not for whooping 48 hours.

I swear that I am definitely not going to poop.

[It's all right if you eat this one. No, actually, I would like to recommend you to eat the medicine. Please take it.]

With the Master Monk's permission, I took out the medicine from the inventory.

After the painful experiences at the 12th Floor, I purchased the medicine after asking Kiri Kiri for advice.

These were expensive as well.

[Wait, there are two different medicines, is that all right?]

One of them was for preventing any involuntary leaking.

[...All right. Take them.]

[Now, then. Take a seat and begin.]

* * *

It was not so bad for the first few hours.

I could run the mana around and check my body. I calmly meditated and passed the time like that.

Throughout the first few hours, the one thing that I focused the most was the distribution of the mana.

To hold out as long as possible, I conserved as much mana as possible. I tried my best to use the mana efficiently.

However, soon, I ran out of mana.

To prepare myself for the duel that was to happen after the first trial, I decided not to use the little mana that was left.

From that moment, the trial really started.

With no sensory input left, only my consciousness existed in the world.

Although I actually lost my senses, it felt like I lost my body itself and was floating around in the universe alone.

The overwhelming emptiness gave me the chills.

From that terror, surprisingly, I felt exhilarating pleasure.

Am I insane?

As the Master Monk said, I think this experience will be valuable.

This experience will probably be once in a lifetime.

When the sense of touch was paralyzed at the 30th Room, I compared that to being deep underwater.

It was similar this time as well.

One thing that was a little different was that this was going beyond just feeling deeply submerged. I wondered if this was how I would

have felt before I was born, when I was still a fetus.

If the state after dying is death, could I also call the state before being alive as death too?

One thing was for certain. What I was feeling right now was really making me think about death.

The only thing that was proof of existence was my consciousness, which was endlessly thinking.

Around that time, all of sudden, I felt that my consciousness was gradually slowing down.

It felt like I was sinking further down into the deep ocean.

My consciousness became calmer and heavier.

It felt soft.

It was like how it felt lying down on the bed after staying up whole night, the feeling at the moment before falling asleep.

[How is it?]

It feels like someone poured a bucket load of cold water when I was sleeping soundly.

I feel really awake.

To tell you honestly, I am displeased.

[It's usually like that, but this is also my role. I need to prevent the challenger from sinking to the bottom and to ensure their return during the trial. My role is to talk to the challenger like this.]

Are there cases where the challengers never come back?

[There were many. In proportion to the number of challengers who

got this far, there are a lot of them. Those that got through the past rooms using cheats, seven times out of ten, are unable to come back.]

Can't you just drag the challenger out to the space outside of this room?

[That is not as easy as you think. It is hard for the consciousness to rise back up from being sunk. Also, if the challenger cannot rise back up without help, then someone else needs to drag the challenger up. However, usually, someone who is capable of such is...]

Usually?

[A God.]

Um...

So, do you need to talk to me for 48 hours?

[That's right. It won't be for exactly 48 more hours some time has passed since you have started. Ah, I cannot tell you about the passage of time.]

More importantly, do you have enough stuff to talk about for 48 hours?

[Of course. Do you have any idea how long I have done this for? If you want, I can tell you all sorts of stories for a whole week.]

So you were a chatterbox.

[Uuhurhurhur.]

I am sorry, but let's stop the conversation here.

I feel like I can sense something, so I want to focus on meditation.

[Oh. Interesting. It's all right. Continue focusing on meditation. You can just treat my voice as the sound of a distant wind.]

[What should I talk about first... Right, I'll tell you about the true nature of fighting art. I see that you have a very different opinion about this from us. Listen. I think that fighting art is...]

[You obtained Meditation.]

* * *

I am absolutely certain.

If someone dared me to bet my finger, I would. If someone dared me to bet money, I would.

I will have to think hard about it if someone dared me to bet the things between my legs though.

Anyway, I am certain that 48 hours have passed by already!

[It has not been 48 hours.]

Damn it.

I anticipated that my sense of time was going to be numbed too.

However, I did not think it would be to this degree.

How fast could a human consciousness be?

It was a question that I never thought about.

Also, what kind of change could that undergo in a special environment like this?

Actually, this place might have a special attribute that directly affects the speed of consciousness.

[Oh, you are very sharp. Ah, right. In our temple, do you know who has the sharpest deductive ability? It is...]

In this place, there are two clues for me to gauge the passage of time.

There is my consciousness and the Master Monk's voice.

The problem was that his voice was not coming through his mouth.

He was merely placing meanings in mana and sending them to me through the Power Skill.

It is hard to determine the passage of time using the speed of his conversation.

Also, if my mental processes are accelerated, then how fast is it? If I am able to think about the story of the Lord of the Ring from the very beginning to the end in less than five seconds...

Or if it can do that even faster...

Uuuuuuuuuuu. This is the worst.

How long has it been since the trial started?

It might only have been 47 hours and 59 minutes.

However, it is also possible that only about six hours passed.

[That's right. Of many answers, you are heading toward one. Think about that topic some more.]

This trial, which paralyzed all senses, also blinded me from my sense of time. Perhaps, for the 48 hours, I might get to indirectly experience an endless passage of time.

Passage of infinite time...

It was not surprising that I thought about this.

That was the principle of the God of Slowness.

The traveler and leader who follows the infinite passage of time.

As I thought about the God of Slowness, I also thought about the God of Adventure.

At a glance, they appeared to be similar.

The two Gods were contradicting in two characteristics.

The process and the result.

The God of Slowness wanted the process of someone who does not falter or run into walls.

In contrast, the God of Adventure wanted the process of someone who overcomes things while agonizing and failing and marching forward.

As for the result, the God of Slowness wants a process that repeats endlessly.

The God of Adventure wants a definite triumph through the process.

Now that I organized my thoughts, the God of Slowness' philosophy is...

In many ways, it is similar to the values that these monks who warship God of Duel.

To point out one thing that's different, the opponent must exist due to the arrangement of a duel, and the monks have huge respect toward opponent.

However, the monks focus more on performing their arts to perfection rather than interacting with the opponent through the art. Considering this, as I thought, these monks have principles similar to the God of Slowness.

[Hur. That's surprising. The God of Duel said you have found the right answer. This is something I didn't know about. God of Slowness...

Actually, I've never heard of that God.]

Unfortunately, my thoughts about the God of Adventure and God of Slowness ended there.

I didn't have any more clues to sustain my train of thought.

I stopped the deduction and started examining myself.

I went back to dig around my own past.

From the oldest memories I had from childhood and the recent memories...

I thought about them, and thought about them some more.

Funny thing was, that I was able to recall memories that I didn't reflect about about on the past tries.

The memories that I recalled already before were also be recalled from a new perspective.

By the time I ran through my memories several dozens of times, and by the time I have done it over a hundred times, I could watch my memories, even my happiness and sadness, from a third person perspective in addition to my own.

[You obtained Meditation]

[You obtained Mana Circuit]

[TL: I know the MC already has these skills. I don't know why the author wrote those.]

* * *

I completely depleted all of my mana.

It was totally exhausted.

I even spent the extremely small amount that I had been saving like pocket change.

Damn it all. How am I supposed to fight the Master Monk in this state?

He won't even let me drink a mana potion.

With the final line of defense gone now, the terror and anxiety sipped into my mind again.

I started to wonder the well-being of my body, which had all of the senses cut off.

Am I still sitting well?

Am I standing?

Am I lying down?

Where is the Master Monk?

I cannot be certain if he is still at the center of the room.

Maybe he is right in front of my nose and looking into me...

As I felt the terror, I realized something that had slipped my mind.

I could no longer hear the Master Monk's voice.

Chapter 80

Tutorial 13th Floor (8)

My sense of anxiety surged.

The Master Monk's voice could no longer be heard, suggesting numerous possible dangers.

It could be that my consciousness had fallen too deep as the Master Monk warned of.

Or, it could be that he simply stopped talking.

Regardless, this is extremely dangerous.

No, the latter is significantly more dangerous.

The predicament I am in implied that I could die instantly if the monk wished.

Fortunately, although time continued to pass, my body... no, my consciousness still felt fine.

I became certain that I cannot hear him because my consciousness had sunk too deep.

Since then, I focused on just the flow of my consciousness.

Just like before the Master Monk talked to me and woke up my mind, I had to endure a sleepy sensation.

Assuming that the situation right now was similar, I should greatly accelerate my consciousness and wake up from sleep.

I should focus as much as I can and keep my mind active by thinking.

Think about things endlessly and beyond.

I am not sure if this is the right method.

Honestly, I am not certain about my theory on my condition either.

I'm still trying despite this. Well, it is not like I have other options.

* * *

I thought about a science fiction movie about space I watched once.

In one scene, the tether that connected an astronaut to the spaceship was cut by an accident. The astronaut was lost to the space and became a mummy.

I wonder if my current predicament similar to that of the astronaut from the movie.

I do have one thing that's better: knowing that this hardship will end eventually.

Damn it.

The world of no senses soon became the world of infinity.

In a world where nothing existed, only my consciousness remained.

I need something.

I need something that can support my mind.

I focused my mind on my body which I could not feel.

Alone, I visualized the outline of my body, which could not be seen or felt.

The world of no senses was like an infinitely wide dark canvas. On this canvas, I drew my own existence.

Actually, it was close to just an imaginary drawing.

I had no sensory input. How could I know where my hands were, where my legs were, and what was the look on my face was?

On top of this, the drawing changed continuously.

Sometimes, it looked like my body was lying down. There were times when I was sitting.

As I thought, this was a meaningless effort.

What could be more meaningless than struggling to feel something that cannot be felt?

However, I cannot afford to quit.

I wanted to know my body's current condition. Not knowing was driving me insane.

Even if it was just a little bit, I wanted to feel the sensory inputs from the body.

The obsession was cornered by my anxiety, and it focused on the imaginary drawing of my body, which was like a mirage that didn't exist at all.

* * *

I continued my thoughts on the condition of my body.

I wonder how long I had been at this?

The imaginary drawing of body, which had been fluidly changing continuously before, had a stabilized visual.

Honestly, this was no different from a virtual character.

Like an account's character in an internet's mini-homepage, it was representing a virtual version of me.

My body was currently lying flat on the floor.

It was a little undignifying that I was drooling a little, but it didn't look like my body had any big problems.

My hands were on top of the stomach. My legs were stretched out and spread.

Although it is an imaginary construct created by the power of my imagination... It looks too real.

Is this really an illusion? Is it possible that it is not? In the state of having no sensory input, I may have managed to detect my body through a very long time using super human focus. Is it really nothing more than just an illusion that I dreamed up? No, if that's the case, instead of this illusion, what is body? What now? What kind of insane question is that? My body is the body that I have. It's just that I cannot feel it at the moment. No, no. That's not what I am saying...

Numerous random questions sprouted up, answered by an equally plentiful quantity of answers.

Before long, my mind had divided into two, and then they divided further to repeat questions and answers.

Like that, time passed, passed and passed some more.

[You acquired Mental Corruption Immunity.]

* * *

[That's why I'm saying this. The breakfast menu in our temple to be improved.]

All of sudden, I could hear the monk's voice.

After that, that was the end of the voice.

I could not hear the rest.

What is this?

* * *

All of sudden, my body started to move.

I am not talking about the real body that I cannot feel. I am talking about the illusion that I drew to help me calm my anxiety.

I had concluded that the illusion body was just an illusion.

This is just a fake imagery that I dreamed up. At least that was what I thought that.

The virtual body that I made with my mind is moving.

It is trying to raise its hands, touch my face and massage the arms and legs.

It's moving well.

Also, I can feel them.

This is insane.

This is imaginary visual, hearing and touch.

To think that I could cause such realistic sensations using my imagination alone...

I am not just a little crazy.

I named the illusion body, the one I made based on my imagination, the body of consciousness.

I had the body of consciousness to sit in meditative pose and started to meditate once again.

Although this was not a real body but a fake one made of my futile imaginations, my mind felt at ease.

It felt like I acquired a floating wooden plank after being thrown into to middle of the ocean.

Anyway, I could rely on it.

[You acquired Meditation.]

* * *

[Personally, I like chicken dishes. I don't think it is right to insist on vegetarian dishes just because I'm a

monk.]

Again, I could hear the Monk's voice.

I finally realized it.

The flow of time was running amok.

It was not that the monk stopped talking. It was not that my consciousness had sunk to the bottom either.

It was just that the time was flowing slowly. It was flowing extremely slowly.

In other words, my consciousness had far beyond a normal human's capacities.

Because of this, while I had the time to finish several hours or days'

worth of thoughts, only a moment had passed.

As I thought, before I could hear the monk's next words, several days' worth of time had passed in my consciousness' accelerated time frame.

[I think the chicken drumsticks are the best. What's your preference?]

Damn it.

To withstand 48 hours, the condition of the trial, just how long am I supposed to be trapped in this prison of consciousness?

* * *

In the end, I overcame it!

I am not saying it had been 48 hours and the trial was over.

I meant I succeeded in withstanding the infinite emptiness and anxiousness in this irrational space.

I just understood it all as pain.

I am currently working on raising my resistances.

I am enduring pain.

As I thought of that, my heart felt a bit more lively.

Uuhahaha.

Fuck. At the moment, I am working.

In this world, where just my consciousness and the imaginary body created by the consciousness remained, I continued to examine myself.

* * *

[Look at this. This inflexible chef brought me potatoes again. Still, it looks delicious. I am sorry, but since you are not in condition to eat, I'll eat by myself.]

This is the second meal for the Master Monk.

How many times does he eat per day?

I wish these monks only ate once a day.

If that was the case, it means two days already had gone by.

However, if they do eat three meals a day... It means that not even a day had gone by.

I desperately hoped that the Master Monk was the kind who didn't eat much.

* * *

This is strange.

I cannot collect mana.

I knew I had spent all of my mana earlier, but I was supposed to regenerate mana over time.

Where did it go?

Could it be that only a brief moment had passed since the trial started and it has not been long enough

to recover even a small handful of mana?

That could not be.

Even with my sense of time completely broken... Fuck. It felt several months had gone by. Toughing it

out like this for several months is too much.

[Once I get used to the potatoes, I can taste its sweetness, so it is delicious.]

As for you, will you just shut the hell up?!

* * *

Now, I have the perfect grasp of the body of consciousness.

I am able to visualize my limbs, feet, hands and even fine details of the face.

Could this really be nothing but an illusion that I made with my mind?

I cannot believe this.

If this is the case, then what about my real body?

What's the difference?

This body of consciousness has everything that it should have.

I can touch and feel with it.

I focused the mana circuit on the body of consciousness

Mana didn't exist in the body of consciousness either.

Still, I tried.

Following the circuit's flow path, I continued to examine the body.

I already had done plenty of examination on my organs.

I had done so much of the reflections on my past memories that I was

sick of contemplating it.

I emptied my mind and moved my consciousness to circulate through the mana circuit's path.

[You obtained Mana Circuit.]

I found mana.

It was purely by chance.

It was not hidden somewhere.

It was a part of the mana that got regenerated over time, which was what I had thought about before.

Surprisingly, before I realized, the mana was being used to maintain the body of consciousness.

Fortunately, there was some mana left, although it was just a teeny amount.

I wanted to use the remaining mana and check my body.

If possible, I wanted to check the situation inside the room and the Master Monk.

However, I could not afford to waste the mana like that.

I circulated the mana through the mana circuit.

It should not have been possible to recognize the mana circuit's flow path at the moment because all

senses were paralyzed.

Also, the mana could run amok if something went wrong in mana circuit's path, so recklessly circulating

mana inside the body is a very dangerous thing to do.

The body of consciousness helped.

It was a creation of my mind based on my real body, which I could not feel at the moment.

The body of consciousness even included fine details of the mana circuit's flow paths. Using the body of consciousness, I circulated mana.

If I didn't make the body of consciousness, running the mana inside the body would have been impossible.

This was also the reason why I simply choose to conserve mana instead of circulating the remaining mana and growing it ever since the trial begun.

I stayed calm and ran the mana.

Little by little...

I did it carefully so that even the smallest amount of mana would not be lost.

I paid extreme attention to details.

I stepped on the desire to check my body and the surroundings. Instead, I focused on growing mana.

[They brought yams instead of potatoes. I like potatoes better than yams.]

* * *

Finally, I collected enough mana.

Finally, finally!

Before I spread the mana, I moved the body of consciousness and sat down in meditation pose.

I had to focus.

Mana was quickly depleted in this space.

It won't take long before the mana I collected so far would disappear completely.

In that short amount of time, I need to collect as much information as I can.

I hardened my resolve and spread mana.

The first thing detected by the mana was my body.

My body was sitting in meditative pose.

My real body was sitting just like how my body of consciousness was. I was shocked.

I was actually doing that as well?

Could it be that my body of consciousness is not an illusion?

Inside the world of no sensory input, I continued to make guesses and imagined to draw the outline of my body.

I believed that the body I drew this way was an illusion, so I named it my body of consciousness.

However, it was not an illusion.

What I drew was the right answer.

Inside the world where I could not feel anything, I accurately drew and recognized my real body.

Instead of calming down and organizing my thoughts, I spread the mana further.

I must set aside such thoughts for later.

At the moment, I need to focus on the mana that I already sent outside of my body. I need to detect as many things I can.

I detected the Master Monk sitting at the center of the room.

Fortunately, he was sitting motionless there.

Mana had spread further.

It got to the 33rd Room's entrance and exit. It also went beyond.

It even got to the 32nd Room.

It detected the monk who was lying down on the 32nd Room's center.

It detected 31st and 30th Rooms.

It even detected 25th Room's monk.

Like that, the mana spread and spread. In the end, it even got to the First Room, the very beginning of the room.

I panicked.

It should not be possible for me to have such a long detection range with the mana I have and the mana operation skill I currently possess.

It was absolutely impossible.

The Master Monk said he had been watching me since the very first room using mana.

Perhaps this phenomenon has something to do with the Master Monk's

ability.

[You acquired Energy Sensory.]

[You acquired Holy Power Resistance.]

[God of Slowness is satisfied.]

[God of Duel is complaining.]

[You are almost there, Challenger. Hold out just a little longer.]

* * *

[You acquired Mental Corruption Immunity Lv.3]

[You acquired Meditation Lv. 11]

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 15]

[You acquired Energy Sensory Lv.1]

[You acquired Holy Power Resistance Lv.1]

After sensing the entire temple by spreading the mana once, my sense of time had recovered a little.

To describe how much, I could hear the monk's voice once every one minute.

[You have worked hard, Challenger. Your first trial is now over.]

Is it really over?

[That's right. Is it hard for you to believe?]

It is hard for me to believe. It feels unreal.

I had a reason to feel this way. I still could not see, hear or feel anything.

Still, a few things are different now.

[With the first trial over, a few of the effects of this room had disappeared.]

For example, accelerated mind, increased focus, paralysis in sense of time...

Those kind of things?

[That's right. You know well.]

The trial is already enough to drive one to insanity without those. Were they really necessary?

As someone who just finished the first trial, I really felt that the amplification on the mind and focus were like calamities.

My thoughts were over-accelerated. The flow of time could not catch up to the speed of my thoughts.

In the end, I was trapped inside my mind.

Honestly, it was scary.

I was scared that I may never escape the prison of thoughts forever.

[Actually, in your case, the extents of those effects were particularly severe. I don't think God of Duel arranged them that way for you in particular, but... Hm... Still, thanks to them, you have obtained things, haven't you?]

Certainly, I had gained things.

Still, I never want to experience this again.

There probably were more people who died from going insane than gaining things from the experience.

[Uuhurhurhur. That's actually true.]

How could you laugh about that...

[Challenger, I strongly recommend that you challenge the second trial right away. There isn't much time.]

There isn't much time? What do you mean?

[You probably cannot feel it, but your body is dying from the strains of excessive thought processing and focus.]

Chapter 81

Tutorial 13th Floor (9)

It felt as if I was diagnosed with final stage cancer from a rudimentary health examination in school.

That's so out of the blue. Why?

I am dying?

[That's right. Amplified by the effects of this space, it seemed you focused your consciousness to the extreme. Your body... Your brain to be precise, was not able to endure it.]

How is my exact condition?

[You are gushing blood from your eyes, nose, mouth, and ears.]

...What about other openings?

[Fortunately, they are still safe and sound.]

So, I'm not shitting blood out of my butt yet.

I wonder how long I can endure this?

[About 20 minutes. Instead of straining yourself, leaving the room is an option. You have more than demonstrated your qualification through the first trial. If you go outside and drink a potion to recuperate, you will recover to your previous state.]

However, if I do, this last room...

[Of course, you will fail the second trial.]

In that case, the answer was already decided.

Let's start quickly.

[Count to six in your mind. I'll start afterwards.]

One.

I need to roll my brain.

I don't have time.

I still cannot feel anything.

In this world of no sensory inputs, could I even survive 10 minutes?

I cannot even see the monk's attacks. There is also no guarantee that I would be able to move my body at will either.

I did reserve a bit of mana.

However, it is not even close to being enough.

I don't have time to cultivate the mana through the mana circuit either.

Even if I did, the mana I have at the moment is too little to maintain mana growth.

Two.

I have enough to take a quick look of my body. That's all.

I can't afford to sit here and hope for and be disappointed about mana that I don't have.

The key thing at the moment is thinking about how to use this extremely small amount of mana efficiently.

Using it at a critical moment by reading the flow of the battle will be impossible.

If I am to survive 10 minutes with a single move, then there is only one method.

I need to subdue the Master Monk with that single move.

That's impossible.

Three.

The difference in combat strength is clear.

I recognized this as soon as I entered the 33rd Room.

Since the moment I met him, the Master Monk had been regularly exuding his power.

Because of this, I was certain about this fact.

That monk was unbelievably powerful. It was hard for me to believe he appeared at 13th Floor, even if it was the Hell Difficulty.

Compared to other enemies I defeated easily so far, this monk was most certainly an outlier.

Neutralizing him instantly was impossible.

Therefore, I have to dodge and withstand hits.

My body is dying already, but I am confident about my cockroach-like survivability.

The key is how to endure this.

Four.

I remembered about an experience I had in middle of the first trial.

I had sensed the entire 13th Floor's Stage by spreading a small amount of mana.

If I could use abilities similar to that time...

If I focus on just the monk instead of the entire Stage...

It is possible. That should be more than enough to survive this.

How?

Let's think about the conditions during that time.

Because of the trial's effects, my mind and focus were amplified in addition to an alarming sense of desperation.

Desperation, huh...

When I spread mana, I could not help but feel more desperate.

I felt like I was on the bottom of an infinite pitfall. In despair, I wanted to confirm the world.

I wanted to feel my existence again.

The second condition...

Although the effects of the trial are gone, let's try to recreate the conditions artificially.

Five.

[Battle Focus]

My mind was accelerated through the Battle Focus.

As I thought, what I experienced was a decelerated world caused by an acceleration of processing speed.

It was like the world caused by the Battle Focus.

Of course, there is a difference.

The degree of deceleration is different.

I need to increase the focus.

I need to focus more, even more.

Battle Focus was originally a passive skill.

When I was in a near-death situation, I was able to achieve extraordinary level of focus, and the skill obtained active choice option. That was all.

I need to focus even more.

The memories of from the first trial in the world of no sensory inputs was helping.

I tried to recreate the sensation from that time.

The Master Monk said my body was dying from excessive thought processing and focus.

In that case, what I'm doing right now, trying to bring my focus to even greater extreme, is no different from suicide.

My brain is already at its limit, and I'm putting it through great strain again.

Still, I chose this path without hesitation. I had a reason for this.

[Perseverance]

The Power Skill from the God of Adventure which increases my combat abilities proportionally to my condition and the power of the opponent...

I already confirmed that the ability to focus is included in one of the increased abilities by the Perseverance.

My body's toughness also increased with the skill.

I can survive this.

I cannot be certain about this, but I have to withstand this.

Six.

[Soul Steal]

I used the little bit of mana that was left in me.

I couldn't afford to focus mana in my eyes and ears.

That would have required too much mana.

Also, because I had not used my eyes and ears for so long, I probably won't be able to follow the Master Monk's moves anyway.

I shouldn't spread mana either.

Instead, I sent a part of the mana to my brain.

I accelerated my mind even further.

Afterwards, I kept the rest of the mana.

Like that, I patiently waited.

My focus was throttled to the maximum.

Instead of being anxious, I maintained my focus and waited.

Slowly, very slowly, something was approaching me.

It was will.

A will that wanted to attack me.

To be precise, it was mana that contained will.

I felt it.

My gambling paid off.

The mana inside my body roughly detected the situation outside.

If not for Energy Sensory Skill that I just obtained this time and if I could not maintain a high-level focus, then I would not have detected the attack and be hit by it directly.

Like how the sun that rose from the east disappeared to the west over the course of the day, the invisible attack approached me slowly.

Over a long time, I observed it, and soon, I was able to tell what it was.

It was the knuckles of the Master Monk.

He was using his right fist and targeting my heart.

The monks I met at the 13th Floor all used same fighting arts and had the same anatomy.

Thanks to that, I could be certain where the monk was targeting exactly.

I moved my body and blocked the attack.

I was not certain if I did.

My body, which I cannot feel, moved like I wanted?

Did it block the monk's attack?

I cannot be certain.

Perhaps I blocked it perfectly like a painting. It was also possible I was rolling on the floor after getting hit.

It could be that my body was almost dying.

However, I didn't use mana to check my body's condition.

I just believed that my body blocked the attack successfully and prepared for my next movement.

* * *

I stopped the fifth attack.

Perhaps, about one or two minutes might have passed.

One thing remarkable was that I was blocking them well somehow.

Just before being hit by the Master Monk's attack, I had been successfully recognizing the attack's trajectory. However, I still could not feel my body, and I was not certain if I was moving either.

The Master Monk is weaker than I thought.

No, he is not overwhelmingly strong as I worried.

I could relax a little bit now.

As I waited for the next attack, I now had the moment to spare and think about things other than defense.

Before I block the attack, what I detect and feel is the will.

The mana inside the monk's attack.

Also, the will contained in the mana.

I could feel them.

Perhaps that will could be the clue?

I thought about the conditions of the first trial again.

Extreme focus and desperation.

I am already bringing out extreme focus at the cost of my life span in real time.

In that case, what about desperation?

I'm more desperate than ever or anyone at the moment.

I'm blind, deaf and I'm relying on uncertain sensations from my body... no, using just the Energy Sensory, I was blocking the attacks and enduring the assault.

What's the difference?

It's the mana.

There is will contained in the Master Monk's mana.

The will and mana must not exist separately.

Just like how I spread mana after putting in a sense of desperation, I need to do the same and put will into mana.

I brought back the sensation and memories from that moment.

In a way that feels the same as that time, spread the mana by...

It was at that moment.

I opened my eyes to new things.

[You acquired Energy Sensory Lv.6]

[You acquired Strengthening Lv.1]

[You acquired Amplification Lv.1]

Immediately, I could see the layout of the 33rd Room and Master Monk.

I was still blind, but I could see them through the Energy Sensory.

The monk was slowly positioning to perform his next attack.

Because of the effect of the extremely focused mind, the monk was moving slower than a sloth.

Also, as if he was thinking I would never attack, he had rather defenseless pose.

The best medicine for letting guards down is a beating.

[Talaria's Wings]

[Iron Wall]

[Blink]

It's my certain kill body smash move!

Die, Master Monk!

[Die, Master Monk! How could you say that? Wasn't that too much?]

I'm sorry... My apologies.

The monk said in calm voice.

[Well, I really almost died. Right. My organs were damaged quite a bit too... My shoulder bones have been cracked as well. This is the end of your trial. The time is up. It is fortunate.]

After his words, I felt like I could hear him saying I would have died if this continued.

I was excited at the moment and threw the Blink-Body Smash move. However, in the end, it was a bad move.

The monk was attacked as he was off guard, allowing me to damage him. However, the damage I sustained was also as great.

I used Iron Wall and Talaria's Wings to protect my body as much as I could. However, I came to realize that my body was already in shambles.

It is true that the monk was seriously wounded and that made surviving for ten minutes a lot easier, but...

If I didn't have the Perseverance Skill, I would not have been able to withstand the impact from my own attack and died instead.

I should reflect on this.

Let's not get excited. Let's not get excited. Let's not get excited.

Now, reflection complete.

[Congratulations. You are the first one ever to clear the 13th Floor perfectly.]

[Receive your rewards.]

[You cleared the 13th Floor of Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your wounds will be healed.]

[You obtained 3000 points as rewards.]

[You obtained 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many Gods are showing positive responses to you. You obtained 8500 points.]

[Many Gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 700 points.]

[Additional rewards will be given based on your play record.]

[Instead of an additional reward, the God of Adventure would like to gift you with a part of his power. Would you like to accept it?]

Immediately after clearing the stage, when my stamina and mana were recovered, I spread the mana into the surroundings.

Ugh, I finally feel like living.

I spread mana at will and checked the surrounding and my body.

...My face is full of blood.

The blood on my face is still there even after I recovered.

I'll wipe it off later.

Things were a little different from earlier, when I had the Energy Sensory open.

As I thought, it is not something I can use any time.

Two conditions, the focus and will, needs to be met.

Now that I know how to use it, let's diligently practice this from now on.

Moreover, Um...

There is a new kind of message that I had never seen before.

It's saying I should get a reward for clearing the Stage perfectly.

That's new. I had never seen this kind of message before.

It appeared to be the special message that appears when the challenger clears the extraordinary challenge that's beyond the clear condition of the stage.

This is different from the conquest clear that falls in the category of design flaw. I think I can treat this as the real ending for the stage.

Also... the God of Adventure wants to gift me an additional reward?

Hasn't God of Adventure gifted me a Power Skill to me already?

I'll accept for now.

[You acquired Talaria's Wings Lv. Max]

What is this?

[Talaria's Wings (Lv. Max)]

Description: The original skill was put together in haste by the God of Adventure due to time constraint. The God of Adventure reassembled the parts and recreated the skill.

The weaknesses were addressed and new functions were added.

While recreating the skill, the God of Adventure, the creator of the skill, earned the title 'fool.'

What was that just now?

He gifted me the Talaria's Wings again?

I think I should ask Kiri Kiri for a more detailed explanations.

Well then, now...

Master Monk, isn't there something you are supposed to give me?

[Of course. First, as the reward promised for enduring the first trial...]

About containing will in the mana and delivering it to another, right?

[That's right.]

I guess it will be hard for me to use this right now.

[First. I'll explain how. It seems you figured out what the technique was on your own.]

For about ten minutes, I earnestly learned the method from the Master Monk.

As I thought, this is a difficult technique.

I think it will take a while before I can actually use it.

[Next, it is the reward for having cleared all of the trials in the 33rd Room. It is a Holy Medicine. It will permanently fortify your body and increase your capacity for mana. If you promise to give me something in return, I can give you a Holy Medicine that's a little better than this.]

Something in return?

What is it? Tell me.

[It's about the medicines you took before you started the trials.]

Ah, the medicines that constipates?

[Can you give me a little bit of those? In exchange, I'll give you superior Holy Medicines.]

I had total of six medicines left.

The constipation medicines were not as precious as the Holy Medicine the Master Monk was offering, which could not be purchased anywhere, even in the store, so I gave him the medicines without hesitation.

[I guess I'll be all right for the next six years.]

What do you mean by that?

[Every year, there is an event where a selected monk challenges the first trial in this room which you had just completed.]

I guess that means the selected monk had been pooping inside the room every year.

[...That's right.]

I wish I bought more of the medicines.

Kuhum.

The Master Monk dry coughed and was about to hand me the Holy Medicine. However, he suddenly stopped his hand.

What is this? You didn't just change your mind, did you?

[Um... This is a first. The God of Duel told me to give you the highest quality of Holy Medicine.]

The God of Duel did?

Honestly, we don't get along.

The monk handed me the Holy Medicine. I put it away in the inventory for now and thought about this.

Could I see this as an olive branch gesture?

[God of Slowness is satisfied.]

[God of Adventure is laughing at someone.]

[God of Duel is infuriated at someone who is belittling the god.]

Chapter 82

Tutorial 13th Floor (10)

[Well then, farewell.]

The Master Monk calmly said his farewell. I did the same, opened the 33rd Room's door and proceeded to leave the room.

There was a portal on the corridor's floor.

Apparently, I'm supposed to go this way.

I got on the portal and teleported into Kiri Kiri's green field.

“Hellooooo! Are you still angry? You are going to buy me a cake this time, right?”

As always, Kiri Kiri was asking me about cake. I looked at her.

It was obvious that I was glad and happy to see her.

However, I was not feeling all that great at the moment.

“Kiri Kiri, wait a minute.”

I feel uncomfortable.

Actually, I'm surprised that I feel this way.

I can see the beautiful field and sky. There is the sound of wind whistling past my ears. I can feel the gentle breeze on my skin.

However, I found them all uncomfortable.

The senses that I regained after I left the 13th Room could not feel more uncomfortable.

Is it because of the memories of when I had all of my senses paralyzed and watched the world by relying solely on mana... or when was trapped in the world of no sensory input without any mana at all?

With my senses revived after such a long time, I don't feel comfortable.

I thought I would feel refreshed when I got to this field.

I thought I would feel liberated and accomplished.

However, instead, to think I would feel uncomfortable like this...

I sat down, closed my eyes and circulated mana.

Sitting down, I checked the body's condition and spread mana to the area to check the surrounding.

Soon, I came to realize what it was that was bothering me.

Now, using mana to observe the world was easier than interacting with it through my senses.

Using mana was far more effective.

I could access more information with greater accuracy with even greater ease than before.

I learned why Lee Sin, a fictional warrior character, always had a blindfold on.

[PR Note: Pretty sure this is a League of Legends reference.]

Other than the drawback of having had to spend mana constantly, the mana-consuming Energy Sensory skill's performance far exceeding that of normal senses.

However, I cannot afford to close my eyes for the rest of my life and rely only on mana.

There is happiness in life that can only be achieved through seeing beautiful things with eyes, smelling aromas, eating delicious food, listening to upbeat songs, and touching things.

I opened my eyes and focused on the sensations I could feel through my senses.

I can see Kiri Kiri's face. She is right in front of me. She is looking at me worriedly.

I can feel emotions that differ from my observations through mana.

There are things that I can observe only after I see for myself with my own eyes.

The world that I'm observing through my senses and mana is the same.

There is no need for me to give up one side for the other

It is just that I had spent a long time relying only on my Energy Sensory when my other senses were all paralyzed. I felt awkward for a moment because of the experience.

The 13th floor was the best environment for cultivating one's mana operation ability and Energy Sensory. This is just a minor side effect from being in such a great environment for so long.

There is nothing wrong with observing an object through multiple lens.

I can see the cake with my eyes, smell it with my nose, and taste it with my mouth.

I can even touch the cake by dabbing the cream with my finger.

Like this, I just need to feel the Energy Sensory through mana like the rest of my other senses.

It just feels weird just because I'm not used to it yet.

I used mana to sense the flower near me.

I could feel the backside of the flower and its microscopic texture with greater detail than I would normally see.

I looked at the flower with my eyes.

It was not anything flashy. However, it was one of the common flowers on the field that soothed my mind.

I touched the flower with my hand.

I tried shaking the stem of the flower, which was thin and delicate. It looked like it could be easily plucked.

I bent down and tried smelling it.

I couldn't really smell the flower. Instead, I just got to smell the grass.

All of these were same.

Like that, I slowly attempted to be more familiar with the skill.

[Energy Sensory Strengthening Lv.1 was combined with Sensory Strengthening Lv. 12]

[You obtained Sensory Strengthening Lv. 14]

[Energy Sensory Widening Lv.1 was combined with Sensory Widening Lv.5]

[You obtained Sensory Widening Lv.8]

“Is it over?”

I was lying on the field. Kiri Kiri walked over to me.

Um.

Her one-piece skirt is waving in the air. I can almost see what's underneath.

Instead of trying to shift my eyes around, I just used mana.

It's light blue.

“Kiaaaaaooooong!”

Kiri Kiri screamed in her unique little pitch and threw a punch at my stomach.

Of course, the punch lacked any meaningful power.

“How rude!”

“I'm sorry. I suddenly wanted to check.”

I think I should be careful when I observe another being using mana like this.

It won't matter if the observed being cannot feel my mana movement, but if the being can sense it, I might get a strongly negative response.

Actually, that was rude as well. It would even be the justify attacking me.

“How do you feel?”

The question is quite out of the blue.

“It’s great. I feel like flying. I feel like I’m looking at the world through different kind of eyes. It’s fun just to lie on the field and just observe the breeze the shaking grass.”

“Heheng.”

What is she smiling about?

“How was it?”

That question is even more ludicrous than the first question.

Why are your questions all lacking in common sense?

However, I could understand her question.

After all, she could read my mood and thoughts.

She must be asking about what I was thinking.

I was thinking about the things I went through recently.

“It was great.”

“How?”

Being with Idy at the 12th Floor by summoning her became a very valuable experience.

I believed that I was all alone in the Tutorial. However, Idy became family.

I came to learn the joy in spending simple days with the warmth of a family member with me. I learned how thankful I should be to have someone with me.

In addition, I came to recognize the importance and joy of good meals.

When she disappeared, my loneliness was more apparent than ever.

It became my new weakness. However, I don't think it is a bad thing.

I am a human being.

Being lonely and sad were natural.

I came to realize that as I chatted with the monks.

I could be like that.

The monks taught me that they were not just some monsters that I need to beat the crap out of and kill for experience points but beings who I could have mutual respect with.

We exchanged ideas although we had opposing opinions. We had whole-hearted duels and even discussed them afterwards. There were joys in them all.

They made me throw away the friend-or-foe mentality that I had about all beings in this world.

Relationships were complicated, and they could change.

Again, I gave them a chance to think.

I have lived my entire life by relying on my normal senses. The space where all of my senses were paralyzed showed me a new world.

I came to know the new world that could be experienced through the Energy Sensory.

I had the time to think about myself while I was trapped in the accelerated mind.

I reminisced about my past actions and emotions, and realized that things from the past still had huge influence in my current self.

The past was definitely important. However, I shouldn't be trapped by my past.

I became fully aware of this fact.

I need to live in the present, not the future.

Many things have happened.

I experienced many things. I felt and realized many things from my experiences.

New problems came up, but I could also find as many new answers throughout the period.

I am definitely growing, both in the inside and outside.

I am moving forward.

"I'm glad."

Kiri Kiri smiled widely and asked again,

"So, how do you feel?"

"As I said earlier, I'm feeling great."

"Tell me in detail."

Um... How should I say this?

How I am feeling right now...

"I feel happy."

Happy.

That was the word that best described how I was feeling.

“Also... I feel like I’m alive.”

“Hoooooooouuujae was alive before too.”

I was not certain.

I thought all of this could be just a dream.

I didn’t just question the reality of the Tutorial once in a while.

I always pondered that.

I believed that I already died in my one room from alcohol addiction and all of this is just a hopeless dream of a dying man.

So, I never tried hard to uncover the world of Tutorial in detail.

I never thought about why something like Tutorial was possible. I didn’t bother wondering how it worked either.

I intentionally narrowed my field of vision.

I just focused and obsessed over the goals I set.

Getting stronger, growing, and winning.

However, I’m different now.

Even if this is all just a dream, an illusion.

Anyhow, at the moment, I am happy.

If this is not my life, then what is it?

I am alive in this place.

It could be that I’m excited just because of my temporary sense of accomplishment and the special characteristics of the green field.

Still...

Regardless, that's how I am feeling.

"I'm so glad, hehe."

[God of Adventure is very happy.]

Looking at Kiri Kiri's bright smile, I opened the store and purchased a cake.

Kiri Kiri's smile became even brighter.

* * *

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Are you done with preparations?]

When I was watching Kiri Kiri hurriedly making the cake disappear, a message from Kim Min-hyuk came.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: What preparation?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor... Preparation for the competition. You rascal. Don't you remember that it will start soon?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: The competition is going to start? Now?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, not right now. It will start at Round 16, Day 0, 00:00. Did you not see the notice? I even send you a message.]

I was in a situation where I could not see it...

I asked Kim Min-hyuk for more information as I looked at the community forums.

The community was in a mode of festivities.

Everyone is all excited.

There really was a notice about the competition commencing on Round 16, Day 0, 00:00.

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: By the way, does it matter that I don't have anything in particular that I should prepare?]

I just need to show up and participate. That would be all.

Even if I don't prepare anything special, it was going to end in my victory.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No! That... Ugh. I asked you to take command of the people in the Normal Difficulty. Remember?]

Ah...

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: Hey, can I just not do that?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, you cannot just forget about it.]

You heartless rascal.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Anyway, prepare to take command of the people. There isn't much information about how the competition will be held, so the decisions made by the commanders of each difficulty will become important.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 13th Floor: If the people get separated based on the difficulties, then it will be hard for me to watch the members of the Normal Difficulty.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: If that happens, all members of the Order of Vigilance in the Normal Difficulty will go there, so it will be fine regardless.]

That's true. Kim Min-hyuk is asking me to take command of the people in the Normal Difficulty mostly because the rankers in the

Normal Difficulty, including Kim Min-hyuk, are mostly spread apart thin due to wide authority of the Order.

If it happens to turn out that people have to gather together based on difficulties, then I won't have to worry about the gap in the Normal Difficulty's forces.

I sent a message to Kim Min-hyuk, telling him I understood what he was saying, and then closed the community and the message window.

“Are you going to go now?”

Kiri Kiri's nose was submerged deep in the cake dish. She momentarily raised her head to ask me.

Before I answered, I checked the time first.

[Round 15, Day 29, 21:20]

I am not sure what to do.

“I'll stay a little while longer and then go.”

After she finishes eating the cake, I think I'll just take a nap here.

“Hey, Kiri Kiri, I have a question.”

“Ung. What is it?”

“I obtained Holy Power Resistance Skill this time. Is this going to negatively affect the Power Skills that I have?”

“Of course not. The resistance takes effect only when the Holy Power is being applied against you.”

Um...

I think the definition of that distinction will be quite hard to define.

“It will also take effect when the skill’s user judge that the Holy Power is being used negatively against him.”

I think it will be easier to understand after experiencing this a few times.

“Also, I got the Talaria’s Wings skill again. Add some descriptions for this skill.”

“Uung. I just did! Go check it right now.”

“Right now? Aren’t I supposed to go to the waiting room if I want to see it?”

“It’s all right since it is a skill that you already had. As for the detailed mechanism...”

She probably cannot tell me because the information is expensive.

“Right. Hehet.”

“Status Window.”

Lee Ho-jae (Human)]

Lv. 27

Strength: 34

Dexterity: 47

Vitality: 39

Mana: 30

Skill: Battle Focus Lv.20 Willpower Lv.10 Awakening Lv.2 Night Vision Lv.5 Bright Vision Lv.5 Charge Lv.8 Sneak Lv.11 Meditation Lv.11 Detection Lv.7 Tracking Lv.4 Natural Regeneration Lv.12 Super Regeneration Lv.5 Strengthened Senses Lv.14 Widened Senses Lv.8,

Energy Sensory Lv.6, Increased Field of Vision Lv.4 Ironwall Lv.2
Toughened Body Lv.3 Soul Cry Lv.2 Mid-level Swordsmanship Lv.4
Mid-level Shield Skill Lv.1 Basic Spear Technique Lv.6 Mid-level Hand
to Hand Combat Skill Lv.2 Basic Throwing Skill Lv.5 Basic Cooking
Lv.1 mana Circuit Lv.15 Poison Energy Lv.4 Wind Spirit's Blessing
Lv.5 Familiarity with Spirits Lv.2 Knowledge of the Time before Babel
Lv.6 Soul Steal Lv.5 Mind Corruption Immunity Lv.3 Great Pain
Resistance Lv.3 Bleed Resistance Lv.10 Faint Resistance Lv.6 Pierce
Resistance Lv.4 Great Poison Resistance Lv.3 Paralysis Resistance
Lv.14 Fire Element Resistance Lv.1 Cold Resistance Lv.4 Frostbite
Resistance Lv.3 Curse Resistance Lv.6 Great Magic Resistance Lv.3
Holy Power Resistance Lv.1 Perseverance Lv.1 Focused Effort Lv.1
Blink Emblem Lv.Max Talaria's Wings Lv.Max, Dead Summoning
Lv.???

Misc: God of Slowness is disappointed. God of Adventure is relieved.

God of Slowness' Trial [Completion rate: 4/11]

God of Adventure's Trial [Completion rate: 97/224]

For some reason, I the progression of the God of Adventure's trial's
surged after the last floor.

Could it be that their difficulties are lower in proportion to the
number of assignments?

I folded the question about the trial away for the moment. Instead, I
checked the detailed explanation about the Talaria's Wings.

[Talaria's Wing (Lv.Max)]

Description: The original skill was put together in haste by the God of
Adventure due to a time constraint. The God of Adventure re-
assembled the parts and recreated the skill.

The weaknesses were addressed and new functions were added.

While recreating the skill, the God of Adventure, the creator of the
skill, earned the title 'fool.'

Too many of his range of powers are focused in just one skill. When activated, the Talaria's Wings are summoned behind the caster. The wings provide sustainable flight magic to the caster. The wings have very high durability and magic defense. The wings provide increased mana recovery rate to the caster and allies within the range.

The wings provide an effect of empowered combat ability to the caster and allies within the range.

The wings provide an effect of increased magic resistance to the caster and allies within the range.

The wings provide a fear effect to all enemies within the range.

The wings bestow additional strength to the caster (Strength +10)

The wings can change color based on the caster's will.

Talaria's Wings do not require the caster's mana, mental focus or Holy Power to cast it.

What the hell is this?

...Seriously, really... what the hell is this?

When I saw that the God of Adventure got the title of 'fool' from this, I should have noticed that something was off.

I didn't think too much of it because God of Adventure seemed to have a very apparent dense side, but...

Just what is this? This is one ridiculous cheat-like skill.

[God of Adventure is proud.]

[God of Slowness is sighing.]

Chapter 83

Tutorial 60th Floor (8)

“My name is not Yong Yong.”

Now what’s this now, straight out of the blue.

“Hey, Yong Yong, would you like to eat a hotdog?”

“Yes!”

It seemed Yong Yong was happy about the thought of eating hotdogs. He smiled adorably for a moment, but then he suddenly put up a stern face and yelled again,

“My name is not Yong Yong!”

[I knew this would happen.]

The clone bastard was sitting next to me. He tried to get on my nerve, but I ignored it.

“Yong Yong. If your name is not Yong Yong, then who is Yong Yong?”

“It’s not Yong Yong!”

Ugh.

Well then, that Benedictus... Raocones what not... Are you talking about that?

“My name is Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nistiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third.”

That's a super long name, yet you had no difficulty pronouncing each and every syllable. I think my Yong Yong could be a news anchor when he grows up.

You didn't get tongue twisted. You didn't smudge any of the pronunciations either. Have you been practicing?

[It seems he had been doing it before sleeping every night.]

Ah, he really was practising.

"That's right. My Yong Yong's name is Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nass Timat Karusearin Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third."

"No! It's Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nistiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third!"

Which part did I get wrong?

I can't even figure that out.

"Of course, of course. You are right."

How else am I supposed to console him?

[Just memorize the Benedict-whatever name. Won't that be faster?]

I don't want to do that.

"Yong Yong. Do you know what your daddy's name is?"

"I know. Daddy's name is Daddy!"

"No. Daddy's name is Lee Ho-jae."

Yong Yong's large eyes started to panic.

“That cannot be... It’s Daddy...”

“My name is Lee Ho-jae, Yong Yong. Daddy is a title that a son calls the parent by.”

“A title?”

“Yes. Of the parents, man is Daddy, and woman is Mommy.”

Yong Yong tried mumbling the words Daddy and Mommy. It seemed he deep in contemplation.

“So, my Yong Yong, your name is Benedictus Raylisia Piakhan Raokones Nafplion Nis Tiamat Karusearin Valakas Shyanso Karuddanthes Nesaria the Third... However, I am calling you Yong Yong as a nickname.”

“Is that why you call me that?”

“That’s right.”

It seemed Yong Yong was satisfied with the answer. He smiled adorably again.

He smiles so photogenically.

While I had the chance, I nudged a fairy worm in Yong Yong’s mouth.

Fortunately, he didn’t complain. Instead, Yong Yong chewed the worm and swallowed it.

Oh my, you are eating well.

Yong Yong, even if it is something as simple as watching you eat deliciously, these things brings smiles to your Daddy.

“Daddy.”

“What is it, Yong Yong?”

“Then who is Mommy?”

It was an unexpected question. My face, which was smiling, was now petrified in horror.

[That ruined it. You just activated a trap card.]

Hey, help me.

[How am I supposed to help in this situation? You want me to pretend to be the Mommy? You already told him that a female parent is the Mommy?]

Hey, clone bastard...

[What, original bastard.]

You, do YOU want to try sex change operation?

[PR Note: I used all caps on “you” above because I don’t have any other method of making him emphasize these words and it sounds too casual if I left it as it was]

[You crazy bastard.]

* * *

In the end, I told Yong Yong that his Mommy will come when he grows up a little longer. I cleverly placed hotdogs and pizza on top of the lie to turn away Yong Yong’s interest in the subject.

[Have more excuses prepared for the future or try making a female homunculus.]

If possible, I would prefer not to make an intelligent being.

If my symptoms of schizophrenia act up again, then that could be a serious problem.

Especially when I even have Yong Yong now...

[Well, that's true.]

Yong Yong was sitting at the table and noisily munching on pizza. I wiped the cheese from below Yong Yong's chin as I looked around.

This was a family restaurant that the clone bastard, Yong Yong and I built a few days ago.

I could still smell the paint from the wall, but I didn't bother to erase the smell from the wall using magic.

The paint was harmless to the body to begin with. Also, it wasn't like there was paint in existence that could harm me, the clone bastard or Yong Yong.

Although it was not a pleasant smell, it somehow made me feel like a normal person in society.

The scenery definitely had changed.

I can see the world in different color.

It's a good thing.

I stroke Yong Yong's head once and brought out this month's newspaper from the inventory.

The clone bastard saw me do this, and he also brought out a book.

It was a book that I wrote by recalling a fantasy novel that I read back in school days.

It had been 20 years since I read the book. Of course, it would normally be impossible to write it all down from memory without getting anything wrong.

However, I could remember things from my past at will, even the ones

that I thought I forgot due to passage of time.

As a reward for babysitting Yong Yong while I restored half-destroyed residential area, I allowed the clone bastard to stay and I wrote the novels for him to read based on the memories of what I read in the past before I entered the Tutorial.

Yong Yong addressed the clone bastard as uncle and followed him as well.

I was concerned that Yong Yong might find this confusing because the clone bastard looked exactly like me. However, Yong Yong used mana to identify the differences between me and the clone and distinguished us apart.

It had been a while since Yong Yong, my clone bastard and I have started spending days like a family.

Also, what I had been thinking lately is...

[Oh my, you sure are sensitive.]

Ugh, this god damn telepathy.

Do you really have to intrude in my private life?

“You think I’m hearing them because I want to? Yong Yong, eat up.”

The clone bastard gave another slice of pizza to Yong Yong before returning to reading the book.

Ugh that rascal.

I should just read the newspaper.

[Kim Min-hyuk, former leader of the Order of Vigilance, is forming a new Awakened Warriors Clan?]

Um...

I thought this rascal would go to the Blue House, but he is making a clan...

[TL: Blue House is Korea's version of White House.]

Well, I'm sure he will do well.

Kim Min-hyuk is one of the two people who know about my plan.

He even promised that he will have things prepared for my plan. The Awakened Warriors Clan must be also related to that.

This is different from what I heard before, but if he changed his mind after seeing the situation in the outside world, then I trust his judgement.

I'm sure he will handle things well on his own.

[A newly developing rivalry in Hell Difficulty? Brian from America and Lee Yun-hye from Korea. Their similarities and differences?]

Brian from America was a Hell Difficulty player who was known to have cleared the 31st Floor.

The 31st Floor is not an easily cleared. He is one amazing guy.

Now that he cleared 31st Floor, he cannot return to the 30th Floor's residential area.

It means he must charge toward the 60th Floor no matter what.

Alone.

I'm sure he probably knows what this means. After all, he is a player who got past the 30th Floor in the Hell Difficulty.

I am not sure if this will give him courage or make him reckless.

Lee Yun-hye had been receiving much attention lately from the

outside world.

She seems to be compared to me more often than to Brian.

She was called the second Lee Ho-jae or given a title with a similar idea.

Personally, if I am to compare Brian and Lee Yun-hye, I would evaluate her more highly than Brian.

Even the newspapers are assessing her to be superior to Brian despite the fact that she was at a lower floor.

Of course, that's how it should be. After all, I was the one who guided her.

She is practically my successor.

Also, I don't think she has an objection to being called my successor.

To be fair, Lee Yun-hye has a negative side too. Although her progress is very steady, her clearing speed is very slow.

[That's still pretty fast.]

If you consider the power she has, it is actually on the slow side.

She grew up to as a dual-class warrior that merges the archer and spell caster. She even mastered hidden skills and developed ways to use them when the method of obtaining them were completely unknown.

She uses potions like water. Even in a slightly dangerous stage, she carries a lot of expendable items.

She now has over twenty summon spirits and monsters.

She even has two Power Skills.

However, she is still only at the 13th Floor.

Does that make sense?

Honestly, she should be at 40th Floor by now.

[Not everyone is like us.]

Frustration was slowly creeping up on me. Yong Yong seemed to read my emotions. He stopped eating pizza and looked at me.

I told him it was nothing and redirected his attention to the pizza.

I think I should eat some pizza too.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, were you looking for me? I was on my way to the 91st Floor, so I didn't get to see the message.]

I put the pizza down again.

I left Yong Yong in my clone bastard's care and left the family restaurant.

I contacted Lee Jun-suk because, as Park Jung-ah said before, I wanted to try convincing him that it was time for him to go to the outside world.

It has been a very long time since he started his isolated training at the 90th Floor.

Now, the time he spent at the 90th Floor exceeded the time he spent going from the First Floor to the 89th Floor.

Isn't it really about time you returned to the outside world?

There are families and friends waiting outside for him, and he even has a contract with the Korean government.

Actually, in the outside world now, the media have been yapping

about a conspiracy theory on Lee Jun-suk. They claimed that the Hard Difficulty player named Lee Jun-suk died a long time ago and that the Order of Vigilance is hiding this for the their own benefit.

Now, it is really time for him to go.

Repeatedly, I told him that it was time to go for ten minutes.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Is that so... Is it really time for me to return?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: That's right you rascal. Please go back to the outside world. Other than the NPCs, the only first-year members who still remain in the Tutorial are just you and me. Aren't you sick of this place?]

As for me, I would like to leave the Tutorial, but I cannot.

In the past, I felt that he and I were similar when he stayed at a residential area for the sake of growth. I was sympathetic toward him.

He made me feel better. I was thankful as well.

However, now, it really was time for him to return to the outside world.

Lee Jun-suk was silent for a moment. He then sent me a message that detracted from the topic.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, I thought I was the main character. I think I've been living that way.]

Was that the reason why?

I already know well enough about his goals and the things that he had been agonizing over.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro... You and I... We are very different, right?]

Of course.

Fundamentally, you and I cannot even be compared.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: In that case... what if you made comparison based on your former self when I met you in person before?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: As of now, you are a little stronger in comparison to my former self.]

Lee Jun-suk paused for a long time again.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: When I got to the residential area and learned that the effectiveness of training in this place is not adjusted based on the difficulty, I thought about this.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: What did you think about?]

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: I thought that, if I stayed at a residential area and continued to grow for a long time, I might be able to catch up to you someday. However... As the time went by, the gap in our abilities only widened.]

That's unfortunate.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro. In your case, it's probably difficult to expect any more growth at the 61st Floor. It's the same here for me. There is nothing for me to gain at the 91st Floor now. The only thing I can still do is train by myself at the residential area. I know that there is no growth acceleration effect at the residential area, but... I wonder why...]

It's a sad story to hear.

Lee Jun-suk probably isn't asking me these questions because he doesn't know.

He knows the answers, but he just does not want to acknowledge them.

People always treated me like an outlier.

They didn't even try to compare themselves to me.

Because of this, I always welcomed Lee Jun-suk, and I was thankful.

He saw me like a normal person like him and tried hard to catch up to me.

At first, he probably thought that the differences between us was due to the fact that I entered the Tutorial a few rounds before him.

He probably still believed that up to around 40th Round.

After that, he probably thought that it was the difference in the difficulty.

He probably continued to believe that for another 40 Rounds while I got stuck at this residential area.

The next reason could be found not in me but Lee Jun-suk.

After his long pause, he sent me a response as if he organized his thoughts.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, I'll go back to the outside world in the next round.]

I don't know what to tell him now.

Based on personal experience, I knew that it will become a huge scar for him if I said anything to console him in a situation like this. I just kept my mouth shut.

Now that I think about it, something like this has not happened ever since I stopped being a professional gamer.

Ever since I gained power in Tutorial, Lee Jun-suk was the only one who would seriously consider me as a rival.

There may have been others who were qualified to stand next to me, but they didn't bother revealing themselves.

[Lee Jun-suk, 90th Floor: Big Bro, I'll be leaving the Tutorial first. I'll wait for you, so you have to clear the Tutorial and return too.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Yes. See you at the outside.]

Other than that, I couldn't say anything else.

The good memories we shared, my gratitude, apologies, how I enjoyed his friendship...

I had many things to say, but I only had a few words that I could actually tell him.

If we get another chance to talk before he leaves the Tutorial, then I hope that I'll be able to ease up and give him my heartfelt farewells.

Of the five bracelets on my arm, one of them made a cracking noise and shattered.

These were the safety devices I made after I half destroyed the residential area.

In the past, this was not a problem for me since I lived alone. However, now that I had Yong Yong, I had a need to be careful with my power.

I think I should go make another safety device.

Even if it is bothersome, I should maintain five of them.

I suddenly got worried about the clone bastard.

He probably got the shock from my emotion too.

I quickly entered the family restaurant. The first thing I saw immediately was the clone bastard crying in unsightly manner and

Yong Yong consoling that pathetic clone bastard.

“[I... Iruril... Uuuuhurrrrrng...]”

[TL: Iruril is a beautiful female elf character from Dragon Raja, a famous Korean fantasy novel by Lee Young-do that started the fantasy novel boom in Korea.]

Ah, that lunatic...

What is he doing with my face.

“[The book... The book is over... The Autumn of Magic is over... Uhuhuhunghuk...]”

* * *

Concerned, Yong Yong was still looking at the clone bastard. Yong Yong was licking his hand. I had Yong Yong sit on my lap and asked the clone bastard.

“Was the book that sad?”

“It’s a masterpiece... Amazing masterpiece! The author is a genius! Even Shakespeare cannot be compared to him.”

“But you never read Shakespeare before.”

The clone bastard completely ignored what I just said and continued yapping away.

“Hey. Is there another work by this author? Hey, there are, right? There must be, right? You read it, right? Write it too, please.”

“There is one, but...”

“Hey, do I have to get on my knees and beg? Should I? Should I take my clothes off and prostrate?”

Take clothes off? Why? Are you a pervert? Stop it already, you lunatic. What do you think you are doing? Don't you see you are in front of a child?

“Just wait a day. I'll write you a story about a bird that died quickly.”

“What's that about? A journal about a bird?”

“It's a masterpiece on the level of a nuclear explosion, so just shut up and wait.”

[TL: The author is talking about “The Bird that Drinks Tears” and “The Bird that Drinks Blood,” both written by Lee Young-do.]

Chapter 84

Tutorial 14th Floor (Waiting Room)

[Welcome to the 14th Floor's waiting room.]

[Round 15, Day 30, 04:15]

I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri and moved to the waiting room. As usual, I felt empty.

I wish I could sleep longer at the field and chat with Kiri Kiri while eating all sorts of things.

However, I have too many things to do now.

At minimum, I need to check everything I gained so far before the tournament starts.

First...

[Talaria's Wings]

I tried summoning the Talaria's Wings.

Talaria's Wings used to look like just crystal sculptures. Now, the wings had changed, starting with the exterior.

First of all, now the pair really looked like wings.

The wings were still made of beautiful crystals. However, how should I describe them... They look a little smoother and flexible?

Also, the color was changing constantly.

From red to yellow, to green, to blue... to purple...

Including black and white, the wings even assumed semi-transparent tint.

Because of the wings mysterious beauty, I looked into the wings for a moment.

The description definitely said the caster could set the wings' color.

It seemed that the wings were changing the color constantly because I didn't choose one yet.

Instead of picking a color, I think leaving the wings be like this will look prettier.

Wow...

I'm incredibly satisfied with seeing the color changes like this?

[God of Adventure is proud.]

Now, let's check out the wings' performance side.

[You temporarily acquired flight ability.]

[Stamina and mana recovery rates increased.]

[Combat abilities increased.]

[Great Magic Resistance Skill's effectiveness increased.]

[The skill makes the enemies around you shrivel. Enemies that are weak against Holy Power will shrivel in fear even more.]

[Power increased.]

[You acquired the title, ‘The Man Who May Become the Apostle of Ditzzy God.’]

Wha...

What...

[God of Slowness is clicking tongue while looking at a certain someone with no manners.]

As I thought, this is no joke.

Isn't this a serious over balance?

I'm surprised that there are no limitations. The skill does not spend any power either.

Even the Blink Emblem had the five-times use limitation.

However, the Talaria's Wings had no limitation. I could have it on for 24 hours, for 365 days, even though the skill had several incredible effects.

The skill did come with a strange title for me, but I couldn't care less about that.

I feel like I just hit the jackpot on the lottery.

It's the best, God of Adventure!

I always knew that the God of Adventure will achieve something great one day. I believed in it since a long time?

As I thought, God of Adventure is a true talent who is destined to greatness through steady steps!

[God of Adventure is flexing the ego.]

[God of Slowness is throwing the pillow at certain someone.]

[God of Slowness is yelling ‘get out’ to certain someone.]

It is incredible that the Talaria’s Wings have so many features, but the bigger interest was in the details of the effects themselves.

Let’s see how much the combat abilities, Great Magic Resistance, and stamina and mana recovery rate had increased.

Also, I should check out the flight ability too! Damn it! There are no enemies around me, so I won’t be able to test out the shrivel ability.

I don’t think I’ll be able to sleep before I check out all of these.

Let’s check them all out quickly.

Quickly...

* * *

Eating the sandwich that I made with bread, canned tuna and cabbage that I purchased from the store, I checked out the performance of the Talaria’s Wings abilities again.

The performance verification, which took several hours, gifted me with great satisfaction.

In Perseverance Skill, the one that I received from God of Adventure, there is a description like this.

Your combat ability increases by ‘a small’ margin.

The margin was ‘small’ because the skill’s level was still only at one.

However, the Talaria’s Wings had Max level. There were no descriptions about the margins either.

What I found out through the performance verifications was that the margin of improvement constantly changed.

To be precise, it depended on how accustomed I was to the skill. Also, the margin of improvement changed depending on my strength.

In other words, the boost effects included in the wings are the type that grows in proportion to my specs.

This is the best.

I swallowed the sandwich I had in my mouth and got up.

I jumped, tightened the fists and mimicked a celebratory pose of a famous soccer player.

Wow!

[God of Adventure is amused.]

[God of Adventure is happy.]

[Round 16, Day 0, 00:00]

[The tournament will start.]

[Please enter.]

[Time left until the mandatory summoning: 4 minutes 59 seconds]

* * *

-Park Jung-ah's perspective-

[You cleared 42nd Floor of the Tutorial in Easy Difficulty.]

[Welcome to the 43rd Floor's waiting room.]

[Round 15, Day 25, 17:30]

That was close.

If I was even just a little late, I would not have had enough time to take care of work.

“Everyone, thank you all for your hard work. The tournament will start in five days, so rest until then.”

Although the members were dismissed like that, it was not like everyone could rest easy.

I went to a corner of the waiting room and brought out a desk, a chair and a stack of papers from the inventory.

It is time for me to do some work.

Just like me, other members of the Order who had paperwork to push looked like they were about to die as they brought out desks and chairs like I had.

There is a mountain of paperwork I need to take care of before the tournament commences.

I was never a diligent person like this...

Tsk.

“Excuse me... Commander?”

“Yes. What is it?”

“Would you like me to brew a cup of tea for you?”

“It’s fine. I’ll brew a cup myself later.”

It was Lee Yuu-jung, a member of the Order and my party member.

She is two years older than me.

She was with me at the waiting room during the Round One. She had been with me before the Order of Vigilance was established.

She is also my closest friend.

She is always kind and hard working.

It was just that... She didn't understand at all as to why I don't want to show close friendship with any members of the Order in public.

Perhaps she was not even trying.

I also don't intend to try to make her understand either.

There aren't many genuinely pure hearted people like Lee Yuu-jung.

I don't want to explain in verbose detail as to why we can't act close in front of other people.

I was about to read the paperwork, but Lee Yuu-jung came next to me and told me a news that I could not ignore.

"Mr. Kim Chul-min, a Normal Difficulty player at 24th Floor, died."

"What about other party members?"

"They are all safe."

My head is getting convoluted with all sorts of thoughts.

At times like these, I need to organize one thing at a time.

First, I sent a message to Kim Min-hyuk.

It was to report to him about Kim Chul-min's death and ask him to investigate the circumstance of his death.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor:... About to die.]

[Park Jung-ah, 42nd Floor: No. I'm telling you. He is already dead. Did you understand me correctly?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: No, I'm saying I'm about to die.]

He was whining about serious work load as always, saying things were too difficult for him.

How could he be in position to complain when he is sitting comfortably at the residential area and focusing only on administrative work? Unlike him, I have to worry about my image to the people and carry out the tasks of clearing stages and administrative work.

I ignored Kim Min-hyuk's further messages and went back to focusing on organizing my thoughts again.

"Who is the sub tanker in the 3rd division?"

[Note: Tanker means an online RPG video game character type who has exceptionally high defensive capability. A tanker usually draws the enemies' attention and shield the rest of the party members from enemies' attacks.]

"3rd division... It's Park Su-hyun. He is a Normal Difficulty player at 22nd Floor."

"When this round... No. When the tournament ends, let's issue the Idrean's Shield to him. It would be better if we could send him a higher-level shield, but..."

"We don't have enough spare points."

"Probably. Let's ask him to hold out with that for now. The 3rd Division members will have it hard for a while."

Kim Chul-min was a member of the Order's Strike Division. The division was not related to clearing stages.

He was the main tanker of the 3rd Division.

The Order's Strike Division was formed with the goal of having the division step in first and neutralize unexpected situations in large-

scale events like the day of the great harmony or the tournament.

The members of the Strike Division were required to step in as a party or an individual when unexpected situations occur in residential areas or waiting rooms.

Such situations didn't happen all the time, but I must be always prepared.

When unexpected problems come crashing down, the behavior of the unprepared is far off from the prepared.

Also, that difference in actions taken will decide the survival and the future.

Right now, this Order of Vigilance and myself are the proof of this.

I am currently alive like this and taking care of administrative work for the Order, and this is the result of a man who were prepared when the very first day of the great harmony happened.

He was determined to see his plan through even if it meant attacking others and beating the crap out of them to bend their will.

Also, to make that possible, he had secured enough power for that goal.

Thanks to his kindness, I am now...

I suddenly remembered what happened during the day of the great harmony last time.

There was the issue of my attitude toward him which was brought up to my attention.

Also, requests were made, asking me to relax my attitude toward him.

Also... Ah... Uu... Why did I act like that?

I just had to take it easy and greet him casually in none-honorary terms. That would have been the end of it.

Even a kindergartener could do that.

However, back then... I stuttered and totally panicked.

I am certain I even blushed.

I probably looked ridiculous. I am certain about this.

Also, while I was talking like that, even the pitch of my voice was all out of wack.

Uuuuuaa!

I suddenly felt the urge to get up and scream.

I hurriedly buried my head on the desk and pushed down the urge.

Uuuuuuu...

I felt a presence from the side, so I lifted my head. Lee Yuu-jung was staring at me, wondering why I was doing that.

Ugh... Let's just get back to work.

* * *

[Round 15, Day 29, 03:20]

[Dangerous Individuals Assessment Report]

Can you make a more official sounding title for the report?

While I complained about a trivial matter, Lee Yuu-jung poked at my waist from the side.

“Here, drink this tea.”

“Thank you, Big Sis.”

So that others could not hear me, I expressed my gratitude to her as if I was whispering. I looked around myself.

Other members of the Order, who were pushing the papers around me, all dozed off.

If they were being lazy, I would have shaken them, awoken them and yelled at them.

Although we were at the waiting room where the body was recovered automatically, focusing on paperwork for a long time naturally made our mind tired and lead us to sleep.

We have not figured out the cause of this exactly yet. However, the prevailing theory at the moment was that the brain is not able to recognize the waiting room’s recovery effect and it is forcing the body to sleep regardless.

I do not know what is causing it.

I think it might be a simple matter of differences in mental strength. I think it might be a matter of will as well.

Anyway, everyone around me, who were obviously dozing off, had fallen asleep after working hard to their limits.

I decided not to wake them up.

We had taken care of most of the paperwork in the past four days, so...

Let’s just focus on my own work.

List

Detailed Description

Counter Measure

Like the title, the sub-titles were made haphazardly as well.

Just who wrote this report?

[Writer: Lee Ho-jae]

Ah...

Um... Let's get back to work.

First, I looked over the list.

Lee Gi-min: Danger level 1

Lee Gi-chul: Danger level 1

Jung Jin-uu: Danger level 2

Lee Gi-jun: Danger level 2

Lee Jun-suk: Danger level 3

Lee Hyung-suk: Danger level 5

Lee Chan-yong: Danger level 6

The Order had been making a list of dangerous individuals like these people and managing them.

We had been since the Order was established.

Most of the people who made it to the list had been living quietly without causing much trouble.

However, many of the criminals who were executed for having caused troubles were those who got their names listed in the Dangerous Individuals List.

Because of this, the Order of Vigilance never stopped making the list.

Instead, we had been making the list proactively.

At each round, we changed the observer and continued to make new lists and watched the people who had their names on the list.

It was not a pleasant kind of work.

Sometimes, the work involved watching someone by assuming that the person might be a dangerous one when that person actually had been living peacefully.

To make an excuse to say this was not a bad thing, we were just keeping them under surveillance and nothing further.

We didn't interfere with their lives. We didn't cause them troubles either.

We just kept them under surveillance and carried out the arrests and punishments when they were found to be committing crime.

I tried making an excuse, but I didn't feel like this was all right.

I think I'll just have to acknowledge it.

It is not all right.

However, it is necessary.

I checked the detailed descriptions about the people on the list and flipped a page over.

What would be the counter measures that he came up with?

Counter Measures: Follow Kim Min-hyuk's plan.

...Um.

[Park Jung-ah, 42nd Floor: What is that plan?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: What plan? I don't know.]

...Um.

He must have written it like this because he had a good reason.

Let's just ask him later.

I organized the Dangerous Individual Report and set it aside. I brought out booklet of paperwork from the inventory.

It was information about the past crimes in Tutorial and the involved criminals.

All this time, I have read them over and over, so the booklet became tattered already.

I think I should make a copy soon.

Although they are things from the past, they are also records of things that we should never forget.

We must remember what happened in the past and prepare so that something like these will never repeat in the future.

To that end, we need to keep the memories of what happened in the past in our head.

The circumstances that lead to the incidents.

The perpetrators' motives and characteristics.

How the incidents ended and the counter measures.

We need to continue to analyze such information and think hard about crime prevention, response and punishment.

First Incident

Time: Tutorial Round Two, Day 0 ~ First day of the great Harmony

Rebel Leader: Lee Chang-suk

Summary: On Round Two, Day 0, Lee Chang-suk, the Representative Federation's Commander...

I read this record over a hundred times already. However, I could feel my head cooling down cold as soon as I started reading the first incident.

With that cooled head, I continued to read the record.

[The tournament will commence.]

Chapter 85

The Tournament (1)

-Lee Ho-jae's perspective-

[Round 16, Day 0, 00:00]

[The Tournament will commence.]

[Please enter.]

[Time left until mandatory summoning: 4 minutes 59 seconds.]

It's finally starting, isn't it?

There isn't much time left until the mandatory summoning.

Unlike the day of the great harmony which happened in middle of the round, the tournament is commencing while we are in the waiting room after the round ended. Perhaps this is why the remainder of time until the summoning is different.

Um... I want to go a little later...

I want to thoroughly check out Talaria's Wings.

Besides, I have more to look at besides the Talaria's Wings.

I still didn't get to test the Fire Element Resistance that I obtained recently.

Using the Poison Energy Skill, I need to raise my Great Poison Resistance Skill as well. I also need to find ways to increase my Curse Resistance and Holy Power Resistance.

I need time for meditation to train Mana Circuit and Energy Sensory as well.

I have a mountain of things to do.

I actually had been looking forward to the tournament.

No matter how I fight in the tournament, I will be the winner of every match, and the one to take the first place. I'll get to check out people from other difficulties, and I can spend the remaining time on raising my skills, so there is nothing bad about the tournament.

The problem is that I ended up with assigned work because of the tournament.

It's all because of Kim Min-hyuk.

[Time left until mandatory summoning: 3 minutes 11 seconds.]

“Teleport.”

[Before the tournament starts, please decide if you would like to participate. You can decide at the arena's entrance.]

[Tournament, Day 1, 00:02]

[You acquired Tournament: Rulebook (1). Please check the inventory.]

After a moment, the scenery of a village with two to three stories tall wooden buildings was in front of my eyes.

How should I describe this? Doesn't it look like a western movie set?

At a plaza that appeared to be the summoning spot, there were people gathered.

I didn't want to be cramped in middle of the crowd, so I left the area.

“Ah, you there. Please don’t leave. Please wait for a moment.”

I passed by a man who seemed to be under crowd management. He had a megaphone at his mouth, repeating the same words over and over.

“Please don’t leave... Ah, excuse me.”

No, you don’t have to apologize.

“I didn’t recognize you. I am really sorry...”

I was just trying to pass by, yet the man grabbed on to me and continued to apologize. Watching the man vexed me.

If you are that sorry, then you just need to let me go...

“It’s all right. Please carry on.”

The man was still repeating his apologies. Leaving him behind, I continued to walk.

“Hey, I’m here. Doesn’t this place look similar to the residential area?”

Kim Min-hyuk was on the platform. Having heard what I just said, he crumpled his face and said,

“It is not similar. It is identical to the residential area at the 30th Floor. That place was also raised on an open field like this. You never saw it? Anyway, why are you so late?”

I am only two minutes late, you nitpicking rascal.

“Anyway, hold things for me for a moment. You just need to make sure people don’t go away from this place.”

“Didn’t you say you will put me in charge of the people from the Normal Difficulty?”

“No. I don’t think you have to do that anymore. The situation looks way better than I imagined. Right now, our guys are checking out the region, so just keep people here on standby for the next 30 minutes.”

“What about the tournament?”

“I’ll explain that later.”

With those last words, Kim Min-hyuk ran away in a hurry.

Ugh, I ended up with a job that’s even more bothersome.

Still, I won’t have to do this anymore after 30 minutes, so that’s still good.

I got onto the platform that Kim Min-hyuk was on only a moment ago.

“Now, everyone, please pay attention.”

It was loud here with everyone chatting away, so there was no way I was going to be heard if I spoke quietly. So, I used mana and amplified my voice.

The field was busy and loud like a traditional market, but the entire place immediately fell to heavy silence.

Everyone shut their mouths at once and looked at me.

This is a little creepy.

It’s like a scene from a horror movie.

“Now, I know you must feel frustrated. You are probably wondering why we need to wait here, right? I am too.”

On top of that, I am also frustrated for having had to deal with a task that I didn’t want to do.

“To clearly identify this tournament’s area and explain it to you, the

friends of the Order are breaking sweats while running around the place. Please wait for just 30 minutes. If they don't tell us anything in 30 minutes, I'll go complain to them first, so please rest easy and wait."

I thought people might ask questions or complain, but the people all still just kept their mouths firmly shut and stared at me.

In fact, some couldn't even look me in the eyes?

Why is that woman shaking in fear immediately after glancing my eyes?

"Um... Let's sit down and wait. Just think of it as a picnic. Let's all eat snacks. Um... Does anyone have questions?"

I asked, but only terrifying silence filled the plaza.

Somebody ask me something. Please...

However, nobody opened their mouths.

"Well... Then. Please rest."

Afterwards, I sat down at the platform.

* * *

[Tournament, Day 1, 00:17]

This is incredible.

It's been 15 minutes. There are so many people here, yet they are all keeping their mouths shut, not uttering a word.

Occasionally, people whispered to another right next to them, but nobody spoke loudly.

Are they doing silence training as a group?

I thought they would at least bring out snacks and eat them, but instead, they sat like monks and maintained the silence.

It's probably because they are scared of me, the one sitting on top of the platform.

It hurts to see people being so afraid of me.

Just what kind of rumor spread about me?

I knew that people were afraid of me and uncomfortable about facing me, but I didn't know it was to this extent.

I think it is worse, having so many people gathered at one place.

Because of the people who are extremely scared of me, others who had not given it much thought are getting swept in to the mood.

It was never this bad before.

Should I show them more relaxed side of me?

Should I eat something and talk to someone?

I looked around to see if there was anyone I could talk to.

There wasn't any.

I saw Lee Hyung-jin in middle of the people, but I don't think it would be right to call him to the platform and have a conversation with him.

Others will look at him and think he is being dragged to a slaughter house.

As for the members of the Order who were assigned here to manage the people, they thought I was looking around to supervise them.

They look petrified. I could see clearly even from a far.

Even a new recruit standing in front of the Commander in the army would not look this nervous.

This is going too far.

I suddenly came to realize that Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik had been treating me very comfortably in comparison.

Could it be that they are also a little afraid of me?

Ugh.

With the situation turning out this way, I am getting bored.

Still, if I do things to raise my skills, I think I'll really be treated like a monster, although I think I'm already being regarded as if I'm a monster.

I opened the inventory.

Ah, I had this.

It was the magic textbook that I purchased after clearing the 12th Floor.

I flipped the first page.

‘To bring change to infinite time after death and finite time before life, what is the most important material that must be prepared? Find the answer.’

Recently, I had experienced the changing flow of time at the 13th Floor. What was the thing needed most?

Focus?

The book didn't show any response.

Do I need to write the answer on the book?

Um... First, let's think of a different answer.

Mana, ability to think, Holy Power, Power Skill, Spirit, mind, life, death? Attitude, will power...

No, I don't think those are the answers.

Actually, I think those are needed.

The most important part of this question is the 'most important material that must be prepared.'

The condition that must be met first to change the flow of time.

Time?

The flow of time?

To change the time, the time needs to exist first, doesn't it?

I don't know if time could be considered as the preparatory material, but...

Um... I reread the question.

As I kept the possible answer 'time' in my head, the words 'after death' and 'before life' were bugging me.

It was talking about before life and after death. It must be indicating that this is about a lifeform at least.

Is 'myself' the answer?

I need to exist first to bring change to time before life and after death, so...

No, it does not have to be myself.

The Priests of Death that I met at the Sixth Floor...

They could change the time before life and after death of others at will.

In that case, as I thought, the answer is life... No, that's not it.

The one possessing the time after death could not be alive.

Um... The one possessing... time? The main character?

The main entity of time?

At that moment, the book was engulfed in light.

After that, words were engraved on to the pages. The pages became full of words.

About a third of the book were decorated with words. It seemed the rest was going to appear once I read all of these.

I wanted to read the book right away, but I had no choice but to set it aside for later because of the commotion around me.

People near me were shaking in fear.

When their eyes met mine, some immediately screamed in low voices.

Some were slowly moving away from me to the back of the crowd.

It looks like they thought some magic spell was going to be shot at them because the book I was holding suddenly shined.

Wow... They are taking it way too far.

* * *

"Hey. Don't make me do something like this ever again. People are too

scared of me.”

Kim Min-hyuk ignored me and just kept on walking.

“Hey. Be honest. You spread bad rumors about me behind my back, didn’t you?”

“No. I never have.”

“In that case, why are people so afraid of me? Some were almost having seizures.”

That’s too much.

I’ve only made appearances in front of everyone a few times.

The rumors had become excessively exaggerated in the wrong way.

While I was complaining to Kim Min-hyuk, we arrived at the tournament arena.

The place was based on the 30th Floor’s residential area’s design. The place had residential structures, plaza and special arena.

To explain the arena, it was a grandiose structure.

A colosseum.

The place looked like a western movie, yet there was a colosseum in there, which looked out of place. It was totally breaking the setting. I approached the colosseum’s entrance, and a message appeared.

[Please decide if you would like to participate.]

[Individuals] [Day 1]

[Group] [Day 2]

[Would you like to participate in the individual tournament?]

“Are you going to?”

“I should.”

“What about the group tournament?”

“I should do that too, obviously. There is a reward on the line.”

“What about the team members?”

“I should enter the group tournament alone. I gotta have conscience.”

“Um... I don't want you to enter the group tournament alone too and win. That would be a problem.”

Why? Why is that a problem?

“In that case, who could I team up with?”

“Actually, it would be best if you didn't enter at all, but if you are going to enter, have me, Park Jung-ah and a few others on the team.”

“What about Big Bro Jong-shik?”

“If he joins too, then that will be too much.”

Um... This rascal wouldn't be doing this because he wants the prize...

“Is it for publicity?”

“Well, yes, something like that. If you are going to enter and win, then instead of you entering the group tournament alone, we should take advantage of the situation.”

“I got it. Let's do it that way.”

“You need to hold back a little. Don’t destroy others’ fighting spirit.”

“I got it.”

“Well then, keep up the good work. I’m going to the stands.”

Kim Min-hyuk disappeared afterwards.

It seemed he was teleported to the stands.

[Would you like to enter the arena?]

“Yes.”

I was teleported to a wide ring. It was about 10 meters wide.

The place appeared to be the inside of the colosseum. There were over 20 rings just like the one I was standing on.

There were quite a few people who entered the arena before me.

The rings were not far apart, so I could easily check other challengers.

In the distance, I can see the stands.

They were the people who chose not to participate and decided to watch instead. There were more of them than I thought.

Ooohhh... For some reason, I’m getting excited?

The situation is making me think about the World’s Greatest Martial Art Tournament from the Dragon Ball.

It’s reminding me of my days in the professional gaming too.

I think this will be fun.

[Two minutes from now, the preliminary matches for the

tournament's individual rounds will begin.]

[Condition of victory.]

Survive.

Win.

[Condition of defeat.]

Ring out.

Declaring surrender.

As usual, death was not included in the condition of defeat.

The opponents for the preliminary matches were summoned to stand on of the rings.

It's been a really long time since I saw those faces.

Other rings' challengers had clearly panicked expressions after seeing their opponents.

"What is this? Aren't we supposed to be fighting people?"

"Dumbass. Didn't you read the rulebook? You will be fighting other challengers in the real matches."

"I think that one looks bigger than an orc. Is that a troll?"

"It probably isn't a troll. Hey, be careful. If it is dangerous, surrender immediately!"

"These guys are armed to the teeth! How come their armors look better than mine?"

The colosseum became busy with peoples' chatter about what showed

up on the rings.

As for the challengers from lower floors, the opponents that entered the rings appeared to be stronger than what they expected, so they panicked.

Some challengers surrendered immediately and disappeared from the ring right after confirming their opponents.

[One minute from now, the preliminary matches, the first event of the tournament's individual round, will begin.]

Anyway, I could not hide my disappointment.

The preliminary matches' opponents were seven of Hell Difficulty's mountain goblins.

Chapter 86

The Tournament (2)

Over two meters tall, bulging muscles, violent face...

Even at a first glance, I could tell that they aren't small fries.

On top of this, their armaments were quite impressive as well.

They wore quality metal armor and wielded metal weapons.

However, the Hell Difficulty's mountain goblins' true power lies in their intelligent combat execution and well-planned formations.

Two soldiers with shields stood at the frontline with two spearmen right behind them, using their long spears to keep the enemies in check.

Behind them are two archers providing supporting fire from relatively safe distance.

They even have a swordsman to fight off the enemies that manage to break through their defense. The seven-soldier formation is not easy to pierce.

Challengers who had always been in groups when fighting monsters must be feeling uncomfortable.

Unlike their past experiences, they would now have to do the reverse and be the monster who runs wild, aiming to break through a team's formation.

The power of a proper formation had been proven many times throughout the humanity's long history of war.

There is only one thing that's needed to break the formation alone: overwhelming power.

Overwhelming power in comparison to the goblins.

There are not many challengers who possess such power.

The Tutorial had completed fifteen rounds already. However, only few challengers had been charging forward wholeheartedly toward growth and clearing stages since entering the Tutorial.

There are probably only a few challengers who could overwhelm the goblins.

To think that these goblins would appear at the preliminary matches...

Now that I think about it, it is a good setting.

First, those who are not used to or are weak in solo fighting will be disqualified.

Considering that this is the individual round, people who were familiar with supporting others from the rear are unlikely to do well.

The lower floor challengers who entered the match out of curiosity will also get disqualified.

The difficulty is appropriate for weeding out challengers who lack the qualifications to be in the main match.

On top of this, these goblins are defense oriented. Considering their tendencies, they are perfect opponents for the preliminary matches.

It's just that, for me, they are such a disappointment. What a letdown.

I looked at other rings.

"Kuuuuuhhk... I... I surrender!"

That was quick.

An archer was pouring out a barrage of attacks from a distance, but he quickly declared his surrender soon after.

The goblins had their shields in the front and safely closed the distance toward the archer.

When they got near enough, the swordsman that was standing behind the shields quickly dashed forward and tackled the archer to the ground.

The archer immediately declared surrender.

The goblins were teleported away, and the archer was teleported to the stands.

From the looks of it, I think the challengers who specialize in long-distance combat will have hard time getting past the preliminaries.

Unlike challengers who had been shying away from combat or healer types, many of the ranged fighters had entered the tournament.

It seemed they were thinking they could achieve victory before the distance closes in and becomes a one-on-one duel. However, their strategy didn't work at all against the goblins.

The ring next to the archer held a challenger with a heavy axe. He was pounding away diligently at the goblins' gigantic shields.

What the hell are you doing? It's not like you are chopping down firewood.

That's a waste of your strength. What a numbskull.

If he wrestled with the shields like that, the battle will be decided the moment his stamina runs out.

Um... I think more will be disqualified than I thought?

I can see some challengers whose lives might end up in danger if they don't surrender quickly enough.

Challengers of difficulties other than Hell don't have much experience in fighting intelligent opponents like these goblins.

Of course, I'm sure the rankers at higher floors probably have met such, but...

Anyway...

"Why aren't you guys moving?"

[T... This human is speaking our tongue.]

[Kek. Don't be fooled. It's a whisper of the devil. Kiiiak.]

What?

"Instead, why don't you guys just surrender?"

As Kim Min-hyuk said, during the first part of the tournament, it would be best to not showcase too much of my power.

If possible, it would be better to go through this quietly.

I won't get many experience points even if I slew them anyway.

[S... Surrender? Are we allowed to do that? Kiiiic.]

[I don't know. Is it alright if we surrender?]

They whispered to each other and entered a discussion.

They exchanged opinions for a long time. Suddenly, they had vacant looks on their faces.

That is...

It's a response similar to when Idy tried to recall her past.

[Kiiiac... Kek. We must fight.]

That's unfortunate.

It seemed the system was making it mandatory for them to fight.

"In that case, it cannot be helped."

I took a step forward, and the goblins' eyes shook wildly in fear.

[Kiiiaaak! Kiiiac! Please, go easy on us!]

One of the goblins were especially cowardly.

"I got it. I'll go easy."

[Fool! You must not expect mercy from the devil. That will lead to a disastrous outcome.]

Why do these guys keep calling me the devil? We've never met before.

That's spoiling my mood.

I kicked off the ground and jumped to the front of the shields.

I pounded the top of the shield with my feet.

Kwang!

Along with loud echo, one of the shield soldiers and an archer got thrown to the outside of the ring.

I lightly swung my fist at the other shield soldier who was clearly dumbfounded. The soldier's jaw was turned. I took his shield and smacked the swordsman with it.

I dodged the spears thrusting towards me and narrowed the distance.

As for the spearmen, I struck them both equally at the pits of their stomachs. They fainted.

As for the remaining archer...

[E... easy...]

“Easy?”

The goblin nodded hard.

[Yes. Go easy! Go easy!]

I am not sure if he is asking me to go easy on him or deliver him a swift, painless death.

“Try turning around.”

I struck the rear side of the obedient archer’s neck and he collapsed on the spot.

This is the first time for me to successfully make someone faint by striking the rear side of the neck.

This is hard to use for some reason in real combat.

I cannot say that I skillfully made him faint like how the main characters in movies do. I just struck him with a decent amount of force and forced him to consciousness, so it looked rather crude.

Anyway, I think I met the challenge condition for the preliminary match.

[You passed the preliminary match of the tournament’s individual round.]

[The main match of the individual round will start at 12 on the first

day of the tournament.]

[Would you like to move to the stands?]

Nah. I didn't even get warmed up yet.

Besides, I can feel the other challengers' gazes from the stands.

They don't need to be so surprised. What I did is nothing compared to anything else I can do.

"Move."

* * *

As soon as I moved to the stands, I went to find where Kim Min-hyuk in the stands.

"Hey, I told you to hold back."

"I did hold back."

"Yeah right. I saw two goblins being thrown off the ring from just one kick. I definitely saw it with my own eyes."

"That's what I mean by holding back."

"Ugh."

Next to him were Park Jong-shik and Park Jung-ah.

So, the leaders of the Order were all gathered here.

"Big Bro Jong-shik. Did you not enter the tournament?"

"I did. I cleared the preliminary match first and got here."

Oh...

“Oh...”

“What’s there to say ‘Oh... ’ about.”

I can imagine that a ranker of Hard Difficulty on par with someone like Park Jong-shik passing the preliminary match with ease.

“Hey, introduce yourself to her. She will be entering the team match with you. Her name is Ms. Lee Yuu-jung. You know her, right? She is the keeper of the Easy difficulty.”

After Kim Min-hyuk introduced her to me, I said hello to the woman who was sitting next to Park Jung-ah.

“How do you do?”

“Yes. Yes. Thank you.”

What’s there to thank me about?

Is this woman scared of me too?

It seems to be the case. Her attitude screams out her fear.

“Commander, you too.”

I waved my hand at Park Jung-ah who was sitting next Lee Yuu-jung.

Park Jung-ah’s eyes suddenly widened. She panicked and said,

“How!”

The pitch of her voice was all wrong, starting from the very first word.

“How... do you do?”

Why are you being so formal again?

During the last day of the great harmony, we decided that you would talk to me in casual tone.

What was all that embarrassing and awkward conversation for then?

“I! I have a place to be, so... I’ll get going first. See you all later.”

Park Jung-ah bumped into the chair next to her as she got up, stumbling with her legs before she awkwardly left the scene.

What now? What business could you possibly have today in a place like this?

Lee Yuu-jung quickly followed Park Jung-ah.

Park Jong-shik muttered as he watched Park Jung-ah leaving.

“Did her attitude get worse?”

“She is acting awkward like that because of what happened last time at the day of the great harmony, isn’t it? Hey, Kim Min-hyuk... What are you going to do? That just made things worse.”

“I don’t know anymore.”

This is a serious problem.

Last time, during the day of the great harmony, we asked Park Jung-ah to speak to me in casually. We went through that unnecessary spectacle because Park Jung-ah was being excessively respectful toward me.

In that case, how about her attitude towards me now?

This is no longer just about my position in the Order and the strength of Park Jung-ah’s leadership’s foundation. This is going to damage her image.

“I can’t think of anything in particular to fix this. What about you

guys? You young people should come up with something.”

“I don’t know either. Hey, as the person in the situation, is there anything that comes to your mind? You high and mighty rascal?”

High and mighty rascal?

Now where did that title come from?

Um... A way huh...

Park Jung-ah is treating me differently probably because of what happened on the very first day of the great harmony.

It is true that I saved her, so she had a good reason to be grateful towards me.

The only problem is that she had been excessively idolizing me ever since.

It seemed that, in her eyes, I looked like a prince on white horse from a fairy tale.

In other words, because of her fantasy about me, she has a wearing a pair of distorted glasses.

[PR: She literally doesn't have a pair of distorted glasses.]

I’m sure that I have demonstrated many times that I am not a perfect person from moral and personality standpoints.

Despite all that, the distorted glasses remained on her eyes.

“The tournament will end around the dinner time, right?”

“From how you are going about it, I think it could end sooner.”

“In that case, let’s go drink amongst ourselves.”

“Drinks? That’s great. Do you have any?”

Park Jong-shik, with gleam in his eyes, asked.

“Of course. I have quite a few bottles in my inventory.”

It was not a huge quantity of booze. However, it was enough for four people to enjoy.

I had plenty of snacks too.

“I like the idea of drinking too, but... will that help resolve the problem of Park Jung-ah?”

With a little worried face, Kim Min-hyuk asked.

“Well... If you show her how you look after getting all boozed up and making a fool out of yourself like a dog, then that will shatter her fantasy about you.”

“Kiiiiiaaaaa. What a magnificent answer. Let’s play today like idiots!”

Park Jong-shik’s mind was already at the drinking table. He suddenly got up and shouted.

* * *

[The individual tournament’s main event, the matches will begin.]

Finally, the main matches started.

They are the main event where the challengers duel each other.

[Would you like to enter?]

Hold on.

I ignored the message and opened the rulebook.

The main matches had a pretty unique rule.

It was like a tag match.

Two challengers will duel, where the victor will stay at the arena, and the defeated will be returned to the stands.

With each victory, points are earned, and the final prize will be set based on the points earned.

Uniquely enough, the very first challenger who starts the match will be given bonus points. Also, the final victor has a separate prize.

There were three ways to earn any of the rewards. One could be the first challenger. One could win many times, and finally, there was winning the entire tournament's individual round.

To maximize the rewards, the best thing to do is entering the tournament as the first challenger and achieving multiple victories until you win the entire tournament.

It's just that...

"Hey, you can't enter right now, you understand that, right?"

"I got it, you rascal."

If I entered now, the main match will end like that.

I really wanted the rewards, but I don't want to get it at the cost of pouring cold water on everyone when they are enjoying the festivities.

Of course, the prize for winning the tournament, the most important reward, will be mine.

Meanwhile, the two challengers chosen start the tournament were summoned to the arena.

They were both melee warriors.

After one minute of standby, the duel started.

This is actually pretty exciting.

The two challengers were on par with each other in strength and skills, so the duel was exciting to watch.

As usual...

“Fight between small fries are most entertaining.”

Park Jong-shik muttered from the side. He shared my thoughts.

“This is super fun to watch. When the tournament occurs again, should we bet money? How about it?”

“Betting on sports? I am not sure. We shouldn’t take gambling so lightly.”

“Even if we don’t, someone else will. It would be better if we open the gambling operations instead.”

“Is that so? I’ll bring it up during our next meeting.”

I brought out a bag of potato chip from the inventory and continued to watch the duel.

Watching their intense battle unconsciously excited me.

Should I enter during the match that’s two matches after this one?

“You need to enter when it is about to end, you got that, right?”

Ugh, I think this guy can look into my mind sometimes.

“What about me?”

“Big Bro Jong-shik. You can’t enter either. Big Bro, did you not forfeit

yet? Hurry up and go forfeit. Relax and enjoy the game afterwards instead.”

As days go by, I feel like Kim Min-hyuk is turning more and more into a selfish sister in-law.

Another unique thing about the tournament was that there were no other restrictions during the duel.

All items were permitted.

Expendable single-use items were allowed as well.

There was no restriction about striking critical points either.

In fact, even murder was possible in middle of the match.

This is not like boxing or mixed martial art tournament. Instead, this is closer to duels that took place in real colosseums.

Of course, the Order of Vigilance strictly forbid murder during the tournament.

They could give the circumstance a consideration if the loss of life was a result of unforeseen mistake.

However, if it resulted from even a little bit of intentional motif, they were going to punish the offender

immediately. The Order of Vigilance notified the community actively so that nobody would be caught unaware of the rules.

Not just murder, but the Order also forbid excessive harassment of the opponent and immobilizing the opponent's hands or sealing the mouth to make the opponent unable to surrender.

Because most of the challengers who made it to the main matches were high level rankers, Park

Jong-shik choose to give up the tournament and be on the standby in case of an unexpected situation.

It was so that he could quickly neutralize and punish the perpetrator if such an incident happened.

Several of the Strike Division of the Order were already on the standby. However, some of the participants of the matches were going to be hard for them to handle.

Some said the Order was going too far on restricting things that were allowed by the system.

However, thanks to the Order's decision, people's minds were at ease, so the number of challengers entering the tournament out of curiosity had increased. In the end, the tournament itself became a more peaceful event.

Meanwhile, Park Jong-shik just could not help himself and entered the preliminary match. However, ultimately, Kim Min-hyuk decided that Park Jong-shik must not enter the main matches.

“Hey, Ho-jae.”

“Yes, Big Bro?”

“Can we switch roles? Can you be the guardian instead of me? If I win the tournament, I'll give you the reward.”

“I don't want to.”

Chapter 87

The Tournament (3)

[Participant Lee Hyung-jin has achieved the fourth victory.]

[Would you like to enter?]

“Hey, don’t you think it would be all right for me to enter now?”

Having heard what I said, Kim Min-hyuk counted the remaining participants and shook his head.

“Some of the Hard Difficulty’s rankers has not come out yet.”

However, although time had passed, nobody was stepping up to challenge Lee Hyung-jin.

Although Lee Hyung-jin is a challenger from the Hell Difficulty, there are some high level Hard Difficulty challengers who could stand toe-to-toe with him.

However, it won’t be easy to neutralize Lee Hyung-jin. In the end, the challenger might lose to the next contestant due to the exhaustion and forgo their chance for winning the tournament. It seemed nobody was stepping up out of their own interest.

They were all hoping that someone else will knock down Lee Hyung-jin.

Ignorance is a blessing.

Are they seriously thinking they can win the tournament? When I’m here? They sure dream big.

[Only one minute remains before Lee Hyung-jin is declared as the

victor of the individual tournament.]

[Would you like to enter?]

Many rankers started panicking.

It was the start of the game.

The one who fight Lee Hyung-jin will be distancing oneself from winning the tournament.

However, if nobody steps in, then Lee Hyung-jin was going to win the tournament.

“If nobody steps in by the time there’s only 30 seconds left, I’m going to enter.”

“Um... I’m sure someone will challenge him in next 10 seconds.”

“I need to educate the masses about the fact that excessive carefulness and greed, when combined together, will always come back as poison.”

Rankers had been postponing entering the match because they didn’t want to fight Lee Hyung-jin. I wonder how they would feel when I enter?

“Having the guts to step up to the challenge and fighting head on are also necessary.”

“Still, you beating the crap out of Hard Difficulty rankers one after the other is...”

“I’ll go easy on them.”

Kim Min-hyuk didn’t protest anymore.

It was not that he was convinced by my words. It seemed he was just concerned about the tournament becoming stale.

Actually, the tournament was rapidly becoming boring. Some were dozing off. Some were focused more on chatting with someone next to them. The audience slowly lost interest in the tournament.

The Order of Vigilance figured that they might as well provide entertainment to the people through this tournament.

If I entered, I will be able to refresh people's attention and expectations for the tournament.

[There's 30 seconds left until Lee Hyung-jin will be declared the winner of the tournament.]

[Would you like to enter?]

“Yes.”

As soon as I responded, I was teleported to the middle of the arena.

[Tournament's individual match, the main match's 14th duel will start.]

[Participants: Lee Hyung-jin vs. Lee Ho-jae]

[Standby time: 1 minute]

Shouting exploded from the stands.

All right, all right.

Honestly, being showered with attention like this from the audience feels great.

I know. I sound a little like an attention whore, but...

That's how it really feels.

Some retired sports professionals even develop depression because they could not forget this sensation.

I was like that too.

“Big Bro Ho-jae... You entered already? What do we do?”

“Nobody was stepping up, so what could I do?”

“Someone would have entered before the time ran out.”

“But that won’t be fun.”

Lee Hyung-jin’s face looked as if he chewed something horrible.

The rankers who were engaging in glancing game had the same look plastered on their faces.

“Ugh. Well, I was not thinking about winning the tournament, but I wanted to have more wins at least.”

“You won enough, you rascal.”

“All right. Big Bro, well then, please go easy on me.”

“I got it, kid.”

[The duel will start.]

As soon as the standby time expired, Lee Hyung-jin quickly dashed toward me.

His best ability was, like myself, his speed.

One thing that was a little different was that, unlike me who could block attacks by fully utilizing the advantages of the sword and shield that I chose as the starting armaments, Lee Hyung-jin relied on dodging.

I sometimes intentionally used my body to block attacks. He was different from me.

He was very safety-oriented. In short, he was a scaredy cat.

That's why, like this...

Boooooong-

I punched the shield with my knuckles, echoing into the wind.

Lee Hyung-jin was coming straight at me, but he quickly changed his trajectory and dodged past me to the left.

His ankles are shaking. Perhaps it is because he had to change the trajectory too quickly.

It looks like he is not able to control his speed very well.

Moreover, he was too conscious of my knuckles when it was not even within effective range. He changed his path too soon.

Against a stupid and blatantly obvious attack like this, you should have attempted to dodge it narrowly and charge in deeper.

Perhaps it is because it had not been long since he entered the Fourth Floor. He is still lacking in his ability to make split-second decisions.

A kick is coming from the back.

It's good that you are attacking from the blind spot, but it is too obvious.

Also, that's not my blind spot anyway.

I snatched Lee Hyung-jin's leg with my hand.

"I surrender!"

Lee Hyung-jin immediately declared surrender.

He gave up too quickly.

“Why didn’t you fight me a little longer? You are deflating the balloon here.”

[Participant Lee Ho-jae achieved his first victory.]

“Ugh... As I thought, there is a huge difference between us.”

“Still, it was not bad. I noticed a few things you should fix. I’ll tell you later.”

“Yes, Big Bro. Win the tournament!”

After his words of encouragement, he was moved to the stands.

* * *

After I entered, I wondered if I would win the tournament immediately due to lack of new challengers. However, quite a few rankers came to challenge me.

Maybe it is because the duel between me and Lee Hyung-jin ended rather gently. There were many challengers who wanted to measure their strength against me.

“Thank you for your hard work!”

“Hard work? You don’t really need to say that.”

[Participant Lee Ho-jae achieved his fifth victory.]

That was Lee Jun-suk, the Hard Difficulty’s most promising challenger. After achieving victory against him, I looked at the stands.

I think all rankers who wanted to challenge me already had.

In the distance, there was Kim Min-hyuk. He was cramping his face as if he was trying to tell me something by mouthing the words.

He is probably trying to say that I should take it easy.

However, I really am holding back here.

I didn't use any skills. I had been neutralizing the opponents using clean and simple movements.

I didn't use any flashy Power Skills either. I had only been using my physical abilities.

It would still be apparent that I am the strongest, but the rankers could think the following.

He is not a complete fiend. Maybe I can beat him.

I had been holding back so they could have such hope.

Since I was in charge of being the force of the Order, I should actually avoid creating such image.

In fact, establishing a more powerful image of myself in people is better for the Order of Vigilance. If I looked overwhelming, then it couldn't be better.

However, the Order had a plan in place for the second tournament where the challengers from foreign nations will also participate.

It was at that moment when a familiar looking man was teleported to the arena.

[Tournament's individual match, main match's 19th duel will start.]

[Participant: Lee Ho-jae vs. Lee Chan-yong]

As soon as the message appeared, loud shouting exploded from the stands.

Oh, I was not expecting this.

Lee Chan-yong.

He is the challenger at the highest floor in the Tutorial.

He is also the challenger that the Order was supporting to achieve the first total conquest of the Tutorial.

He was also the regular who was brought up frequently in discussions in the community about who is the strongest person in the Tutorial.

There are quite a lot of people who say Lee Chan-yong must be the strongest since he is at the highest floor.

However, nobody knew for certain.

He didn't have anyone who he could compare his strength against.

When rankers are mentioned the term usually refers to the players who were at the higher floors of the Normal and Hard Difficulties.

Normal Difficulty rankers were usually around at 50th Floor. As for the rankers at the Hard Difficulty, they were at around 30th Floor.

Rankers' strengths were assessed based on the floor they were in.

In that case, what about the challenger who is at 89th Floor at the Easy difficulty? What kind of power does he possess?

Nobody knew besides Lee Chan-yong himself.

It was not like anyone else besides him were even close to that floor.

“Big Bro. I thought you would not be interested in something like this.”

As I said, Lee Chan-yong was obsessed with clearing the Tutorial like it was his lifeline.

He didn't pursue strength. He didn't desire challenge either. He didn't

want to be entertained.

He just wanted to clear the Tutorial and reunite with his family again.

It's impossible that he was thinking he could beat me and win the prize.

“After some time passed...”

Lee Chan-yong calmed his breathing and said,

“After I got stuck behind a wall, I finally got a moment to spare and look around myself.”

I had already heard that he was having difficulties in clearing the 89th Floor.

I even made a report to the Order based on that information.

“That’s why I entered. To gain experience.”

Experience huh...

Experience is important.

“Please, let us have a good duel.”

“Yes, same here.”

[The duel will start.]

This is a tricky fight.

I’m fighting an opponent with no knowledge of his combat abilities. Meanwhile, I need to hide my own.

From the stands, Kim Min-hyuk was looking at me, concerned.

He probably wants me to have tough fights or even fights one after the other and achieve a narrow victory at the end.

However, a human being's heart will not always move the way it should.

[Blink]

I used Blink to leap to the front of Lee Chan-yong. I immediately threw a punch at the him.

He raised guard fairly quickly, and my fist struck hard at his guard.

Kwang~

It sounded like an explosive went off as Lee Chan-yong's body flew off to the outside of the ring.

* * *

"I told you that you should hold back."

"Ah, I said I am sorry. Why are you still scolding me? Could you please stop?"

The tournament was over. Kim Min-hyuk and I were going to the residential section.

We had to check to make sure everyone left the arena, so we were one of the last ones to leave.

The housing building was a wooden building. It was about 10 stories tall.

There was a large dining hall at the first floor. Starting from the second floor, there were separated rooms tightly packed in the allocated area. The building looked like a motel.

The Order assigned the rooms to the people.

Different floors were assigned for each gender. Different floors were assigned for different difficulties.

Of course, the assignments were not mandatory. If someone wanted to move, then the Order moved their room.

To start with, there were more rooms than the people anyway.

It was just that, ever since the tournament concluded for the day, the people who grew closer started to get together. Requests to move the room became more frequent, and thanks to this, the members of the Order who were in charge of room assignments became busy.

That's what I've heard, although I don't really need to mind this.

Kim Min-hyuk, who was walking next to me, let out a deep sigh.

"Hey. Just what were you thinking?"

"I only used one skill, the Blink."

"So, you finished it with just one punch? What are you, the One Punch Man? Are you bald, just like the One Punch Man? You completely ruined the plan."

"I think this is fine too."

"What are you talking about?"

"Before giving them despair, I wanted to give them a chance too."

Kim Min-hyuk fell silent for a moment. He then tousled his hair.

"Ugh. I don't know. I really don't. It's already a cup of spilled milk. There's no point in crying over it."

That's right. That's easier. It's the right decision too.

Kim Min-hyuk was repeatedly sighing. I ignored him and opened the

inventory to check the prize for winning the tournament.

[The mysterious box for the winner of the first tournament]

Description: It's the prize for the winner of the first tournament ever held. The box's contents are unknown. However, it will definitely be useful for the winner.

Well, it feels good to win at least.

In the distance, I could see Park Jong-shik and Park Jung-ah waving at us at the front.

It looked like they were waiting for us in front of the residential building.

Now, it's time to drink and play. I suppose I can think of this as a celebration for winning. It's perfect.

It's a perfect plan.

* * *

As soon as we got to the motel, we went to Park Jong-shik's room and started drinking.

The bottom line was that we were somewhat successful at the drinking table.

Not just myself and Park Jong-shik, but Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk also had Poison Resistance Skills.

The skill responded to the drinks.

In the end, the four of us could not get intoxicated.

However, we succeeded in getting intoxicated by the mood.

Although we were not getting drunk, we could have fun while

drinking and playing drinking games.

In particular, it seemed Park Jong-shik was born to be at the drinking table.

As for Kim Min-hyuk, perhaps because he was stressed so much until now, he was causing a loud ruckus.

I think I never saw Park Jung-ah smile until today.

She always maintained a stiff, emotionless face. Today, she was smiling brightly. Looking at her smile, she really looked like a different person from the usual.

I cannot remember how long it had been since I got to chat away and laugh loudly like this with everyone.

I can recall the drinking table I attended before I nosedived back in my professional gaming days. Perhaps that was the last time?

It was a joyful experience. I even wished that we could have drinking occasion like this often.

I wish we could have even more people next time instead of just the four of us.

It was not just me. The other three had not been living happily ever since they entered the Tutorial.

Each one of us focused on clearing the Tutorial while getting used to exhaustion, tears and death everyday.

Just like I have, I'm sure they could relieve themselves of the stress and anxieties here, even though it is just for a while.

I think the problem with Park Jung-ah's attitude toward me is making progress.

She is still unable to be at ease toward me, but at least the

uncomfortableness and awkwardness that she had in her behavior towards me are now gone.

At least now she won't be awkward in front of others when she is talking to me.

After the drinking party ended, I went to my assigned room.

I wish I could play the whole night. However, we drank all of the booze. Kim Min-hyuk also said that he had something he had to do early in the morning, so we concluded the party and went our separate ways.

Now that I was lying down on the bed, I suddenly felt lonely again.

I was having fun all excited with others and laughing only a moment ago, compared to the quiet, desolate room.

I still have some time left before the morning.

I'll have just enough time to sleep, but because of insomnia, sleep is not coming to me easily.

I stared at the ceiling and counted sheep. In the end, I gave up and sat up.

Should I read a book instead?

I picked up the book I almost read but decided not to last time.

I turned on the stand next to the bed. I was about to read the book, but I heard knocking sound on the door.

Knock knock

The door opened. The one I saw was Park Jung-ah.

She was holding a bottle of wine.

“Would you like another drink with me?”

That’s definitely my wine.

Also, when the drinking party ended, there was no booze left.

Unless she filled the bottle with water and brought it here, there is only one conclusion that could be deduced from this.

“Before the booze ran out, you hid a bottle away, didn’t you.”

“I am sorry. Actually... I wanted to drink it separately.”

“With just me?”

“Yes.”

Honestly, I panicked. I didn’t know what to do.

My panic-stricken mind reflected onto my face. Park Jung-ah looked at me and furrowed her brows a little.

“W... What is it? Do you still see me as just a girl in school uniform? I’m an adult now.”

Are you drunk? You have Poison Resistance, so you couldn’t be.

Park Jung-ah was reciting seductive lines rivaling that of the prelude from some triple X-rated adult movies. However, her voice was shaking, and her words were stuttering awkwardly.

I could see her face was red. She was blushing. She was tightly clutching the door handle as well.

I think she will break into tears if I left her be.

“Drinking together... You don’t want to?”

“No, that’s not it. Come in. Let’s talk as we drink.”

Don’t want to? Of course I want to drink. I’m actually thankful.

Chapter 88

The Tournament (4)

I opened my eyes after feeling the sunshine pouring in from the window.

It's been a really long time since I've been awakened by the sunlight.

There was no sunlight in the waiting room and the sunlight at Kiri Kiri's field was not strong enough to wake me.

Something was missing. I groggily fumbled around my surroundings.

Park Jung-ah, the one who should be lying next to me, was nowhere to be seen.

I just lay there with vacant look on my face for a while. I remembered Park Jung-ah saying she had something to take care of early in the morning and leaving the room while I was still pretty much asleep.

I got up and sat on the edge of the bed.

I hit the bottle with my foot. It went off rolling.

It was the wine bottle that Park Jung-ah brought yesterday.

It rolled and rolled. It eventually hit the room's door. Looking at the bottle, I thought about Park Jung-ah from yesterday. She was leaning on the door and asking if I would like to have a drink with her.

She probably wanted to say it in cool, composed tone. However, she had awkward look on her face mismatched her intentions. Her voice was completely out of whack like an elementary kid who just entered a debate competition for the first time.

She looked awkward, but she was adorable.

Park Jung-ah entered the room. As for what happened after drinking...

The bottom half of me did its morning stretch after waking up.

It wanted to go pee.

I fixed my pants and thought about last night.

Um... Did I go too far?

I suddenly got worried. Panic flooded into my mind.

She may look like an adult, but she was seven years younger than me.

I think I was inconsiderate toward her.

I'm a little disgusted at myself.

Was it because it's been so long since I did it last time?

It's been a little over year since I entered Tutorial.

Before that... I lived the loser's life. Even when I was a professional gamer, I was so busy that I didn't get to date anyone.

Wow.

Now that I'm thinking about this, I have not done it in a super long while.

It's like a heavy boulder inside my heart has been spirited away. I feel light and refreshed. Maybe that's why.

There was the satisfaction from the action itself, plus the emotional satisfaction of doing the deed.

I thought highly of Park Jung-ah, but not as a potential date.

I thought she was amazing and confident. I cheered for her. However, that was the extent of my thoughts.

I found her boldness and courage to be appealing. However, her emotionless and stiff attitude made me think of her as a skilled comrade over anything else.

However, yesterday, I got to see a different side of her I never knew.

She was cheerful. She had bright smile. Also... what I saw when it was just us last night... She was incredibly attractive.

My feelings for her may have deepened.

I got up and stretched.

Until morning, I drank and even performed a crucial ceremony. However, because my body was that of a super human now, instead of feeling tired, my body was light. I felt amazing.

[Tournament Day 2, 06:10]

I still had time left until 8 am, which was the preliminary round for the tournament.

The tournament was to take place over a total of three days.

The first day was for the individual. The second day was for the group rounds, and the third was for free activities. That's what I've heard.

As soon as the Order of Vigilance was notified about the tournament, they started to gather more information about it.

Just before the tournament started, they posted all of the gathered information on the community.

I was busy clearing the 13th Floor, so I didn't have the time to read

this.

It was very late, but I opened the community and read about the tournament.

To summarize,

1. During the tournament, no protective or healing effects will be provided.
2. The very first tournament will be held for the three waiting room days before the round 16 starts.
3. First day is for individuals. Second day is for groups. Third day is for free activities.
4. Anybody can choose to participate or opt out of the tournament.
5. Once the group tournament ends on the second day, anyone can return to the waiting room.
6. Tournament will take place in multiple sessions.
7. The tournament's size will grow over each session.
8. The second tournament in the future includes keyword, 'foreigners.'

Of the information gathered, the Order is most concerned about the first one.

People will be gathered here for three days. People could agitate one another and cause unruly fights.

So far, it seemed nothing big had happened.

I closed the community and changed clothes.

I still had time left until the tournament. I pondered if I should go check out things outside or if I should read the magic book, but I got a

message from Lee Hyung-jin.

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Big Bro, do you have time now?]

* * *

“Big Bro! Over here!”

You don’t have to shout. I can hear you just fine.

With my hearing, I would have heard him even if he whispered from that distance.

He was waiting for me at the opposite end of the colosseum’s main entrance.

At the open space, there were six others besides Lee Hyung-jin.

They were all challengers of Hell Difficulty.

“Oh, good morning.”

“Yes, Big Bro, good morning.”

“Hello. It’s been a while. Did everyone sleep well yesterday?”

I greeted everyone.

Until now, other than Lee Hyung-jin, the Hell Difficulty challengers were all afraid of me, so I didn’t have much expectations from greetings. However, they all brightly greeted me.

Some even smiled when they said hello.

After all, they were away from waiting rooms and tutorial stages that exuded a deadly atmosphere. They were now at the tournament with festivities. It seemed everyone was in good mood.

Lee Hyung-jin asked me about my opinion of him from the duel.

He also asked me to give advice for himself and others in areas that they lacked.

Of course, I abided to his wishes.

Other Hell Difficulty players developing further was a good thing in many ways.

I might end up doing party play with them one day.

It bothered me a little that they were afraid of me. However, seeing how they are responding to me today, I think it is going to be all right.

First, I explained what I thought of the duel with Lee Hyung-jin.

“I saw you when you were dodging my attack. Your eyes strained wide open.”

“Yes. You told me I should look carefully at the attack and dodge it. That’s why.”

Ah, you did it because you were listening to my advice?

“Um... That’s true, but it’s not easy to keep your eyes open when an attack comes. When you are moving quickly like yesterday, there is the wind coming at your eyes. Also, when the attack is coming closer to your face, we tend to close our eyes instinctively.”

“Yes. That’s true.”

“It looked like you were forcing yourself to keep the eyes open. You could see the front of your eyes by keeping them open like that, but you can’t make sense of all information you need in such a short period of time. Even when your eyes are wide open, you end up making your field of view smaller to the size of a rice grain.”

“In that case... What should I do?”

“You need to be able to keep your eyes open naturally when the attack comes. It will not do you much good if you are forcing them. Now, like this.”

Out of the blue, I swung my fist to the front of Lee Hyung-jin’s face.

Surprised, he stepped back.

Of course, He closed his eyes.

“You need to be able to keep your eyes open even in situations like this. To do this... I guess the only way is to just get used to it.”

Honestly, the problem with Lee Hyung-jin was that he was a scaredy-cat.

Still, if he didn’t even resolve a basic problem like securing a field of view at all times, he probably could not have reached the Fourth Floor in Hell Difficulty.

Also, he probably would not have been able to win four times against other challengers either.

Others would not have hesitated to challenge him either.

Lee Hyung-jin is very evasive and fast. Because of his traits, he wasn’t exposed to many actual hits by the opponents so far. He was still afraid of getting beat up and wasn’t used to it.

Because of this, when facing an attack that appears to be hard to dodge, he shrivels.

The problem only occurred because he got scared of my attack and shriveled more than he should have.

“Getting used to them?”

“If this was not Tutorial, I could have trained you by getting one of those baseball batting practice machines. Otherwise, sparring against

me for a week would lead to a big improvement. You are in middle of the Fourth Floor, right?”

“Yes, Big Bro.”

“In that case, go try getting beat up a lot by the goblins. Don’t dodge them. Try fighting them as you get hit. As you get used to getting hit, your eyes won’t close as much from getting scared or surprised.”

Lee Hyung-jin looked like he was about to die. He whined.

“Big Brrooooo... Do you have a different way that doesn’t involve getting hit?”

“No. Just do as I said. Toughen up and gain endurance while you’re at it too.”

“Ugh...”

I also gave him my opinion about his moves and decisions. I started to tell the other challengers about all sorts of things.

“Like this? Dodge it like this?”

A girl was breaking sweats demonstrating her dodges. Watching her made me hopeless about her future.

Her name is Oh Hye-jin.

She was a new challenger who came into the Hell Difficulty during the last round.

She didn’t even manage to get past the first trial. No, she didn’t even try.

During the challenger’s first round, water and meat jerkies were given for free.

“No, what I’m saying is... When the arrow comes at your right

shoulder, then what is the best way to dodge it?”

“Like this!”

She dove to her left side by throwing her body.

What the hell are you doing, seriously...

It seemed she thought of the most certain way to dodge it because I asked for the best way to do it.

“No... Instead, since you know the arrow is coming toward your right shoulder, dodge the arrow with minimal movement. That is the best way. Think about it. That will allow you to maintain a stable stance, don't you think?”

“Yes, right.”

“You should maintain stable stance so you can dodge the next arrow. Right?”

“Pardon? But the next arrow is... Ah, yes. I see.”

I know. Once you dodge the arrow, there won't be a second attack coming.

You are right.

Still, you can't just be defenseless after dodging the first arrow. You need to be ready to dodge the next attack. You need to get completely used to it.

Not all of the traps in the First Floor have perfect answers.

Some traps have no patterns.

I realized that they had completely different perspectives from me.

When it came to passing the traps, I thought of it only as a process for

my growth.

However, their goals were just surviving.

It cannot be helped that they were not as interested in growth as I was.

They obtained information about traps' order and dodged the arrows by following the information.

They lacked the ability to think independently and disliked practicing for the sake of their growths.

They were only focused on knowing the order of the traps and dodging the arrows they expected based on the information. People who acted this way died when they slipped up and decided or responded too late.

It was not like I could not understand them.

Not everyone could be like me.

Actually, it would be odd if there was someone who was.

With their lives at stake, who would choose to challenge the stage again from the beginning? Who would intentionally harm themselves just to raise their skill levels?

Also, unlike other difficulties where people had an obtainable goal like reaching the residential district at the 30th Floor, people didn't even have hope like that here in the Hell Difficulty.

Even I still had long ways to go.

To others, it probably made more sense to hold out at the First Floor using the little bits of points they obtained and the support points sent by the Order to buy food while holding onto a desperate hope that the situation might improve someday.

I could understand them.

* * *

[Tournament, Day 2, 07:40]

It was about time for the tournament, so we all headed to the entrance together.

As we walked, I asked Lee Hyung-jin,

“Are you going to enter the group round?”

“No. Who would I team up with?”

“Why don’t you team up with the other Hell Difficulty challengers?”

“Pardon?”

Lee Hyung-jin looked surprised. He said in low voice,

“Won’t that be hard? They’ve never experienced real combat.”

“Still, it could be a good experience. Try to at least get through the preliminary. As for the main matches, try to think of them as a learning experiences and challenge them. Pick your opponents carefully.”

“Um... Would that be all right?”

It’s all right.

You guys won’t stand any chance during the main matches, but the Order of Vigilance forbade use of excessive force during the tournament, so it is possible for you guys to enter for the sake of gaining experience.

“Try it. I am not saying you should just because you could enter the group round. Even if it is just for the sake of the Sixth Floor, you need

to strengthen the others no matter what.”

“The Sixth Floor?”

“That’s right. From the Sixth Floor and on, it is not going to be just dangerous like how things are now. The difficulty will escalate to the point where it will appear to be impossible. I thought it might have been impossible to clear it by myself. It was that difficult. If you want to advance further, you need to have them rise up too and join you for party play.”

I had told him about the party play at the Sixth Floor before, so Lee Hyung-jin understood easily.

“Also, don’t you think you should help them become stronger? You can’t just let them stay at the First Floor forever.”

“Yes. I’ll try talking to them.”

We arrived at the entrance soon.

Lee Hyung-jin gathered up the other Hell Difficulty challengers and started to discuss the tournament with them.

I watched them. There were sense of excitement and anxiety along with Lee Hyung-jin who was trying to convince them.

I got to the colosseum’s entrance.

[Will you participate in the tournament?]

[Individuals] [Day 1] [Complete]

[Group] [Day 2]

“I’ll participate in the group round.”

As soon as I said that, the party selection window showed up.

[List of parties you can join (5/14)]

[You can also create a new party.]

I would have made a new one for myself if I was going to enter the tournament alone. However, I already decided to enter it with Park Jung-ah, Kim Min-hyuk and others.

I came a little late because I was giving advice to other Hell Difficulty challengers. Kim Min-hyuk and others probably had made a party already.

I checked the list.

[Party Captain: Park Jung-ah]

[Party members: Lee Yuu-jung, Kim Min-hyuk, Lee Gi-jun]

[Would you like to join?]

“Yes.”

[The party’s captain is deciding on your request.]

[You joined the party.]

[You will be moved to the arena.]

“You are late.”

“Yeah. I had something I had to do.”

Park Jung-ah, Lee Yuu-jung, Kim Min-hyuk, and Lee Gi-jun were inside the arena.

The tournament had not begun yet.

[Tournament, Day 2, 07:45]

We still had 15 minutes until the preliminaries began.

Looks like I could have came a bit later.

“Hey. This is Ms. Lee Yuu-jung. You met her last time, right?”

“Ah, how do you do?”

She had a panicked expression just like our first meeting. However, she greeted me more naturally this time.

I think people are not as scared of me today for some reason.

Is it just my mood?

As for Lee Gi-jun, the other party member, I knew him already.

During the first day of the great harmony, he was one of the first rankers that I contacted along with Kim Min-hyuk.

Currently, Lee Gi-jun was at the 30th Floor along with Kim Min-hyuk and handling the Order of Vigilance’s work.

“They actually did gather just the managers from the Order.”

“Well, yeah.”

The four were all residing at the residential area. Instead of clearing the Tutorial, they were all focused on the Order’s work.

People who didn’t know much about the Order’s business also believed Park Jung-ah and Lee Yuu-jung usually focused on the Order’s work instead.

In fact, although Park Jung-ah had been working hard on clearing the Tutorial because of her position as the Commander of the Order, still, she was more focused on the Order’s business than clearing the Tutorial.

So, her image to the outside was as described above.

Looks like these guys are hell-bent on appearing to be pushovers.

“Um.”

Anyway...

Now that I'm facing Park Jung-ah again, I feel awkward.

When I got up, I wanted to talk to Park Jung-ah about a myriad of topics.

However, now that I'm facing her, I cannot think of anything to say.

My eyes met with Park Jung-ah's.

It was coincidence. No, it was not coincidence.

We were consciously minding each other's presence.

Anyway, it seemed Park Jung-ah was embarrassed. She glanced away.

“What is this? Hey, what's going on? What with this foul mood?”

Embarrassed, Park Jung-ah was going to say something, but she just looked at me and smiled.

She looked so adorable, so I smiled back.

We both always had emotionless and gloomy looks on our faces. Today, we were both smiling brightly, and it was great to see that.

We had seen Park Jung-ah smile yesterday on the drinking table. However, she was smiling out in the open in middle of the bright daylight. There was a different kind of beauty in her smile under this setting.

“You crazy bunch.”

I ignored Kim Min-hyuk’s curses and walked next to Park Jung-ah.

“Do you have a wooden staff? A wooden staff?”

“No. What were you going to do with it if I did have one? That bastard probably won’t die even if you had a spear to stab it with.”

Chapter 89

The Tournament (5)

[The group round's preliminary matches will start in two minutes.]

[Conditions of victory]

1. Survive
2. Defeat the enemies

[Conditions of defeat]

1. All challengers are outside the ring.
2. All challengers declare an intent to surrender.

The monster for the preliminary round was summoned above the ring.

This time, it was not from the Hell Difficulty.

It was about three meters tall with a gigantic head.

Its head is huge. I think the head makes up a quarter of his total height.

I bet this one has a hard time putting on clothes.

Fortunately for the monster, it was not wearing any clothes.

Actually, there is nothing fortunate about it.

A hideous monster's nude fashion show is hazardous for eye health.

“What should we do? Should I go finish it quickly?”

Kim Min-hyuk shook his head and said,

“No. It would be best if you hide your strength. Sit this one out. We can handle something like this.”

“I got it.”

Kim Min-hyuk started coordinating with the rest of the group.

Although they didn’t plan for this, it seemed like they were going to fight this with a team formation.

[The preliminary will start in one minute.]

Although I decided to step back and just watch, I was not worried in particular.

Although Kim Min-hyuk and Lee Gi-jun had been staying at the residential area on the 30th Floor, it was just for the sake of Order’s work. They were rankers who proved to be of high caliber since the beginning.

They reached the 30th Floor before anyone else. Uniquely enough, they both wielded spears.

Although they were Easy Difficulty challengers, Park Jung-an and Lee Yuu-jung had reached the 42nd Floor. They were not particularly weak either.

As for Park Jung-ah, it was hard to measure her strength with just floor progression. She was far stronger than that.

She was the one who started using firearms as a main weapon. Of the firearm users, she was ranked the highest.

Recently, number of challengers who used firearms as their main weapon had increased.

In the community, they were commonly called a ‘gunner’ class.

Firearms had distinct advantages and drawbacks.

First, it was too expensive.

Both the firearms and the bullets were purchased at the store, and they were very pricy. Taking care of them was tricky as well.

To begin with, the firearms were not included in the list of starting weapons.

Because of this, it was difficult to grow skills related to wielding firearms from the start.

As for the advantages, simply...

It was powerful.

Its power was overwhelming in comparison to non-firearm weapons, so it made up for the lack of skills.

Also, the firearms purchased from the stores were made from magic and special ores and that had otherworldly powers unlike what existed in the outside world.

With enough support, a gunner could be recognized as the strongest class.

Recently, there’s been active research going on about rankers with enough points who specialize in distance combat.

Unlike other gunners who started later among the entrance floors, Park Jung-ah had been using the handgun since the First Floor because I gave her the gun.

Thanks to the support of early stage rankers who joined the Order recently, she didn’t feel the burden of the expenses either.

Some in the community said Park Jung-ah's achievements were just a result of having overwhelming support and funds from the Order of Vigilance, and they criticized her. However, even I think Park Jung-ah has brilliant talent as a gunslinger.

Anyway, not everyone has the composure to shoot and kill someone after just one round in the Tutorial.

Moreover, she was quite the decent marksman.

She said she didn't have experience in wielding firearms before entering the Tutorial, she must be naturally talented at this.

As for Lee Yuu-jung... She brought out a huge shield from the inventory.

It was a gigantic tower shield. It encompassed her entire body.

Is she a shield warrior who doesn't even wield a weapon?

This is rare.

Actually, after getting used to a shield, one could use it to attack as well.

Also, the power of the shield attacks was definitely not weak.

However, few choose just the shield without any weapons in the beginning.

Most preferred a sharp weapon.

It could be used for protection, and that put people's mind at ease.

I guess she would make a good combo with Park Jung-ah who is a long-range fighter.

[The match will begin.]

Taaaang!

The match begun as the translucent wall that blocked the space between us and the monster dissipated. As soon as the wall disappeared, Park Jung-ah's gun breathed fire.

The monster's eye burst explosively.

I thought Lee Yuu-jung would play a defensive role. However, she dashed forward immediately.

From the start, the monster lost one of its eyes, and it couldn't get a grip of the situation. The monster was struck by Lee Yuu-jung's shield charge and fell onto their back.

Kim Min-hyuk and Lee Gi-jun, who were next to Lee Yuu-jung, stabbed the monster with their spears.

As expected, I don't need to worry about them at all.

Still, it feels awkward to just sit back and watch.

I don't think it would be right to act like I'm not interested. However, I'm too embarrassed to clap and cheer.

I brought out a slingshot round from the inventory and played catch with it as I watched the battle.

It was a heavy slingshot round made from metal.

Usually, it was used in conjunction with a sligh. However, I had been just throwing it at my enemies.

Using it that way was powerful enough.

'If someone ends up in danger, I should save that person by throwing this at the monster.'

I thought about it as I watched the battle. However, the opportunity

never came.

Um... I wonder if anyone would make a mistake soon.

I'm bored.

* * *

The battle dragged on longer than I thought.

There was a simple reason for this.

The monster's ability to regenerate was beyond our wildest imagination.

The eye that got blown up in the beginning of the battle had completely reformed. Most of the wounds on its legs, arms and body were closed.

It was probably going to be difficult to defeat this monster unless its head was blown up in a single blow or its heart was pierced.

At least its rate of recovery was slowing over time.

Its recovery ability had a limit. The match was testing the participants' ability to fight until the monster could no longer utilize its ability to recover.

It was perfect as a preliminary match opponent for the group round.

The monster's movements were not quick. It did not excel in its attacking power but its defensive abilities based on its ability to heal.

Anyway, its recovery rate is no joke.

If only my recovery rate could be that fast.

Ah, could it be that this bastard is a troll?

A troll never appeared in the Hell Difficulty, so I don't know how a troll looks like.

If this really is a troll, then I am a little disappointed.

The troll that I pictured in my mind all this time looked a little more ferocious and less stupid.

There was a time when my goal was to become a human troll. With that goal in mind, I used to work diligently on hurting myself, yet...

[Wuuuuurrrrr-]

The troll running rampant and roaring.

Everyone is dodging well and continuing to deal damage to it.

As this continued, Kim Min-hyuk made a mistake with his steps and faltered for a moment.

He tripped over his own foot. That's just plain stupid.

Did his fighting sense fall from staying in the residential area too long?

Whatever. Finally, I have something to do.

After winding up my throw with all my might, I swung my arm and threw the slingshot round at the monster's shoulder.

Kwang!

Along with piercing sound, the slingshot round made direct impact with the monster. The monster's left arm and shoulder disappeared along with it.

Blood and flesh scattered into the air. The slingshot round went over the arena and flew to the stands.

Fortunately, it was blocked by the invisible barrier that separated the stands from the arena, so it didn't cause casualties.

There were screams from the stands, followed by sighs of relief.

That was fortunate.

It's been a while since I used slingshot rounds. I made a mistake in controlling my strength.

The monster fell down immediately. It was unable to move.

Its legs and arms twitched occasionally.

Actually, since it lost an arm, I should say its legs and arm twitched occasionally.

Anyway, it was foaming at its mouth. It unable to get up.

I looked carefully, and I saw that its heart area was crushed.

Surprised, Lee Gi-jun looked at me once. He approached the monster and stabbed it with the spear to end its last grasps at life.

As for Kim Min-hyuk...

With crumpled face, he turned to look at me and mouthed words.

'Hey! I told you not do use your strength!'

You complain even though I saved you. Even though I saved you.

* * *

"Wasn't that too much? How many times have I told you? Huh? I told you not to flaunt your strength needlessly. If you didn't want to keep quiet, then you should have just said so. Why did you say, that you will stay quiet and then go back on your words? You did it at the individuals, and this time too? Huh?"

“I got it. Seriously. I am sorry! I saved you when you could have gotten hurt, but you are nagging.”

I ignored Kim Min-hyuk who was berating me from the side. I plucked a handful of popcorn and stuffed it into my mouth.

It's delicious.

As I thought, popcorn is all about its salty taste.

The preliminary matches were not over for the group round.

The monster's specialty was its ability to recover, so the battle dragged on longer than I thought.

Ah, as a supplementary information, the monster was not called a troll.

It was called Akinicos or whatever. It was a monster with a strange name.

Park Jung-ah, Lee Yuu-jung and Lee Gi-jun said they had work to do and left. I was sitting with Kim Min-hyuk and watching the battles from the stands.

The people from the Hell Difficulty were fighting pretty well.

They were challengers of the first floor who had put everything in their abilities to dodge attacks, so they were not even thinking about attacking the monster. Instead, they were just dodging the monster's attacks.

I wondered if they would be able to slay the monster at this rate, but still, that counted as valuable experience.

This was different from the traps. They were facing the monster's deadly aura and dodging its attacks.

When the people get tired, Lee Hyung-jin will kill the monster.

Really, this monster is optimal for gaining combat experience.

I'm glad.

"Hey, were you not listening just now?"

"No, I was listening to you perfectly?"

[TL: In Korea, people use "no" and "yes" to say if the statement given is true or not. Since Lee Ho-jae was in fact listening to what Kim Min-hyuk was saying the whole time, he was 'not' not listening only just now, hence Lee Ho-jae said 'no.']

"Ugh."

Kim Min-hyuk sighed deeply. He was quiet for a moment, but he suddenly reached for my popcorn and took a handful.

"It's tasty."

"I know, right?"

"Um. About Park Jung-ah, last night, did you guys..."

"Yep. It's what you are thinking."

"...Ugh. I wonder how I ended up setting up the bridge between you two."

"What are you saying? It's not like you did anything."

"Do you know how worried I was because of the awkwardness between the two of you? Now that it is resolved, you guys took it to the next level."

"Anyway, it is not awkward anymore. It worked out well."

"...The two of you looking at each other and smiling like fools is not a proper picture. You know that, right?"

I put on a sour face and nodded.

That's true.

The managers of the Order tried not to show human sides of themselves to the public.

When it comes to managing people, appearing to be super humans who lacked human emotions was better at reducing complaints even if it made a miniscule difference.

The image that Park Jung-ah had was a powerful charismatic person, with a machine-like composure and almost cruel degree of decisiveness. It was not the beautiful and bubbly personality of typical girl.

Should I act stiff toward her in public as much as I can?

Like secretly dating?

While I pondered about what to do, Kim Min-hyuk said out of the blue,

“Still, this is good.”

“What is?”

“Because of the happy look on the face.”

What's this out of the blue?

“Ah, Jung-ah? Yeah, it is totally good. She just turned 20. She had so much burden on her shoulders until now. It's great that we got to see her beam with laughter. It's so great. Even if she is going to usually maintain a calm, business look, she should still know to smile like that when people are not looking. If she doesn't, it wouldn't be good for her mental health.”

I had once seriously worried about her mental health.

She was under tremendous stress and numerous restrictions. I feared that her mentality would rot away gradually and explode.

I guess she should be a little better now.

“No. I see about Park Jung-ah, but I’m talking about you. I was talking about you.”

“Huh? Me?”

“I saw you talking to the Hell Difficulty’s people earlier.”

“When did you see that?”

“There were people gathered at that empty field. I had to come and check it out.”

He picked up the drink socketed in the armrest. He quenched his thirst and continued.

“I wondered if the person I was seeing was really you. Um... How should I say this? You looked a little brighter. This was probably why they could ask you questions and talk with you comfortably.”

“Tell me a bit more in detail.”

I definitely felt like people were not scared of me today for some reason.

They greeted me. They even asked various questions.

I cannot just let this pass. He is saying I look different to people.

I started to think seriously about my mental condition and my attitude toward others while I went through the 13th Floor, so I have even more reasons not to let this pass.

“How should I explain it. You knew that you look super scary when you just sit with an emotionless look on your face, right?”

Um...

“Is that so?”

“Yes. You look angry as if you have a complaint. People aren’t afraid of approaching you for no reason. From standpoint with common sense, someone like you who possesses overwhelming power, will attract people like garbage to flies. But even such people are afraid of approaching you.”

“Since when?”

From experience, I knew that my public image was not very good.

Still, it was not this bad.

“It was like this since they saw you for the first time at the very first day of the great harmony.”

During that time, I was under tremendous stress.

Around that time, I was just starting to get used to the pain. The goblins appeared, and I had to kill them. From doing so, I piled up a large amount of mental stress.

Meanwhile, the existence of the Representative Federation was slowly starting to scratch at my nerves.

Before then, I was spending the days at the Second Floor inflicting self-injuries. Before then, I had to accept the death of others who I met at the First Floor’s waiting room.

I had to get away from the fear of the First Floor’s traps and struggle for my survival somehow.

Before then... I had been drinking alcohol by the buckets. I was dying.

I was in a slump and quit professional gaming because of that. There was the thing about my father as well.

My image now was definitely different from how it was many years ago when I used to hang out with many people. This could not be helped.

“So, I was not like that earlier?”

“Yeah. It will be hard to explain in words. You have the same look on the face too. Still, you looked brighter than the usual. Your voice sounds more excited too. You’ve been like that the entire day.”

My mood is brighter? Could it happen without me noticing? I do think I look a little excited ever since the morning, but...

“You are still like that too. How should I say this, you look more comfortable? You look more human like now. You still look sharp and fierce as always, but regardless, you still look more human-like? In the past, you looked like people would get attacked just from approaching you carelessly.”

There is nothing bad about this.

The fact that my image looks brighter is a good thing.

It is a good thing, and I am thankful.

I lifted my head and looked around the stands to find Park Jung-ah.

Chapter 90

The Tournament (6)

“This is fun.”

“I know.”

I was sitting with my teammates and watching the game.

The preliminaries were over. The main matches begun at 12 pm.

Following Kim Min-hyuk’s strong recommendation, we decided to participate as late as possible.

It was going to take a few hours until the tournament cooled down, so I relaxed and watched the game.

The group tournament was fun to watch, in a different way than watching the individuals.

The teams who had superior teamwork continued to beat teams that just had strong individual challengers.

Watching the fight and seeing the people helping each other was quite fun.

The team from the Hell Difficulty also participated.

They challenged a team that was made of well-versed challengers of the Normal Difficulty. They did their best, but they were soundly defeated.

Their opponents were well aware of the obvious difference in strength, so their match concluded in friendly mood as they gave tips to the team from Hell Difficulty.

As I expected, it was good that I recommended them to participate in the group round.

I hope this will be the foundation for their development.

[Team captain Lee Myung-sun and the other four members achieved victory!]

[Will you challenge them?]

Lee Myung-sun was a pretty famous ranker in the Normal Difficulty.

The other party members were high rankers. Their team work was quite excellent as well.

According to Lee Yuu-jung, the five were the Order of Vigilance's Sixth Strike Division.

Their team work was obviously at a whole another dimension compared to other teams that were formed in the heat of the moment.

It looked like they were going to continue their winning streak unless they encounter an unexpectedly strong team.

I ate the nacho that Kim Min-hyuk bought as I thirstily anticipated the next challengers.

It's delicious.

He said that it was not purchased through the store. It was being sold by a challenger who made it himself.

Of course, the base ingredients had to be purchased through the store. However, considering the difference in the ingredient cost and the food's final price, this nacho had the potential for an incredible profit.

Kim Min-hyuk explained that the one selling the nachos made a contract with the Order. The one selling the nachos is making records of all dishes sold and plans to purchase items he wants from the Order

based on the list.

The message about participation disappeared.

It seemed someone took on the challenge.

Who...

[Team captain Park Jong-shik and six others are stepping up.]

[The 11th match of the group round's main match will begin.]

[Team captain Lee Myung-sun and the four vs Team captain Park Jong-shik and the six]

The challenger team's captain was the Order's manager of the Hard Difficulty. Along with his entrance to the arena, Kim Min-hyuk, who was eating nachos, screamed as he crunched nachos in his mouth.

Uuuuuaaaaa!!

Ugh, that's disgusting.

"Ugh. Why do you guys go back on your words so easily..."

I also went back on my words, so I quietly looked away and pretended to be oblivious.

Park Jong-shik was not supposed to participate so early.

He was actually assigned to act as the responder in case any trouble popped up during the tournament.

Plus, Kim Min-hyuk thought it would be best if Park Jong-shik hid as much of his strength as possible.

Of course, he agreed to Kim Min-hyuk's recommendation just like I had.

Park Jong-shik didn't even glance at us at the stands. He was just strategizing with the team members.

Even though we are at quite distance, I can still see very well that the tip of his mouth was tilted up.

That Big Bro, he looks super excited about this.

I personally can understand his motives.

He doesn't want to be excluded from the festivities.

Moreover, the tournament was going smoothly. It was going better than the Order had expected. With this unexpected smoothness, there was not much for the responders to do.

There were almost no occurrences of emergencies like real fights between challengers.

"Hey. What do we do now?"

"I don't know... Let's just hope he will take it easy and come down. I'm going to go check if the responders' manpower can be supplemented. I'll be back in a bit."

Disappointed, Kim Min-hyuk's shoulders drooped down as he got up from his seats. He started to walk as he sent messages.

Unlike Kim Min-hyuk, who was upset about this, I was actually a little eager to see this match.

It was fun to watch battles between ordinary challengers. However, collisions between the strong ones was also intriguing.

Now that Park Jong-shik entered the scene, most of the ordinary challengers will give up on participating. From now on, only the strong teams who stand a chance against his team will participate.

It seemed that any other people shared similar views. From the stands, cheers broke into the intermittent noise.

Oh, I'm getting excited.

"Everyone who entered with Big Bro Jong-shik are from the Hard Difficulty, right?"

I moved to where Kim Min-hyuk was sitting. I asked Park Jung-ah next to me.

"Yes. On top of that, they are all from the Order's Strike Division."

Park Jung-ah looked at Lee Yuu-jung who was sitting next to her. Lee Yuu-jung diligently introduced each members to us.

"That one is from Hard Difficulty's 24th Floor. The one with blue shield is from 27th Floor. The two over there with the Captain Park Jong-shik, make up the main forces. Also, the young boy over there is still at 19th Floor, but he is blessed with luck and quite talented as well, so he is being actively supported by the support team. As for his specialty, he uses Blitz..."

Um? That kid. I think I met him once during the day of the great harmony.

"By any chance, do you remember his name?"

"Yes! It's Lee Jun-suk."

Ah, it is him. I asked Kim Min-hyuk to find someone with lightning magic so I could raise my magic resistance. It is that Blitz user.

During the day of the great harmony, I asked him for information about the 12th Floor's Stage in return for an accessory that improved his mana circuit skill.

So, he was quite highly rated.

Lee Yuu-jung continued her explanation about other participants.

It seemed she memorized all the information about every member of the Order.

She sure has great memory.

Her eyes were shining as she explained things. She was like a young, eager teacher who liked explaining things to others.

After hearing her explanations to the end, I learned two new things.

First, I could understand that this would more than frustrate Kim Min-hyuk.

Second, Park Jong-shik's party members were practically the all-stars of the Hard Difficulty.

* * *

[Party Captain Park Jong-shik and the six have achieved their 11th victory.]

Infuriated, Kim Min-hyuk's legs were shaking. He was glaring laser beams of fury at the back of Park Jong-shik's head.

However, Park Jong-shik never looked this way like he didn't give a damn about us.

Park Jong-shik's team's 11th victory made the crowd go wild.

At the tournament, there was no healing or recovery effects provided.

With passage of time, as they repeatedly fought in the, it was obvious that they were gradually being placed at a greater disadvantage.

However, his team crushed all 11 matches with perfect victories.

At first, when they won with overwhelming power, the audience

looked a little disinterested. However, as they won three matches, then five matches, and when Park Jong-shik's team won ten matches, people shouted out his name and began cheering for his team.

This was no different from the gladiators at a colosseum.

Park Jong-shik frequently displayed showmanship to encourage applause and positivity from the crowd. I was sure this was one of the reasons for such heated reactions from the crowds.

Of course, Park Jong-shik never looked at our direction on the stands.

[There's three minutes left before the Party Captain Park Jong-shik and the six will win the entire tournament.]

Nobody was stepping up for the challenge.

It is no surprise. Who would challenge them now?

All strong teams who had confidence in their abilities to stand proudly against Park Jong-shik's team lost.

"Hey. Don't you think it is time for us to enter? I want to win the tournament at least."

Kim Min-hyuk's head was lowered. He looked at me for a moment before starting to agonize about the situation.

"Um... Now that it came to this. Can we just let him win? There's no need for you to enter too..."

Kim Min-hyuk was not liking the situation at all. He was trying to convince me against it regardless. However, his words were interrupted by Park Jong-shik's powerful voice.

"HOO-JAEEEE!!"

Despite the colosseum's humungous size, the voice echoed through the entire place like a lion's roar.

“Aren’t you going to step up!”

The crowd exploded with shouting.

Wow... The response is unbelievable.

I could see why. When the mood is like a maelstrom that it is right now, then nothing would be more disappointing if the tournament because no challenger was willing to step up.

Instead of the tournament ending so prematurely, the crowds probably would want to see the greatest match up.

“I’ll enter.”

Park Jung-ah, who had been quietly watching the situation, declared participation.

All team members, including myself, were moved to the arena.

Watching us entering the arena, the crowds’ cheer became louder.

[Party Captain Park Jung-ah and the four will enter.]

[The 12th match will begin.]

[Party Captain Park Jong-shik and the six vs. Party Captain Park Jung-ah and the four.]

I can see the crowds’ enthusiasm and anticipation and I can hear their cheers clearly.

This reminds of the days of the professional gaming again.

It is the sensation that I cannot forget even if I wanted to.

It’s great.

Unlike myself, who was enjoying the situation, Kim Min-hyuk looked absolutely pissed. Park Jung-ah explained in detail,

“Now that it came to this, let’s focus on giving them entertainment. People will be very disappointed if the tournament ended now because nobody stepped up to challenge the team.”

Kuuuu. You are absolutely right.

Even Kim Min-hyuk had to agree with her. Of course, he didn’t forget to glare at Park Jong-shik with a fearsome gaze.

“Still, that’s within limit, do you understand? I won’t really help in the battle anyway. I’ll just get in the way, so I’ll stand back from the start.”

With that, Kim Min-hyuk left the arena.

Actually, in this battle between me and the Hard Difficulty’s highest ranked warriors, he was not going to be much help.

I could say the same about the other team members.

[Participant Kim Min-hyuk has left the arena.]

[Participant Lee Gi-jun has left the arena.]

[Participant Lee Yuu-jung has left the arena.]

“I signed us up for this... You will be all right?”

Before leaving the arena, Park Jung-ah asked. She looked concerned.

“Of course. It’s totally fine.”

“Well then. You must win.”

I nodded, and she walked toward the edge of the arena. Also, before she left, while maintaining her emotionless face, she winked at me.

[Participant Park Jung-ah has left the arena.]

Haha.

As I thought. She's so adorable.

[Time left until the match begins: 30 seconds.]

Now, there were just myself and Park Jong-shik's team.

Kim Min-hyuk is probably still hoping that I was going to hold back against him.

However, I was facing seven of the elite Hard Difficulty rankers.

Also, based on the matches so far, their team work is quite incredible.

The party member attributes' combination is well formed as well.

Against such opponents, I can't take it easy.

Also, I don't want to go easy on them.

They were fired up with will to fight. I can't afford to relax.

I was actually quite disappointed in the tournament so far.

The excitement felt great. It put a smile on my face.

Finally, I'm facing opponents who I can fight properly.

"Ho-jae. You won't disappoint me by taking it easy, right?"

Full of fighting spirit, he was provoking me. I let him hear my reply.

"I should be the one to say that, Big Bro Jong-shik. You won't disappoint me, right? You must not fall so easily!"

[The battle will commence.]

The message signaling the start of the match appeared. Drowning in the cheering thunder of the crowds, I charged forward.

They were not far from me. Still, I accelerated quickly and received the acceleration effect from the Wind Spirit's Blessing.

It was at that moment. There was someone who blocked my path.

The opponent was not wielding anything besides a dagger.

Watching the matches from the stands, I had obtained plenty of information about the team.

This one was a close-range fighter who focused on speed.

His ability to evade attacks was extraordinary. He didn't deal heavy damage. He wasn't able to take much damage either. However, he provoked and drew the opponents' attention to scatter their gazes.

Looking at the dagger coming toward my neck, I used a skill.

[Battle Focus]

If this is a battle of speed, then it is a fight that I cannot lose.

This is especially true at the moment since I have the accelerator effect.

I struck the man's wrist with ease and smacked his jaw with my elbow.

It was a clean hit.

The man was faltering. I haphazardly pushed him away and resumed my charge forward.

A warrior with a blue shield blocked my path.

He was a shield warrior who was in charge of the front line.

At an instant, a wave of mana surged from the warrior. A sturdy layer was formed along the outside of his body and the shield.

I wanted to go around or jump over it if I could. However, it was going to be difficult because of my speed.

I took light steps and prepared for an attack.

[Iron Wall]

I slightly reduced my velocity and sent a reverse kick to the shield.

I didn't like this method of attack very much. However, I didn't have much choice since I wanted to strike up from below.

Kuuuung-

There was a blunt echo of collision. However, the warrior didn't get pushed by my attack. He was holding the stance.

Damn it.

I wasted that move. I thought it was simply going to make him sturdy. I was going to make him float up into the air, but it didn't work.

Does it also increase the weight?

Aiming for the moment, Park Jong-shik charged at me from the side with his sword. I dodged it, grabbed his wrist and used Blink.

Kuuuung—

I made him collide with the shield warrior with resounding boom.

Having used the Blink so many times now, it was possible to utilize it like this.

The two were noisily clattering on the floor as they struggled to regain their stance. I ignored them and charged toward the opponent that I was aiming for from the start of the match.

Lee Jun-suk.

The long ranger who uses Blitz.

His attack power was incredible. Also, the Blitz attack caused substantial pain and paralysis. It was going to be tricky to handle.

As I approached Lee Jun-suk, powerful lightning surged from his body and spread around me.

Is it a skill that prevents the opponent from approaching him by discharging lightning into the surrounding?

Still, I can't let this opportunity to pass when I'm this close.

When it comes to difficult opponents, I had to finish them off even if it meant sustaining damage.

The lightning was striking my body. I could hear the zapping sound. However, I ignored it.

Do you have any idea how high my pain and paralysis resistances are!

I even have great magic resistance.

Watching me approaching while ignoring the lightning magic, Lee Jun-suk swung his arm in a futile attempt to try to stop me.

However, he was a long ranger. When it came to physical ability, he couldn't be all that strong no matter what.

I grabbed his arm and threw him to the outside of the arena.

Normally, against an opponent like him, I should be quickly striking him on the critical point to knock him out or kill him. However, since

this was tournament, I chose to throw him off the arena.

All right. I eliminated the difficult one.

I didn't even have a moment to rest. A lancer was charging at me. I avoided his spear with ease and celebrated inside for the victory to come.

While I thought I'll be grasping the victory without any trouble at this rate, I could feel a strong flow of mana from behind me.

Park Jong-shik was focusing an incredible amount of mana at his right hand.

What the hell is that...

Is that a Kamehameha wave? Or is it Rasengan?

From the looks of it, it seemed to be an attack that required a windup time.

Let's handle this one first.

It seemed the preparation was over. Park Jong-shik released himself from the stance. He raised his right hand up.

The focused mana in his white hand was glowing white as he charged in, his palm facing me.

It is too fast.

Is it also affecting his physical performance?

The increase in his speed is excessively high.

That's got to be a Power Skill.

I need to use a Power Skill to fight this.

[Perseverance]

[Talaria's Wings]

[Sensory Widening]

Just before I collided with Park Jong-shik, I used Blink and moved to the left side of his back.

Perhaps because he had seen me use Blink several times, he didn't panic. He figured out where I was and turned to his left.

'You responded quickly, but this will be different from dealing attack to the front in the way you wanted.'

Let's decide the duel here.

I also focused mana at my right hand. I threw my fist and swung the Talaria's Wings.

Kwaaang~!

* * *

With nothing to do, I rolled around on the bed.

The tournament concluded last night.

Now, the only thing left was the free activities for the third day.

Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik left the tournament as soon as it ended. Because of the Order's work, they returned to the residential area and waiting room.

To explain in more detail, Park Jong-shik used work as the excuse and left the tournament first to avoid hearing nagging from Kim Min-hyuk. Kim Min-hyuk left afterwards to the residential area.

As for me, I had a meeting, so I decided to stay here until the lunch

time.

“Inventory.”

[The mystery box for the winner of the first individual tournament.]

Explanation: The reward for the winner of the first individual tournament. It is unknown as to what could come out of the box. However, it will definitely help the winner.

[The mystery box for the winner of the first group tournament.]

Explanation: The reward for the winner of the first group tournament. It is unknown as to what could come out of the box. However, it will definitely help the winner.

I had two mystery boxes.

One was from the individual tournament. The other was from the group tournament.

Looking at the prizes made me think about the tournaments.

The individual matches were boring, but the group match was very satisfying, especially the fact that I won in the end. That made me feel even more satisfied.

Everyone was satisfied by the group tournament; not just the members of Park Jong-shik's team, but the crowds were pleased as well.

Kim Min-hyuk was probably the only one who was displeased with today's outcome.

Hahahahaha.

I brought out the mystery box and held it in my hands.

It was the size of a cube. It was black, perfect square block.

[Would you like to open it?]

I thought about it for a moment and put it back in the inventory.

I didn't need a new power right now.

Actually, I had many powers that I didn't know how to handle very well at the moment.

Let's open the box after asking Kiri Kiri.

I was getting bored. I was about to do skill training. At that moment, the knocks that I was waiting for resonated into the room.

Knock knock knock...

I panicked. To greet the guest, I got up.

I opened the door to greet Park Jung-ah. She was blushing a little.

"Were you waiting for a long time?"

I was.

I was waiting ever since the tournament ended last night. I was waiting through the entire night and the morning of the third day.

Still, I couldn't just tell her that I had been waiting long.

While I hesitated, Park Jung-ah apologized as she excused herself.

"I'm sorry I was late. The business I had to handle took longer than I thought. Were you asleep? I am not bothering you, am I?"

Bothering me? My heart is pounding from anticipation.

"Of course not. Actually, I was desperately waiting for you."

Having heard what I said, she came close to me and smirked lightly.

She whispered into my ear that she was sorry for making me wait.

As I thought, her smile is so attractive.

Park Jung-ah placed her arms around back of my neck. I picked her up by the waist and used my foot to close the door.

[PR Note: No explicit scene guys, sorry for your dissatisfied boners.]

Chapter 91

Tutorial 60th Floor (9)

“I got it out!”

Using his three plump fingers, Yong Yong plucked out a wood block and shouted. Watching him made me smile automatically.

The clone bastard and Yong Yong were playing with Jenga.

Unlike how it was played with two people taking turns to pull out wood blocks. It was only Yong Yong was pulling the blocks out.

The clone bastard was taking on the role of meddling Yong Yong’s attempts at getting the blocks out.

Actually, he was more focused on reading a novel. Anyway...

To Yong Yong and the clone bastard, Jenga was not some simple game for utilizing their focus and maintaining the center of weight of the Jenga tower.

It was a game for practicing the applications of magic.

This could be easily understood from how the clone bastard was using magic.

He wasn’t just using telekinesis. He was also controlling gravity. He had been constantly changing the weight of the wood blocks.

He also had been adjusting the amount friction between the blocks. He wrapped the Jenga tower with a barrier that absorbed shocked from outside. On the wood blocks, he even applied strengthening magic on the wooden blocks.

Just to prevent Yong Yong's ability to interfere with magic... That bastard is even using dimensional spells?

Hey, isn't that a little underhanded? That's cheating.

[It's not a crime if one does not get caught.]

What's that now?

Are you the Nyarlathotep?

[TL: Nyarlathotep is an Outer God in the H. P. Lovecraft's work. However, it is mainly a reference to Haiyore! Nyaruko-san as pointed out by NotAnApron on NT subreddit]

The clone bastard recited the famous line by the character and leisurely flipped the book's page.

Unlike the lax attitude he had, Yong Yong was really concentrated on the Jenga game.

He was endlessly circling the Jenga tower. He was observing the Jenga and using all magic spells he knew to try all sorts of things.

He beamed and looked overjoyed every time he succeeded in getting a block out.

However, it seemed the clone bastard was still too much to handle.

The differences in abilities were too great.

In fact, Yong Yong is quite skilled at magic.

There probably hasn't been a dragon in the history of dragons possessed his level of magic at his age.

This is all thanks to the early education.

I think it would be all right to have him try out Polymorph skill soon.

Yong Yong and clone bastard were playing just fine. I turned my gaze away from them and looked at the dimensional bag in my hands.

It was the bag that Lee Jun-suk gave me before he cleared the Tutorial and left.

It was possible to take things from the Tutorial when leaving. However, the amount that one could take with was restricted.

Moreover, items beyond a certain power and level were restricted regardless by the system, making them inaccessible by the outside world.

So, the graduates who left the Tutorial occasionally gifted their belongings.

Usually, the belongings were gifted to the people they knew. However, there were also many cases where the belongings were auctioned off.

People who were rich in the real world purchased the maxed-out items from the graduates. Such people cleared the Tutorial quickly.

The graduates then received the reward for the sold items at the real world.

Of course, such cases were limited to the Easy Difficulty.

It was an even trade where both sides were happy with the end result.

The graduates got to sell the items which became useless to themselves for good money. As for the rich people, they were guaranteed safety through the Tutorial.

What was a rich person going to do by becoming an Awakened Warrior of rank B or above anyway?

It was going to be enough for such a person to just clear the Easy Difficulty and become an E rank Awakened Warrior with healthy body and long lifespan.

Looking at the bag, brought up some memories.

I had received gifts like these before a lot.

When I opened the bag, the first thing from the bag was his diary.

...You are a guy, dude. Why in the world did you send me your diary?

I opened the book and read it. It was closer to a record of his growth than a diary.

It was packed with memories from the beginning of the second round of the Tutorial, which is when he started, to when he left the Tutorial.

Um... I know this is obvious, but this rascal sure was amazing too.

Lee Jun-suk entered the Tutorial like me in its early days. Instead of learning from others, he had to research and master things himself.

The process was written in great detail.

For a caster who uses Blitz as his main skill, this record would be the greatest treasure in the world.

It would not be a waste for such person to give their entire fortune in exchange for the book.

Unfortunately, this book is not much of a use for me.

I put the record away in my inventory and checked out other things in the bag.

Robe, cape, staff, coat, shoes, all sorts of accessories and even precious orbs...

He sure sent me a huge collection.

On top of that, the items have incredible levels.

This rascal held the throne of the second strongest in Tutorial for almost ten years. Should I say it is as expected of the man of such caliber?

Actually, in fact, aren't these items are better than mine?

Although it is true that I didn't care much for getting best items, this is hurting my pride a little.

I put the items away on the side.

I was thinking that I should give them to Yong Yong later.

What should I do with the rest that would be hard for Yong Yong to use?

As for the orbs, I can use them as materials for experiments.

Um... There are so many items that I am not sure about what to do with.

I had no reason to think hard about it. I opened the community.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm going to give away S rank items. First two people will get them.]

[Lee Gi-min, 32th Floor: Me!]

[Jung Ji-hyun, 41th Floor: Hand!]

[Lee Whee-sung, 3rd Floor: 1st Place~ Thank you so much. I'll use them well!]

[Park Jin, 14th Floor: Me!]

[Lee Whee-sung, 3rd Floor: What the... There weren't any replies before. I got pushed off while I was writing the message. TT TT]

Life is all about timing.

I need to give away items like this occasionally. People really like this.

As for the rest, I should send them to Park Jung-ah and donate it to the Order of Vigilance.

* * *

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: They are Lee Jun-suk's belongings? Of course I'll be grateful.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Well then. I'll place the items on the auction.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I got it. Big Bro, by the way, how did you convince him? I know I am the one who asked you to try, but I honestly did not think he would leave so willingly.]

How? What do you mean how? It's me, after all.

First, I told him the reasons why he should go back to the outside world.

Of course, they were not all that important for him, so that didn't really convince him.

Instead, Lee Jun-suk asked me what my level was.

So, I told him the answer.

Afterwards, he agonized for a long time, and told me that he thought about it and decided to go back to the outside world.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: What's your level?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: 351]

Park Jung-ah didn't send a reply for a while.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Really?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Really.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I find it amazing that levels over 300 even exist. What's this? How's this even possible? Does it make common sense? You went up by another 100 since the last time.]

My level is 351 because it is possible.

You shouldn't even try to compare me to other challengers.

Most challengers use the skills issued by the Tutorial's system and try to increase the skills' masteries.

Growing like that, they proceed with clearing stages and gaining more skills.

Meanwhile, they steadily gain experiences and levels. They also gain stats too.

After grinding 100 levels, they graduate from the Tutorial. As soon as they are freed from the influence of the Tutorial's system, their growth stops.

They may grow in experience and sense, but there are almost never any instances of anyone gaining something like skill levels afterward.

However, I'm different.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How are you different? Hurry and explain.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Unlike others who think of skills as super powers that just dropped from the sky and use them as such, I understand the fundamentals and inner workings of the skills. I can use abilities without skills.]

Ever since I was stuck behind the wall called the 61st Floor, the path I chose in attempt to break through the wall was magic.

I was trying to obtain skills that would allow me to pierce through the

floor.

For example, the sealed environment magic or clone production.

I was at the residential area. To obtain new skills, there was only one way. It was through studying magic and obtaining them without the help of the system.

Of course, such attempts all ended up in failures, but...

Like that, I increased my level in magic.

I had plenty of materials for my development.

Inside Tutorial, there were countless skills.

I dissected each of these skills. I discovered their inner workings and fundamentals.

Eventually, I learned new magic spells. I was able to create new spells and modify them.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Really... I can only say that this is incredible. By the way, how did you gain the experience points? You can get to level 300 from challenging the 61th Floor repeatedly?]

Of course not.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: There is a way.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Is it the kind that you cannot share?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It is not like that. It is similar to increasing the stats through training. When one's strength is at 9, rigorously exercise to strengthen one's muscles will increase the stat to 10. You know this, right?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: But I never heard that level will increase too.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: It turns out it does happen when the height of one's abilities go beyond the level. For example, if someone who already possesses the power of a SS rank Awakened Warrior entered the Tutorial, then that person will probably start with level 55 instead of level 1. Roughly speaking, think of it like that.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: The height of one's abilities?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I suppose I could call it one's caliber. Once the person's true caliber far exceeds the given level, the level goes up by 50. There is no reward for the level up. It is literally a change in level only to correctly reflect the person's true caliber.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: I don't quite get it, but I understood well that it is not normally possible.]

You are actually right. It is more or less impossible.

It will take development a path like mine or something even harsher. Also, it will take cooperation from countless Gods.

In addition to excessive obsession and madness, it also demands over ten years of arduous training.

It is impossible.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: An event?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Yes. Do you remember that there might be a new event soon? I told you that it definitely will not be a day of the great harmony.]

I do remember.

It's been a while though.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Didn't you say it was inaccurate

information?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: It turned out to be correct. I heard the next tournament will happen.]

I think this will get bothersome.

I never expected another tournament to happen again at this time.

One special characteristic of the tournament was that the size of the tournament grew each time.

The most recent tournament was a super-size one that combined all servers.

That means, the next tournament's size will be at least...

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Are we going to be participating with servers of other dimensions?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Probably. That's our guess.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Any other information?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: There isn't any. The information about the next tournament is ridiculously expensive. It was so expensive that we doubted our informant. It will take some time before we can get proper information.]

The problem is when the tournament will happen.

I think I should prepare for this in advance.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Still, there are good things about the tournament, don't you think?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: What's good? Because we get to meet again after not being able to see each other for so long?]

[Hey, original bastard. When you are doing your dating stuff, can't you shut the emotional feedback?]

Clone bastard, who was doing Jenga with Yong Yong, complained in frustrated voice. However, I ignored him.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: T... That's nice too, but there is the mystery box as the prize for the winner.]

I am certain that the tournament will be problematic for me, but as Park Jung-ah said, there were good things too.

The mystery box, the prize for the tournament's winner, didn't have a preset content for the prize.

Depending on the user's abilities and the situation the user faced, the item that would be most useful for the user or the user's greatest desire would be gifted to them.

In that case, perhaps I could get an item that would be the clue to getting through the 61st Floor?

I have never heard of such an item, but it was possible.

I got a new goal.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Ah, I'm sorry, but please confirm the information for me. About setting privacy for a specific information, if it applies for the servers in other dimensions. Don't put this in the request list.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor:... I got it. I'll go find it as soon as I can.]

Park Jung-ah knew about my situation very well. As expected, she understood me quickly.

I expressed my gratitude to her and closed the messenger.

I raised my wrist and looked at the bracelets that were clanking with

each other.

They were safety measures to suppress my power.

First, I should make more of these.

Other people are not like Yong Yong or my clone bastard. They are very fragile.

I am going to be meeting other people. It has been a long while since I met other people. If I was forgetful about this, I could hurt others.

If my mana ran rampant, a large-scale disaster will happen too.

I think I should spend the days making the safety devices for a while.

I opened the inventory and checked the materials.

After that, I checked the points I had left.

There wasn't much material left to make enough safety devices.

It looks like I'll have to go to the 61st Floor again.



PbF by: traitor/SEN



The Tutorial Is Too Hard

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- Part 4 -

**-Author-
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[Light Novel Bastion]

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튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



Chapter 92

Tutorial 15th Floor

[You cleared 15th Floor of Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your wounds and abnormalities will be recovered.]

[You obtained 3000 points for clearing the stage.]

[You obtained 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You obtained 5300 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 700 points.]

[Additional rewards are given based on the play record.]

[You acquired Night Vision Lv. 10]

[Night Vision Lv. 10 was combined with Night Vision Lv. 6]

[You acquired Night Vision Lv. 11]

I'm so glad to see the clear message.

Ugh. That took long.

The 15th Floor stage's clear condition was killing all the monsters of an abandoned mining cave.

The monsters were like moles. They turned the mine into a complicated network of pathways like an ant farm. It took over 14

days to hunt them all down.

To find the traces of monsters hiding in strange corners, I located hidden pathways. As I spent a lot of time crawling through narrow pathways, I wondered if I was going to develop claustrophobia.

I never knew that spending a long time at dark and narrow space could be this grueling.

No matter what I was doing, resting, sleeping or eating, the space was so small that I couldn't even stretch my arms up all the way. Having spent so long in such confined spaces, my arms, legs, feet and hands all felt incredibly stiff.

Unable to satisfy the desire to stretch out and be comfortable, I felt trapped, and I lashed out at the Tutorial frequently.

The clear difficulty itself was not tricky.

I now had Energy Sensory, and my ability to operate mana had developed another level as well. Hence, darkness was not a big hurdle to me.

However, I wondered if I should be training other senses besides the Energy Sensory, so I minimized the use of Energy Sensory and carried out the search for monsters by relying on other senses. This turned out to be a bad idea.

Of course, my efforts were not in vain.

I spent two weeks and tracked down monsters by focusing on just my vision and hearing. My skills on tracking, stealth, and other ones related to sensory leveled up a lot.

As a clear reward, the Night Vision skill's level increased as well.

As a bonus, I became very used to moving around while in prone.

It is just that... I never want to experience this stage ever again.

Let's hurry and go out to Kiri Kiri's field.

“Teleport.”

* * *

“Hello! Ah hahahahahat! Houjaeeeee, you are completely dark! It's a dark Houjae!”

I didn't even get to feel the joy from moving to a open field before Kiri Kiri started to tease me about my experience.

First, I ignored her and focused on being thankful for the space.

There were fresh wind and warm sunlight.

More importantly, the field was wide and open. It was magnificent.

I stretched my arms and legs as I asked Kiri Kiri,

“Dark? I am?”

Kiri Kiri didn't have a moment to spare to respond to my question because she was busy rolling on the ground and laughing out loud.

Bewildered, I looked at myself found out that even my armor had darkened into shades of dirt.

It seemed a lot of black stuff got on me because I spent so long grinding in the narrow cave.

“Kiri Kiri, you don't like this?”

“Yea! I don't like it! Ah hahahat. Dark Houjae!”

You sure are excited, totally excited.

I quietly opened the store and bought chocolate.

“It’s too bad. You don’t like dark stuff. You don’t like chocolate either then?”

“No, I like it!”

Of course you do.

Kiri Kiri immediately changed her words. I handed over the chocolate to her and brought out a small hand mirror from the inventory.

Kiri Kiri recommended that I buy this before I went up the Fourth Floor.

Now that I think about it, why did she tell me to buy this?

I never even used the mirror in clearing any stages.

Um... It means that it could had been a clue for clearing a stage, but I didn’t utilize it.

This proves that Kiri Kiri’s advices are not 100% necessarily useful.

I looked at myself in the mirror. I do look dark.

It looks as if I intentionally put on makeup on my face. There is not even a single spot of light skin anywhere. My entire face is covered in a layer of dirt.

I can see why Kiri Kiri was laughing.

The chocolate I gave to Kiri Kiri was 98% Cacao, so it was incredibly bitter. Having tasted it, Kiri Kiri was cringing and on the verge of tears. I glanced at her and peeked a smile.

Kiri Kiri looked like an innocent child who experienced the evils of the world for the first time. She looked that shocked. Kiri Kiri looked at me.

I opened the inventory to bring out a towel and water bucket. I wiped

the black layer from my face.

It is not coming off easily.

It took a long time just to get it off from my lips and eyes.

Let's wipe off the rest later. It's such a bother.

I looked at Kiri Kiri. She was shedding desperately thick, chicken-shit-like tears. She was crying like a small child whose toy was taken, yet she was chipping away at the dark chocolate.

I was dumbfounded. I took the dark chocolate from Kiri Kiri.

What the... If it tastes so bad that you are going to cry, then don't eat it. Just throw it away.

You are making me feel sorry that I gave it to you. Why are you eating while crying?

"Hiiing. Don't take it from me... Hiiing."

Note: "Hing" is a kind of sound made when Koreans want to express stressful, annoying, or depressing emotion.

Even though she looked desperately sad, Kiri Kiri was not able to give up on the snack. I felt terrible for some unexplainable reason.

Could it be that a ghost who never tasted sweet treats got attached to you?

I bought a sweet milk chocolate from the store and handed it to Kiri Kiri.

* * *

"You don't have anything you think would be worth telling me about the next stage?"

Kiri Kiri was holding the dark chocolate in one hand and the milk chocolate in the other.

“That’s right. I got nothing.”

I figured as much.

Ever since I cleared all floors that were supposed to required party play, Kiri Kiri had not been giving me any solid information about clearing the next stages.

If I asked specifically, then she did tell me things. However, she usually didn’t tell me anything because she judged that I didn’t need it.

What was I was going to ask?

First, there are the questions about God, mana and the tournament, which are the things I am always curious about.

Information about them are incredibly expensive, so I need to collect more allowances.

Other than those...

“Ah, Kiri Kiri. I was thinking about switching to a different weapon.”

“Weapon?”

“Yes. I really need a better and sturdier weapon.”

I seriously do.

Recently, I had been really feeling the need for new weapons.

The weapons and armors I currently use: the shield, gladius and backsword, were purchased right after clearing the Fourth Floor.

I had been using the same weapons and armors since then.

Ever since I gained the ability to layer the weapon with mana, I didn't exactly need to find a good weapon. However, I kept contemplating about the lacking performance of the weapons compared to my level.

The weapons looked like they were going to break if I weakened the mana layering on them even by a little bit. Compared to my power, the weapons I had were too light and weak.

If it were not for the fact that the weapons were repaired automatically when I entered the waiting room, the weapons would have become junk a long time ago.

As for the shield, it would have been pierced by arrows that appeared at the First or Second Floors.

Regardless, I developed skills on minimizing impacts because of this, so the shield helped me, but...

"You should change them. Actually, you should have changed them sooner. Wait."

Kiri Kiri pondered about something for a moment and proposed her idea.

"How about opening the Mystery Box?"

"The Mystery Box? You mean the box I won from the tournament?"

"Yea!"

I opened the inventory and brought out a box.

[The mystery box for the winner of the first individual tournament.]

Explanation: The reward for the winner of the first individual tournament. It is unknown as to what could come out of the box. However, it will definitely help the winner.

It was an item that I received as the winning prize from the

tournament.

Because I won both the individual and group tournaments, I had two Mystery Boxes.

I had asked Kiri Kiri about the box when I cleared the 14th Floor, but she only gave me information similar to the box's description. She said that I should open it later when I have something I need.

“Honestly, opening the box for a weapon is a little... I don't feel comfortable with that. It is possible that some random, unfitting weapon that I had never used before could come out.”

“No. The statement about the resulting item being unknown does not mean the item will be random. It is stated that way because the needs of the user change constantly.”

What I need changes constantly.

I am not sure about that. I can think of something I would need regardless of when.

For instance, let's say a total cheat item that raises all stats by 50 each came out.

Such an item would be useful for anyone regardless of the person's level.

So, the item that could come out of the box is not going to be the best and greatest item that I need.

It would be better to say that it will be the best item I will need at a moment.

For example, items that are a little better than the ones I could purchase through the store.

Perhaps the item from the box will be something like that?

In that case, I understand why Kiri Kiri said I should open it later.

“All right. I’ll open it.”

[Would you like to open it?]

Yes.

[The Mystery Box you won from the first tournament’s individual round is disappearing.]

[You obtained the Transmutable Thousand Arms of Kangtus]

An item with a strange name popped out.

I stared at Kiri Kiri. She avoided my gaze and bit on to chocolate.

[TL: There is a toilet joke here that could not be translated because it is a play on words of how the Korean word sounds. Because I read further, I realized the name actually means Transmutable Thousand Arms. However, because of how the name sounds, the name also could mean the “Toilet from the Heaven,” which does not sound like a weapon at all. MC thought it might actually be a Toilet from the Heaven because he had numerous troubles in the past that involved pooping. He thought perhaps an item to help his poop troubles came out of the box considering the past history of needs regarding this matter which proved to be critical in some instances.]

Let’s check the item.

It won’t be too late to take the chocolate from Kiri Kiri later.

The item was a black sphere.

It was very sturdy and heavy.

[Transmutable Thousand Arms of Kangtus]

It is the weapon used by Kangtus, the weapon master.

It has a thousand different forms.

There is a limit on its size and weight.

The weapon was created by a nameless gold dragon of a high rank.

Nothing is known about the inner workings of the weapon or its composition.

Kangtus, the owner of the weapon, lived for over long 300 years, so there was a rumor about him being half-human and half-dragon.

It was a great item.

First, it stated the weapon was made by a dragon.

That means that I hit the jackpot.

I don't know about the weapon's performance yet, but the fact that I can change its form at will has a huge merit.

I had been using short dagger, spear and long sword. The weapon's transmutability was sweet.

It means I could have three different weapons with just this one item instead of buying three different weapons.

Let's test it out.

The Transmutable Arms was the size of a volleyball. I placed it on top of my hand and visualized the shape of a weapon.

Nothing happened.

I injected mana into the weapon and tried to visualize a weapon again. This time, the weapon wobbled and changed its shape into a gladius.

I injected it with mana again and tried to change it to a long sword.

The long sword was black, and it had a simple design.

It looked a little different from the backsword. However, it didn't feel awkward when I tried swinging it.

The weapon's ability to change forms is quick.

It didn't even take five seconds.

If it is this fast, I think I could even shift the weapon's shape in middle of a battle to surprise my enemies.

Also, the weapon's weight and durability are substantial as well.

As for the weight, it seemed to remain consistent regardless of the weapon shape.

The weapon's weight was heavy enough to be a drawback. However, considering my current muscular strength, heavier weapons are more effective.

I think the weapon is more durable than the other weapons I had been using.

More importantly, this weapon is handling my mana very well.

Layering a weapon with mana is quite difficult.

When I trained in this art at the Fourth Floor, it took two rounds. I continued the training, barely eating or sleeping.

Because the technique was so tricky, it was still somewhat difficult for me to layer a weapon with mana.

However, this Transmutable Arms handled the mana so efficiently.

Yep. Jackpot. Supersized Jackpot.

After getting a jackpot from one box, I became greedy.

What would happen if I opened the other box?

Are they going to give me another Transmutable Arms?

Even if it is not that, if it is another item on par with the Transmutable Arms, I'll welcome it no matter what.

Let's crack open another one. I should do this when I'm lucky.

[Would you like to open it?]

Yes.

[The Mystery Box you won from the first tournament's group round is disappearing.]

[Transmutable Thousand Arms of Kangtus]

It is the weapon used by Kangtus, the weapon master.

It has thousand different forms.

There is a limit on its size and weight.

The weapon was created by a nameless, high rank gold dragon.

Nothing is known about the inner workings of the weapon or its composition.

Kangtus, the owner of the weapon, lived long for over 300 years, so there was a rumor about him being half human and half dragon.

Jackpot...

Another one really did come out.

It would be perfect to use one for the shield on one hand the other one as the weapon on the other hand.

I can also shift the shape of the shield at will into various forms. I could even wield weapons with both hands.

It seemed that the Transmutable Thousand Arms could not change to a form that is not predetermined. However, since there are thousand different forms, this is enough.

“Kiri Kiri.”

“Yep, yep! Yep!”

Eyes sparkling, Kiri Kiri looked at me.

Based on the past experience, it seemed she knew what my next line was going to be.

“What kind of cake would you like me to buy for you?”

“Ice cream cake!”

* * *

While Kiri Kiri was rushing at the ice-cream cake, I decided to check out the community forums.

There wasn't any new information there.

Lately, useful information went to the Order of Vigilance first, so I didn't end up getting new information from community as often as before.

My main goal in visiting the community was just watching people playing with each other.

Lately, the hottest topic was guessing who would become the first one to clear the Tutorial.

If it was like before, people would have picked Lee Chan-yong, the one at the highest floor.

However, the public's opinion had slightly shifted.

It had been many rounds since Lee Chan-yong got stuck on the 89th Floor. He was unable to clear the stage.

Has it been five or six rounds?

On top of this, the situation was that he couldn't even make an estimate on when he would clear it.

It seemed Lee Chan-yong had become lethargic because he was stuck behind a wall.

He was a challenger who had put his life on the line to focus on clearing the Tutorial.

Because of his determination, he was able to clear through the floors faster than everyone else, and became the challenger at the highest floor. However, his rapid progress had come back to hurt him as a poison.

Unlike me, he didn't care about growth at all.

He merely focused on clearing the stage faster and faster.

Even when he had opportunity for growth, he chose to clear the stages faster, even if it was just a day or an hour sooner.

Honestly, the choices he made were stupid.

Plus, the Order had been sending him items and information to support him, so he progressed through the stages more rapidly.

Back then, it looked like Lee Chan-yong was going to be able to leave the Tutorial in a few short rounds. Now that he was facing a stage that truly tested his abilities, he had no choice but to stop his march to the top.

I thought about how he looked when I saw him at the tournament.

In the past, he obsessively charged toward the goal he set for himself. Now, he was lacking in drive, and he looked empty.

If it was like before, he would not even have come to the tournament.

He was not interested in it.

Recently, Park Min, a challenger in Easy Difficulty at 83th Floor, was being discussed as the possible first challenger to clear the Tutorial.

He was slower than Lee Chan-yong. However, he had been forging his abilities as he progressed through the floors. Also, he made it to 83th Floor despite not having received any support from the Order. He was a challenger who made it to where he was on his own.

Even the people inside the Order sometimes talked about if the Order should support Park Min instead.

I suddenly wondered what Kim Min-hyuk's thoughts were on this matter.

He was aware of this problem.

He was the type of man who always recognized problems well before they became apparent in the community, and he had been preparing for them.

Should I contact him?

I was about to send him a message, but I turned off the message window.

Since I'm going to ask, I'm going to ask Park Jung-ah.

Keeping that thought in mind, I started to write a message to her.

[God of Adventure is smiling while watching you.]

...That god...

Since the tournament, the God of Adventure had been showing such responses whenever I thought about Park Jung-ah or communicated with her through the messages.

The God of Adventure was acting like an uncle who was more than happy to watch the nieces and nephews play. It was quite unpleasant.

Especially when I think about what happened during the night with Park Jung-ah...

[God of Adventure is excited in anticipation.]

[God of Adventure is eagerly watching you.]

[God of Slowness is smacking the back of someone.]

Because of such responses, now I'm past being a little annoyed. It is awkward.

Pervert...

God of Adventure is always watching me.

Honestly, I never tried to hide anything, and I never let it bother me. I thought they could go ahead and watch if they wanted.

However, thinking about the fact that they were watching what I was doing with Park Jung-ah too...

[God of Adventure is blushing out of embarrassment.]

Ugh... That voyeurism patient...

Chapter 93

Tutorial 16th Floor (1)

[God of Nature?]

[Yes! The Trial of Apostle started, and I obtained a new Power Skill.]

[Is that so? Um...]

[Is there a problem?]

[No. It's not like that. It's just that I don't get along with the God of Nature.]

* * *

I left Kiri Kiri's field and entered the 16th Floor's waiting room. As soon as I got there, I tested out the performance of the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

It was definitely more durable than the equipment I had before.

I could feel its heavy weight as well.

After doing a light performance test, I checked out its various forms.

It would be hard to utilize all thousand forms in battle.

I will probably end up using a few forms most of the time. Depending on the situations, I might select a few more.

I thought about the long sword that I formed at Kiri Kiri's field, and the weapon immediately changed to the long sword.

Once I had formed the weapon before, it seemed the weapon was going to change shape even if the idea just casually passed through my mind.

Of course, I needed to inject it with a little bit of mana.

It even has a favorite mark function. It's the best.

First, I looked for a shield form.

I was concerned about the possibility that the Transmutable Arms didn't possess a shield form. Fortunately, it included various shield forms.

I found two forms that I decided to use as my main shields.

First one was a relatively small round shield.

I was most used to this shape.

The second one was an inverted triangle-shaped shield.

Its corners were protruding noticeably. I think the corners will be useful for striking down the enemies.

It doesn't look like it was used by a human being.

The shield had the design that made me think of history books or video games.

Actually, because the Transmutable Arms is so heavy, ordinary humans would not even be able to lift or swing it.

I should just think that the weapon itself was never meant to be used by a human.

...No. The description of the weapon said Kangtus, the owner of the weapon, was rumored to be half-human and half-dragon.

It means he definitely was a human being.

Does that mean he is from another world?

Another dimension, another planet? Perhaps that's what it is.

I wish I could ask Kiri Kiri about these, but this kind of information is extremely expensive.

Once, I tried to find information about Idy before realizing how expensive it was.

I thought information about the Gods were actually cheaper.

I set distracting thoughts aside and focused on testing the weapon again.

Now that I have a shield, next is the weapon.

I tried out the gladius form first.

I was most familiar with this.

It formed a powerful combination with the shield, and the weapon fit me well, so I probably won't be throwing away this combination any time soon.

There were many other short swords that matched the form of Gladius.

There were minor differences in width, length, and handle. Some just had different decorative designs.

I think there are over ten short swords with similar shapes.

Of them all, I picked the one that had similar length to the Gladius I used to use. This one didn't have much decoration. I committed the sword's shape to my memory.

Next, I tried forming long swords and straight swords.

The long sword was for swinging with the shield.

It was closer to the kind of sword that was used on horseback. It was similar to the backsword I had been using.

As for the straight sword, I made it although I didn't really have a specific use for it.

I didn't feel that I needed one, but because straight swords usually looked really cool I decided to remember memorize one form.

Next was the spear.

I learned spear techniques from Idy. Plus, it formed a powerful combination with a shield.

First, I tried forming the most basic shape.

It was straight, and it wasn't decorated with anything.

Because of the unique metallic nature of the Transmutable Weapon, the entire spear was made of metal. Because of this, the spear didn't bend. Also, it was quite heavy.

The weight of the weapon was constant, but because spear was longer than a short weapon like Gladius, it felt heavier.

Of course, with my strength, I could handle it with ease in one hand.

The next form I discovered was a halberd.

I found many forms with large edges while I was checking them out.

It had an axe-like edge for swinging and a spear tip for thrusting. It even had a hook for grabbing the opponent. The halberd had various methods of attack.

I was sure it would take me some time to get used to the halberd. Still, I liked that it looked cool.

The last form I found was a blunt weapon.

Throughout stages, there were a few occasions where I needed such a weapon.

Blunt weapons were highly effective against sturdy armor or monsters with strong bones.

In particular, when I fought skeletal soldiers at the Sixth Floor, I regretted not having a blunt weapon and even wished to restart the Tutorial with a blunt weapon.

Since the Sixth Floor, I had been clearing the later floors with ease, so I didn't feel a strong need for weapon upgrades. I had been postponing the plan of finding myself a blunt weapon, but I finally got one now.

I memorized another two forms, a mace shape and a hammer shape.

I practiced swinging various weapons before checking the time. Just in time for a meal.

[Round 17, Day 17, 08:10]

It's time for me to go to the Stage.

It won't be too late for me to master the weapons as I clear the stage.

I ate a simple meal with muffins and milk as I watched the community.

There wasn't much there.

Should I message to someone?

I already sent a message to Park Jung-ah. Besides,, it was her busy hour. I'll just get in her way if I contact her at this time.

I should contact her again later.

[God of Adventure is proud of your decision.]

...I'm very close to getting annoyed.

Please show some restraint in watching me, you old man.

I thought about an old man who was heavily panting with blushing face. That was giving me the creeps.

There was no proof that the God of Adventure was an old man.

[God of Adventure was seriously hurt by your words.]

[God of Adventure is pissed.]

I don't care.

It is not like this is the first time that the God of Adventure got pissed at me.

Ah, since God of Adventure is pissed, maybe he won't watch me as much? That's actually better.

[God of Adventure is very disappointed.]

[God of Adventure is very disappointed.]

[God of Adventure is very disappointed.]

Oh my... It looks like he isn't going to stop watching me just because he is pissed.

I ate the muffin as I thought about God of Adventure, and then I contacted Lee Hyung-jin.

There was no reply.

He said he entered the Fourth Floor's boss room recently. He was probably busy.

The boss room at the Fourth Floor is pretty tough. I wonder if he will do well there.

Of course, considering the theme's special characteristic, as long as he is hell bent on remaining hidden, I won't have to worry about him dying in that boss room.

I fed the rest of the muffin into my mouth and got up.

I wiped my hand on my waist and got on the portal.

I went past a familiar looking bonfire room and used the portal that led to the stage.

[Welcome to the 16th Floor's stage.]

Kwang! Kwang~!

As soon as I entered the stage, violent sounds echoed into the air and the ground shook wildly.

I instinctively lowered my body and maintained balance.

It's dark in here.

I spread mana to check the surrounding area.

It's a sealed space.

Just now, when the ground shook with loud noise, I think the ceiling collapsed and blocked the exit.

The walls, ceiling and floor are all made of stones.

Am I trapped in here?

There were five other people in this space.

To figure out their appearances in greater detail, I was about to spread more mana. However, a long message appeared.

[The 16th Floor's Trial will begin.]

Description: Ten years ago, at the west of the Urphan Continent, a nameless dungeon was discovered. Since then, countless adventurers have come to the dungeon.

At the dungeon, some found precious stones, rare mana herbs, disabilities and even death.

Those were daily routine in this dungeon.

Two years ago, holy temples throughout the continent all received the same divine message.

The message said there is a precious treasure lying dormant in the dungeon at the west of the Urphan Continent.

Fueled by greed, numerous forces sought the treasure and sent exploration squads.

Holy knights of a holy temple, adventurers and mercenaries of a guild, knights of a kingdom and mages of a magic tower gathered for the dungeon's treasure.

At the end of their joint search effort, which lasted for one year, they succeeded in finding a narrow hidden pathway that led to the center of the dungeon.

As soon as they discovered the pathway, their collaboration ended.

Each organization sent their best to the pathway.

They were all thirsty with desire to eliminate the competition and take the treasure.

The explorers were anxiously searching through the pathway, and they made contact with the Doppelganger, the dungeon's lord who was asleep at the center.

When the explorers were about to attack the doppelganger, someone activated a trap which generated darkness and noise. Taking advantage of this narrow opportunity, Doppelganger disappeared.

Doppelganger is a very dangerous demon that could bring calamity to the human world.

You must not let the doppelganger leave the dungeon.

Fortunately, the exit is blocked by the collapsed ceiling.

Defeat the doppelganger and escape from the sealed dungeon.

[Clear condition]

1. Survive for seven days until the rescue party will arrive.
2. Find and eradicate the doppelganger.

When I finished reading the long message, a quiet voice reverberated across the space.

“Light.”

The man was wearing a big coned hat and wielding a wooden staff. Bright light was coming from his hand.

With the light, now I could clearly see the inside of the dungeon.

Including myself, there were six people.

As the message said, there were a holy knight, a knight, a mercenary, an adventurer, and a mage. Including myself, there were six.

“Doppelganger! The doppelganger is gone! Did it escape!?”

A big mercenary shouted.

I was not sure if he was the mercenary, but he was the only one in mercenary getup.

He sure has strong vocals.

He isn't just making the dungeon shake. I feel like my head is shaking too.

“The doppelganger is still here. Be careful. My holy object is warning me that the demon is still in this place.”

That old man must be a holy knight.

Each of these people had strikingly unique getup, so it was easy to tell them apart.

“Could it be using a transparency magic? Doppelganger is a type of demon, so it must know how to use magic.”

That one must be an adventurer.

He has all sorts of items packed in the pockets and the bag.

He head is covered by a long hood, so I cannot see his face.

I could use the mana to check his face, but he is definitely a man, so I don't feel like doing that just to check his face.

“Detect Invisibility.”

The mage had been quiet after casting the light magic. Now, the mage used another spell.

Invisibility detection. So, there is such a spell too.

It must be convenient.

After a moment, the mage shook his head.

It meant he didn't detect anything through the spell.

My senses were telling me the same.

“There are just the six of us here.”

Having heard my words, the holy knight lifted his head and expressed his doubt.

“But my holy object definitely... Ah, I see.”

Why are you stopping in middle of the sentence?

What's 'ah, I see.' Instead of keeping it to yourself, why don't you share it with me too.

However, the holy knight's mouth was shut. It didn't open again.

There was a knight on the corner. It seemed he hurt his back. He was rubbing his back in the corner. Fortunately, the knight resolved my question.

“According to the records, the doppelganger takes on the subject's form after killing the person. When the quake happened and the ceiling collapsed, it appears one of us was done in by the doppelganger. Everyone gathered here are all powerful warriors, yet the doppelganger managed to do with such a narrow opportunity. It is no wonder why it is a high demon.”

It seemed the knight liked to act like a smart-aleck. The snobby looking knight explained it step by step.

He is good at explaining it in a clean manner, however annoying he is.

I see his talent in explaining things.

To organize it, he was saying there is a doppelganger among the five,

other than myself.

Also, I need to defeat that doppelganger before the rescue party arrives. I need to survive and escape the dungeon. These are the 16th Floor stage's theme.

This is fun.

The clear condition and message didn't say anything about the lives of the other four.

In other words, if I killed them all, which will include the doppelganger, then I will be able to clear the stage for sure.

I could be certain of clearing the stage if I did it that way, but I want to stay away from that idea as much as possible.

How long has it been since I entered the Tutorial?

For the first time, I met other humans in the Tutorial who were not challengers.

It was possible they were not really humans. However, they were at least from humanoid civilizations.

There is no need for me to set the direction that way from the start.

Doppelganger is not the important part.

It is their information that matters more.

Their world, culture, technology, magic, and holy power... I have so many things I want to ask.

In particular, my study of magic had hit a roadblock lately, so I am in desperate need for information, especially the mage's knowledge.

I should set the plan toward having conversations with them and resolving this doppelganger situation together.

[God of Adventure is satisfied with your decision.]

[God of Slowness is unhappy with it.]

The mage had his eyes met with mine by chance. The mage panicked a little and turned his head away.

Actually, it was not by coincidence. I was glaring at the mage.

Why is he acting that way?

Is he shy?

[God of Adventure is highly entertained.]

Two men looked at each other, and one of them avoided the stare. What's so entertaining to watch?

Ugh...

Chapter 94

Tutorial 16th Floor (2)

“I don’t think it will work... We will have to sit tight and wait for the rescue party to come. I will be hard for us to clean up the debris and get out of here.”

The adventurer said that after checking out the exit that was blocked by the ceiling’s rubble.

“We have another matter that’s more important than that. The doppelganger is a dangerous demon. We must not let it escape to the outside. Before the rescue party comes, we must resolve this matter on our own here.”

The holy knight said that.

You don’t need to say that again. I kill the demon as well so I can clear the stage.

“However, figuring out the doppelganger is extremely difficult once it steals the likeness of a person. The doppelganger doesn’t just steal the appearance of a person; It also steals the memories and personality of the original, so you cannot tell it apart from the person so easily.”

As I thought, that knight is talented at giving exposition.

Was he an oil baron in his past life?

“Does anyone here know how to identify the doppelganger?”

The mercenary shouted in husky voice.

Having heard the man, everyone pondered deeply about it. However, it seemed nobody had any good ideas. They all kept silent.

“How about just trying to attack each other?”

Having heard what I just said, the holy knight panicked a little. He asked,

“Attack? What are you trying to say?”

“About the doppelganger. Does it reveal its true self when it is attacked?”

“It will! Even a doppelganger will reveal its demonic form to survive when attacked because its power in its demonic form will be stronger. However, we don’t know who is the doppelganger, so how are we supposed to attack the doppelganger?”

The kind knight explained.

There is a way.

“I do have a thought. I wonder what everyone would think of this plan.”

“What do you have in mind?”

“In my town, we call this the mafia game.”

* * *

“So, after having a discussion and concluding it each day, gather everyone’s opinions, select the doppelganger and attack the selected person?”

“Yes.”

That knight over there has superb talent for explaining things.

Using the mafia game method, people will naturally be forced to take turns and talk about themselves.

Instead of the identity of the doppelganger, I am more curious about the people's stories, so this is the best method for me.

“Denied.”

The mage said in quiet voice.

The adventurer laughed as he crouched and sat the corner.

“It looks like you guys don't even have the level of a rat's shit about understanding demons. A doppelganger is a powerful high demon. I cannot be certain of the victory even if the five besides the doppelganger were to join forces and attacked it together. Let's assume we did collect our thoughts and attacked one person. It would be good if we got the right one. However, what if we got the wrong one? If we lose even just one person, we won't be able to defeat the doppelganger.”

“Ah, you don't have to worry about that. I'll kill the doppelganger.”

“You? How?”

“I intend to kill it by myself.”

Also, if possible, I hope others won't interfere and get in my way.

The experience points I gain might decrease if other people join me in hunting down the doppelganger.

I never heard about a doppelganger.

Obviously, I don't have a way of knowing how strong a doppelganger is.

However, I could make a guess.

It is the matter of the Tutorial stage's setting.

First, the challenger must find the doppelganger while minimizing

casualties.

From the doppelganger's perspective, it would want to reduce the number of foes as much as possible before it gets discovered.

It might ambush someone when it has the chance. It might cause strife between people. It could also try to deflect attention to a scapegoat.

Second, the challenger must defeat the doppelganger with the remaining people once he is revealed.

The question is how many of the challengers will still be alive by the time the doppelganger is discovered.

The adventurer said it will be very dangerous to fight the doppelganger with just four people, and the group would stand a slim chance of victory even with all five people.

Assuming the challenger is stronger than the average strength of the other five, the challenger must have at work with at least three or four survivors to stand a chance against the doppelganger.

However, such a plan applies only for ordinary challengers.

It is a completely different story for me.

If the doppelganger is a little stronger than or is on par with the combined power of the five here, then the doppelganger is not strong enough to beat me.

Honestly, I could fight them off if a group of four and the doppelganger came at me at once, and I could win.

Of course, the group didn't think so.

"Bravado."

"That's nonsense. Are you out of your mind? Kill a demon by yourself? Why don't you say you can kill a dragon by yourself too?"

I think it would be faster if I just demonstrated my power instead of explaining it in words.

Bearing that thought, I carried my will in mana and used a skill.

[Overwhelm (Lv.3)]

Explanation: Spread mana to the surrounding and overwhelm the weaker opponents.

I learned this skill by chance while I was practicing the telepathic communication that I learned from the master monk at the 13th Floor.

As I practiced the skill alone, I realized that this skill was responsible for the strange sense of pressure I felt from the master monk.

Because of this pressure, I overestimated the monk's combat potential, and was overly cautious.

The skill was similar to the telepathic communication, which allowed me to convey meanings by carrying my will through the mana.

The skill didn't contain detailed meaning in the mana. Instead, it overwhelmed the weaker opponents with pressure.

When they are affected by the Overwhelm skill, they will discern a strong battle spirit from the caster and feel the overwhelming pressure creeping into their hearts.

To the affected individuals, the caster's existence will appear to be huge and mysterious as if there is something hidden within.

The difference in strength will appear to be greater than it actually is.

Of course, the skill won't actually deteriorate the stats of an affected individual. The skill was essentially a bluff skill.

Carrying my will, the mana reached the group, who backed away in fear.

They all panicked and quickly took steps back. They all brought their hands toward their weapons.

“Now, let’s assume I am the doppelganger. Ah, don’t do anything while I’m talking. I’m going to attack you without warning if you do.”

The group’s eyes became even sharper and violent.

They were under the skill’s effect, yet it appeared that they didn’t lose their fighting spirit.

“If I am the doppelganger, then you guys don’t stand a chance of victory to begin with. It won’t matter to me if my identity is discovered or not.”

“Ah. We won’t know until we tried fighting you. The five of us here are all quite famous in the continent.”

“You should listen to the end. If I am not the doppelganger, then the opposite situation will happen. As long as you guys can figure out who the doppelganger is, I will be able to kill it no matter how many people are still left by then. Considering that, isn’t it worth assuming that I am not the doppelganger?”

“So, as a way to figure out who the doppelganger is, you want us to take turns and tell stories about ourselves?”

The holy knight asked.

“That’s right. Even if the doppelganger can mimic the person’s memories and personality, talking for a very long time might lead to a few mistakes, don’t you think? It is not like we are talking about just a few sentences. Talking about oneself for a whole day can cause the doppelganger to drop clues unconsciously.”

The dungeon fell to silence as I finished my monologue.

It looked like they were all diligently contemplating.

Will they be convinced by my words?

Most probably won't be.

Although I was the one who said it, it was not all that convincing.

After a while, the holy knight said,

"I agree about taking turns to talk. First, I would like to ask about you. I actually know a bit about the other four. I met them a few times while we were searching the dungeon as well. However, I don't have any information about you. Why don't you start with an introduction about yourself?"

The holy knight just made it annoying for me.

My goal is hearing their stories and gaining information.

This was a rare opportunity for me to get past the Tutorial system's restriction and obtain free information. I cannot just let it pass me by.

However, I cannot tell them about me in honest manner either.

They won't believe what I have to say about my true identity.

It's not like I could tell them the truth and say that I am Korean and a former professional gamer who is currently in the Tutorial stage, can't I?

I need to properly hide my identity.

I thought about the message I read earlier and slowly said,

"I am here to... obtain the treasure that's said to be hidden in this dungeon. I am sorry, but I won't be able to tell you about my identity in detail. There are plenty of influential organizations who would send someone in secret to secure the treasure, right? Just think that I'm from one of those."

I think I talked my way out of it pretty well.

However, the people didn't think so.

"You were the one who told us to talk, yet you are the one who is hiding your identity. Honestly, you are the most suspicious one here, you know that? You are the one who looks like the doppelganger the most. Are you scheming to get information out of us? Is that why you asked us to talk about ourselves?"

The adventurer casually hid one hand behind his back as he said that.

Wow, that was sharp.

He was right. It was a scheme to get information by having them talk.

I can't think of anything to say in response to the adventurer.

Because I was not able to say anything back right away, everyone slowly positioned their stances through small movements.

"Also, I cannot agree to what you said earlier either. Hope that you are not a doppelganger since that will give us best chance of survival? If we do as you say and the doppelganger escapes to the outside, that will bring huge chaos to the world. Even if we only stand a narrow chance of victory, if the five of us fight together against you and we should be able to inflict serious damage and drag out your true form. After that, when the exit opens, our comrades will be able to put an end to a bastard like you."

Oh my... You sure have a global perspective, our great holy knight sir.

Considering the change in the tone throughout what he just said, it looks like he is certain I am the doppelganger.

The group looked like they would strike at any moment. I wanted to moan of frustration.

I tried hard to convince them the best I could. As I thought, I am still clumsy at convincing people.

Now, they were drawing their weapons right in front of me. They

aren't even trying to be stealthy about it. I waved my hand around and said to the group,

“Ah, wait a minute. Let me say one more thing.”

“Trying to scheme to the end! Die, you demon bastard!”

The adventurer threw a dagger at me, initiating the battle.

So, in the end, this is what happens?

Ugh, time to go back to the usual method.

I should just beat them senseless and then have a conversation with them.

First, I didn't dodge the dagger. I caught it with a light movement with my hand.

I am so sick of projectile attacks.

I had gone through excruciating experiences during my early days in the Tutorial and learned.

I promptly threw the dagger back at the adventurer.

The dagger flew at the adventurer whistling through the air, and the adventurer dove away.

The mercenary came close to be before I realized. I dodged his axe and quickly moved away.

I was fighting a combined force of a holy knight, a knight, an adventurer, a mercenary and a mage.

I had no need to act like a dumb monster in an RPG game that fights the frontline fighters who draw attention.

The most important target is the mage.

The mercenary was trying to keep me here, but I ignored him and quickly approached the mage.

The mage was reciting the spell. He was just mumbling something and was neglecting preparations to defend himself.

Chwaaaaak~

At that moment, the holy knight put himself between me and the mage.

Oh, that was quick.

Looks like you anticipated that I will go for the mage?

The holy knight was wielding a mace on his right hand, and raised it to strike me.

Instead of taking steps back, I charged in and caught the holy knight's wrist.

Afterwards, I hit the holy knight's right shoulder with my other hand.

He is wearing a thick armor, so I cannot not be certain, but his shoulder blade is probably broken.

The holy knight ignored the pain and swung the large shield on his left hand.

I took half a step back and dodged the shield. While at it, I lightly kicked the holy knight's ankle.

The holy knight crumbled down and fell immediately.

His center of gravity was shaken at the moment, and he was not able to withstand the weight of his heavy armor.

“Uuraaaaait!”

Instead of wasting more time at the holy knight who just fell, I directed my gaze to the mage.

By the I approached the mage again, the mage completed chanting the spell.

“Flame Strike!”

A giant lump of flame burst toward my face.

[Battle Focus]

Damn it. The holy knight is still on the ground in the magic’s effective area, but the mage shot the magic spell anyway.

He is quite the heartless one.

I could dodge it safely if I used the Blink and retreated. However, then I’ll be putting distance between myself and the mage.

Also, after they see my Blink move, they’ll block my path to the mage like an iron wall.

I need to win while they are all scattered.

If they make a formation around the mage and start to hold out, then that will get very annoying.

I should just force my way through this.

[Talaria’s Wings]

The Talaria's Wings has high magic defense. I covered my front with the wings and stopped the lump of fire that was flying towards me.

It’s pretty hot. I have fire element resistance, but even I think it is hot.

It is pretty powerful.

The holy knight on the ground gasped for air desperately, like he was going to die.

Remember, I just saved your ass, sir holy knight.

Immediately after blocking the fire magic, I approached the mage from the front and forcefully kicked him.

This is Sparta!

The mage didn't even have the chance to scream. He was thrown to the back of the cave and collided with the wall.

It was too powerful of a kick for a mage with weak body to withstand.

He is probably unconscious at least. He might actually be knocking on the gate of death.

It would be a shame if he died.

I have so many things I want to ask him.

It appeared that the mage had lost consciousness. The light, the spell that was illuminating the area, was suddenly disengaged.

The dungeon fell under the cover of darkness once again.

First of all, it seems like the mage is not the doppelganger.

"Damn it. Biruson! Do you have a lantern?"

"Wait a sec! I have a flare...!"

I had exceptionally good perception throughout day and night and even Energy Sensory. I could secure clear visual in the darkness and move around unhindered.

I quietly approached the adventure who was busy searching his pockets for the flare.

My stealth skill's level was not low either, so it would be hard for them to notice my movement in the darkness.

After getting closer to the adventurer, I warmed up my hands by repeating the motion of making fists and opening them.

For a while now, the way the adventurer bastard was talking to me was getting on my nerves.

From this moment, I shall sentence you for a super hard strike on the pit of the stomach.

Chapter 95

Tutorial 16th Floor (3)

I was about to approach the adventurer stealthily and strike him his stomach. At that moment, the adventurer suddenly moved.

He threw himself to the back and tossed something toward me with the hand that he was using to search his bag.

“Take this!”

What he brought out from the bag was not a lantern.

It was a round marble. He threw it toward me.

Apparently, the adventurer was not bothered by the darkness either. The marble’s trajectory made haste to my face.

It looks like he was feigning ignorance and waiting for me to come closer to him.

I swung my hand and swiped the marble.

Instead of being bounced off, the marble shattered.

After that, the contents inside the marble got spread on my face and body.

It’s wet.

“Poison?”

“That’s right. It’s poison, you demon bastard! Now, show your true self! If you stay hidden under human skin, you will die from the

poison!”

The adventurer shouted with confidence.

I licked the poison with my tongue. It was jolting my tongue.

And that was that.

Ever since I obtained the great poison resistance skill, I was fine even when I tried drinking the bottle of poison sold at the store.

I won't sustain much harm unless it is an extremely powerful poison.

I am not resistant to all poisons, but I am resistant to quite many.

It was not the poison's effect that bothered me. I just found it unpleasant to have a wet face.

Having noticed that I was relatively indifferent to the poison, the adventurer panicked. He quickly approached me.

He was trying to quickly pull out something from his pocket. I tightly twisted his shoulder with my left hand and channeled my annoyance into my right fist.

My angry punch, plummeted into the adventurer's stomach.

I punched him hard. Super hard.

I threw my punch while being affected by strength boost from the Talaria's Wings. I thought the adventurer's body might burst a little. However, it seemed the man was pretty tough. His body didn't burst open from the shock.

He is coughing blood from the mouth though.

The adventurer curled his body like a shrimp and fell down. He was twitching. It appeared that he was in shock.

Booooooong~

From somewhere, a sound could be heard. It sounded like the lightsaber effect from the St*r W*rs when it was activated. I turned around, and the knight's sword was exuding blue mana.

He was pouring so much mana into the sword that the steady blue light from the sword was bright enough to see people's faces.

You are pouring in mana too inefficiently.

If it was the darkness that was the problem, then he should have engulfed the sword with the thinnest layer of mana he could create and spread the rest of the mana to the surrounding or focused it on his eyes. Doing either of those would have been more efficient.

Now, there are just the knight, holy knight and the mercenary; so three small hurdles.

“Uuuuuaaaa! For the Emperor!”

I knew you would say that.

[TL: Judge Dredd reference.]

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory, formed a long sword and parried the bluish sword.

Kaaaang!

The loud sound echoed throughout the dungeon.

The collision of mana pushed the knight far back.

Oh. His attack was more powerful than I thought.

It looks like he is the strongest among the group.

The knight shouted again and charged in.

With flashy sword swings, he threw fierce and sharp attacks at me.

His moves were... quite cool.

Honestly, this is the first time I've seen proper swordsmanship.

Until now, I had only been watching monsters swinging stone axes day after day. Now, I was witnessing flashy yet disciplined moves by a knight. It was intriguing.

His swordsmanship was different from how Idy's spear techniques aimed for the gap in the opponent with precise moves. As I said earlier, the knight's moves were flashy.

Not only were his individual moves extremely clean, the stances between the moves were also graceful and majestic.

On top of this, he had blue light surrounding his sword, and the light was illuminating the entire room. He really looked like a hero from a fiction story.

His swordsmanship was super cool. However, I noticed that he did have a few moves here and there that were added for the sole purpose of looking cool.

For instance, after attacking once, he always took a step back to calm his breathing.

After that, before he started the next attack, he always took a ceremonial stance.

It looks majestic. However, his moves are appropriate only in a duel with a rule that promises a break after each attack to catch breath.

In normal circumstances, like this...

Puk!

It is only natural that the weakness in his ways would be exploited by

experienced warriors.

I kicked the knight away from my foot. He rolled to the back from the impact. The knight huffed and puffed and got up right away.

“That’s disgraceful!”

What’s disgraceful?

The knight took a stance and intensified his concentration.

Oh, what’s this? A super move?

The blue light in his sword became even brighter.

You are in middle of a battle. Using such a time-consuming technique is not wise.

Who is going to wait for you to finish that?

It seemed that this knight was lacking in real combat experience.

Is he a Young Master from a high nobility?

Still, to show my gratitude for his demonstration of amazing swordsmanship, I decided to wait for him to prepare his super move.

I was curious about its power as well.

I also brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms and formed a long sword.

The knight peeked a smile and said,

“Try withstanding my attack! It is an ability of my total strength and the ability of Alamas, the treasured sword bestowed by the Emperor! Nobody has ever survived this attack!”

By the way, after you recite a line like that to the opponents, won't they try to dodge it instead of taking it head-on?

I wonder how many of his foes actually sat tight and waited for the attack to be ready and graciously received it?

Watching the knight rambling on about the power of the attack, I questioned the effectiveness of this strategy.

Regardless, it seemed the knight was quite confident about this attack.

Even I could feel considerable power concentrated in his sword.

I could feel waves of mana emanating from the sword itself. It seemed the sword really did have a special ability.

I gathered more mana onto my body and prepared to step up my strength.

Ever since I had been handling mana through the mana circuit at the Sixth Floor, I occasionally layered weapons with mana and fought with them.

Doing so strengthened the weapon to a whole another level.

This was different from the aura sword or aura blade; it's not the same old crap that gets tossed around too often in fantasy novels.

By layering a weapon with mana, its destructive power is exponentially increased, and the weapon got to have a sharper edge. On top of this, the weapon doesn't break as fast.

Also, ever since I obtained the energy sensory and heightened my mana operation ability at the 13th Floor, the power of my layering technique increased substantially.

After a moment, the knight shouted in loud voice. It seemed he was ready.

“Here I come!”

After that, the knight quickly charged toward me.

It would have been all right if you charged at me without telling me.

In response, I also swung the mana-layered long sword to parry the knight's sword.

Kwang!

It didn't sound like a clash between swords. It sounded more like a firework explosion. As soon as the swords clashed, the knight was pushed backwards again.

Oh, as I thought, this knight is pretty strong.

I swung my sword with intention of making him fall immediately. Instead, the knight withstood the impact and only got pushed back.

He did falter a little, but he didn't fall.

He is incredible.

One disappointing thing about this exchange was that the knight's attack was his super move and mine was a regular move.

The knight was having hard time standing. He was also having difficulty catching his breath as I slowly walked toward the knight.

His legs were buckling.

Just like the adventurer, I finished him with the fist.

The knight let go of the sword and raised his two arms to defend himself, but he was thrown to the back from the impact and collided with the wall.

Now, there's just the holy knight and the mercenary?

“Uuhahaha! This is the end, you demon bastard!”

It was an annoyingly screeching voice. It was torturing my eardrums.

I looked at the mercenary, and noticed that the mage was doing something.

There were strange symbols drawn on the floor.

A semi-transparent layer was cast to block the path between me and the symbols, which were at the center of the circular barrier.

Is it a mana shield?

Inside the layer, there were the holy knight, mercenary and the mage.

Looking at them together, I figured out what happened.

The holy knight healed the mage. While the knight was buying them time, the mage established the barrier.

Earlier, that holy knight almost died as a collateral from the mage's spell. I am surprised that he promptly decided to heal the mage.

“Is that really worth celebrating?”

I can just shatter the barrier.

Actually, even if the barrier is sturdy, it can only guarantee their safety for a brief moment. They won't be able to turn the tables against me.

“Of course...! Cuulok... Cuulok!”

The knight who was stuck at a corner was going to say something, but he coughed violently.

Does he actually want to explain the situation, even in his current state?

“T... that mage is the master of the Maruathen Magic Tower! Also, the Maruathen Magic Tower is famous for surekill AoE magic. It could be said that their abilities are best suited for a large-scale war than a small skirmish. Long casting time is a drawback, but it is a different story if he can patiently prepare the magic inside the barrier. From what I can hear, he is preparing his most powerful magic! It will take an hour to cast, but its power is incredible! You may be a high demon, but you won’t be able to survive its destructive power.”

That rascal sure loves to explain stuff.

Anyway, it takes an hour to cast the magic?

Honestly, I was underestimating the spell that the mage was preparing.

I didn’t detect much mana from him, so I was intending on blocking it with the Talaria’s Wings. However, it is a magic spell that takes one hour to prepare.

I had never experienced this kind of magic, so it was hard to estimate its power.

It looks like the other factor is the power of that barrier.

The battle will depend on my ability to break through the barrier within the hour.

Fortunately, there’s plenty of time.

“Hey, you dumbass! Please shut that mouth of yours! Why are you handing him information on a silver platter!”

The mercenary yelled at the knight.

You are so right.

“By the way, if a magic of such power is used, won’t you be killed as well? You are outside of the barrier.”

“...Probably. However, I am not afraid! I have taken an oath that day to become a sword who protects the Emperor and the people of the kingdom! I...”

The knight started to go on and on, blathering about himself. I ignored him and observed the barrier instead.

It sure is tough, but it does not look like it will be able to withstand many of my attacks.

Of course, I won't be certain unless I tried striking it first.

“...So! I am not afraid! Of course, I am still a human being, so I cannot be completely indifferent about death. However, with Roben, a childhood friend of mine...”

This guy has a really thorough and solid concept for his character.

The knight was rambling on about the promise and the dream he shared with his childhood friend who he had not seen in a very long time. I interrupted him and questioned him,

“By any chance, does this barrier have a weakness?”

“Of course there is! The special characteristic of the barrier magic circle by the Maruathen Magic Tower is...”

“Hey! You numbskull bastard! Are you really not going to shut your pie hole! Are you trying to get all of us killed!?”

From beyond the barrier, the mercenary shouted with anxious and red-faced.

That's too bad.

With just a little bit more time, the knight with a compulsive explanatory disorder would have slipped and told me about the barrier's weakness.

Although the knight was not acting like one, he and I were on the same boat.

We could both survive only if that barrier was shattered.

He said he was not afraid to die. However, he appeared to be a Young Master from a high nobility. He probably would not want a pathetic death under a ruin like this.

“Sir Aruhan, I’ll definitely tell the Empire of your great sacrifice, so please, wait quietly.”

Even the holy knight, who had been quiet all this time, stepped in and stopped the knight.

“Thank you! In that case, I will be able to close my eyes without any regrets!”

Are you being serious? Aren’t you overflowing with regrets and desire to live?

“Now, I’ll quietly face my final moment. Hey, you demon! Your final moment is also nigh, so I guess my journey to hell won’t be lonely. That magic by the Master of Maruathen Magic Tower is a high difficulty spell that requires extreme focus for one hour, but its power is...”

It requires extreme focus for one hour?

I am quite proud of my ability to maintain focus, so I know how difficult that is.

Focus can be broken easily by trivial annoyance.

For example...

“Soul Steal.”

“Kuuuaaak!”

The mage inside the barrier collapsed after coughing blood.

“Hey! You son of a bitch!!”

The mercenary’s infuriated voice echoed through the dungeon.

Chapter 96

Tutorial 16th Floor (4)

“Acknowledge?”

“I... I'll acknowledge your strength.”

“All right. Here is a potion.”

The mercenary collapsed on the floor with his legs and arms completely crushed. I handed him a potion.

The only limb that was still relatively functional was his left arm. He grabbed the potion with his left hand and chugged the potion's content.

I was sure he must be experiencing substantial pain right now. However, he finished drinking the potion without screaming too loudly. He then started to massage his body.

After the mage coughed off blood and lost consciousness, the battle ended in less than 15 minutes.

The result was obviously my victory.

After the barrier disappeared, I beat the crap out of the holy knight and then the mercenary. Afterwards, nobody else tried to come at me.

To be precise, there wasn't anyone left who could fight me.

Unexpectedly holy knight was weaker than I thought.

At first, I thought he was a holy knight who happened to also have mastered the holy healing spell. Instead, it seemed he was closer to being a healer. His combat potential was quite lacking.

I think he could be more difficult to fight against than other warriors of the same level if he actively used his holy spells in battle.

Also, the mercenary was more tenacious than I thought.

The impression I got from looking at the man's face was that he was the type who would give up after a good beating or two. However, he came at me to the bitter end. As of result, he was almost beaten to death.

To put it positively, he had grit and persistence. To put it negatively, he was incredibly dumb.

Until the battle ended, everyone inside the dungeon took turns and received beating from me. However, the doppelganger did not reveal itself.

It could be that the doppelganger was aware that my attacks did not have killing intent, so it did not feel the need to reveal itself. It could be that there was a restriction on revealing itself. I was not certain.

Anyway, that was actually a good thing.

For me, there was nothing good that could have come from the doppelganger revealing itself at this very moment.

I needed the doppelganger and the people here to spit out information for me.

I have plenty of time to defeat the doppelganger.

I cannot someone die already; there was too much opportunity.

The mercenary finished drinking the potion. He dusted himself off, got up and complained,

“God damn it. If it wasn't for that snobby scaredy cat over there...”

He was talking about the knight who ran his mouth off about the

mage and contributed to the mage's collapse when the mage was holding the barrier.

The knight stayed at a corner and fiddled with his armor. He pretended as if he didn't hear the mercenary.

"Don't be so hard on him. Even without the information about the barrier magic requiring high focus, it would not have withstood my attacks for an hour."

"...God damn it. You heard about that one hour thing from that knight as well."

Now that you mentioned it, that is true.

I can totally understand why the mercenary is grinding his teeth in frustration.

I think the mercenary and the others would see the knight as a traitor?

Why did the knight do all that?

Perhaps he is just one of those personalities who cannot stand it unless he explains everything he knows in verbose detail.

If that is the case, that knight really should be treated as an idiot.

If that is not the case, then it is also possible that he did it while feigning stupidity simply because he did not want to die.

He is a knight who values honor above all else. He could not afford to let others catch onto his desperation to live and his attempt to ruin their plan in the process. So, he handed over information to me and neutralized the mage.

If that was the case, then there was nothing that could be said in his defense if everyone accused him as a knight without honor.

There was a third possibility.

He still didn't want to die, but he wasn't trying to conceal his desperation. He could be the doppelganger in disguise.

If the knight's true identity is the doppelganger under the guise of a human, then it is not restricted by the title of the knight and his ways. It would leak information without feeling guilty about it.

I carefully observed the gazes from the mercenary and the holy knight toward the knight. Their eyes didn't look like they were simply criticizing the knight as a traitor.

Their gazes contained strong doubts and suspicions.

Personally, I think it is obvious that any human being would not want to die.

Therefore, I am giving the second and third possibilities equal weight.

However, the mercenary and the holy knight kept to the idea that an honorable knight would not do this. It seemed they were certain that the third possibility was the right answer.

Is the knight a dumbass, a chicken or the doppelganger?

No matter which one was the right answer, it was hopeless.

I think the knight did what he did to survive.

The mercenary and holy knight's attitude toward me toned down a little after I gave them some time after their beating. It is probably because of the knight.

Now, they are finding the knight more suspicious than me.

Honestly, it does not matter if the knight is the doppelganger.

Actually, it is not a bad thing if the knight is the doppelganger and gave me more information on how to survive the danger.

The mage was still unconscious.

He fell unconscious twice so far, and the last time, he collapsed because he lost focus in middle of casting magic and his mana ran amok. He must have suffered substantial internal damage.

Because of this, the holy knight said it would be best to leave the mage be for half a day.

In addition, he planned to give treatment in one to two hours intervals.

As for the adventurer, he was not able to get back up because I beat him too hard. I handed a potion to the mercenary who was getting up and told him to tend to the adventurer who was still in pain.

From what I saw earlier, it seemed the mercenary and the adventurer were pretty close.

After waiting for a moment, the adventurer also gasped loudly and got up.

It looks like he was hurt pretty badly.

Adventurer, why weren't you kinder with words earlier.

"Now, everyone, shall we start our conversations again?"

I clapped and gathered everyone's attention.

"Are you talking about that Mafia game earlier?"

The mercenary asked.

It is a proactive question. I like his attitude.

"No."

Surprised, people stared at me. I told them what I was really thinking.

“That was actually just a ploy to get information from all of you. Now, I don’t need to bother with such a game.”

Looking at people’s dumbfounded face, I continued.

“Now, you guys have a simple job to do. Just take turns and start talking.”

“Talk about what?”

“Everything. Geography, history, religion, politics, literature, economics and other basic knowledge. The information about the organization you belong to. Treasures, magic, monsters, armor, information about dungeons, experiences from the childhood, common courtesies and manners, or even things like unfounded rumors you heard from somewhere are fine too. I would like you to tell me everything you know.”

Their eyes were soaking in anxieties and suspicions.

I subdued them. However, I was not finishing them off like a logical opponent would, which made them suspicious of me again.

I was directly asking for information about the world. They were suspicious about the possibility that I might be the doppelganger.

Their minds must be pretty convoluted right about now.

I can clearly see them twiddling their thumbs anxiously.

Sure, I just had their asses handed to them. Still, I bet they were concerned if it would be all right to give information to someone who might be a demon. They might even be considering fighting me again even if it means a certain death for them.

I used Overwhelm skill again and amplified my power.

The effect was intensified when the opponent felt the difference in strength was high. It was also amplified when the opponent was mentally subdued.

They just got beat up by me, and they just came to their senses.

The conditions of their bodies could not be all that great at the moment either.

The overwhelming pressure they will be feeling this time will be incomparable to what they experienced before the battle.

If they were merely uncomfortable about me during the last time, I bet they are feeling like someone is pressing down on their shoulders this time.

“Now, everyone.”

I layered my hand with mana and clapped hard as I said in low voice. Everyone shriveled and flinched.

“Shall we start talking now? I have a lot of things I’m curious about. I might even get angry if everyone keeps silence like this.”

The adventurer was the one who received the most severe beating from me. He was breaking out a cold sweat.

Nobody started to talk. They just glanced at each other.

Is everyone hoping for someone else to start?

I felt the need to subject them to a new threat. I pondered what I should use, but someone raised his hand.

It was like a diligent honor student at school answering the teacher’s answer. The knight politely raised his hand and said,

“I want to start!”

His eyes were sparkling. While others were glancing around and hoping someone else would start, it seemed the knight was glancing around to check if it would be all right for him to start. There’s no mistake. I was certain of this.

I nodded in anticipation.

“Thank you! My name is Kaesis Aruhan. My grandfather named me during the day I was born...”

Like that, the knight started telling his story, starting from the day of his birth.

His story went on for a long time. He was still not done when it was almost the midnight of the first day at the dungeon.

By the time I stopped him so we could all sleep, the knight was only up to when he was 11 years old and just entering school.

His story was surprisingly detailed.

Thanks to his story, I learned about even the most trivial things of this 16th Floor stage's world.

Even when he was just talking about dinner, he described individual dining items with meticulous detail.

Things like the varieties of the dining items, people who make them, the items' prices, and even how his families thought of the makers... He told me so much. Thanks to him, my mind was overflowing with new information.

On top of this, his stories were intriguing.

He was talking about such useless things, yet he could maintain the audiences' attention so well.

The knight was exceptionally talented as a storyteller.

Occasionally, when his stories were too exaggerated or embellished, the mercenary or the adventurer butted in to correct the story.

Honestly, this was a lot of fun.

Before I realized, the atmosphere had changed to bunch of school classmates on a trip who were sharing stories before bed.

I even brought out snacks and drinks from the dimensional bag and munched on them as I enjoyed the stories.

It seemed this world also had a dimensional bag. Although the people were a little intrigued by the bag, they weren't shocked by it.

The knight's stories were interesting, but they were not without flaws.

He liked talking way too much, and he was describing everything that came to his mind, so the actual story progression was at a snail's pace. It was frustrating.

Also, his stories went tangent often. While talking about a method for checking the quality of a carpet, he found his way to talking about how his grandfather entered the castle and received a title after achieving a great exploit.

Also, while talking for several hours, he never once shut his mouth.

He didn't even take a break to eat any snacks. He just occasionally sipped on wine to quench his throat and focused on telling the stories.

It was incredibly fortunate that the man never repeated a story that he told.

The time went on since the knight started telling the stories. An hour, two hours... By the time we got to the three-hour mark, I learned that listening to stories for an extended period of time was a laborious duty, both physically and mentally.

By the time we reached five hours, my head felt blurry.

By the time it was at the five-hour mark, others started to doze off, so I told him we should stop here and continue the rest tomorrow.

Others seemed relieved to hear it. Meanwhile, the knight looked disappointed that he could not chatter away some more.

Doesn't your throat hurt?

The people scattered about the dungeon room so they could get some sleep.

They agreed with each other to not get too close while sleeping. They even warned that anyone who approaches will be attacked.

This didn't matter to me, but the people were very conscious about their safety while sleeping.

I opened a sleeping bag from the inventory and lied down at a corner.

I should run mana circuits while organizing the stories I heard from the knight.

Thirty minutes passed while I was doing that before I was interrupted by someone's quietly mumbling.

"I'm certain he ran his mouth so he could survive and chatter away afterwards. If that guy drowned and died, I bet only his mouth will float up."

Judging from the voice, I thought it was the mercenary.

I totally agree.

* * *

I checked the time using the pocket watch I took from the adventurer and got out of the sleeping bag.

I couldn't sleep.

My insomnia didn't allow me to sleep in a sealed room with potential enemies.

Nobody showed any suspicious behaviors during the night.

Honestly, I thought the doppelganger might make a move while everyone was asleep. However, I was worried over nothing.

I walked around the dungeon room and woke up the people.

It was morning.

First, I should eat breakfast, and then... listen to the knight rascal's blabber-mouth.

Today, I should ask him about his swordsmanship before he talks about his childhood.

I should ask about the holy knight's religion. I also need to ask the adventurer about the dungeon.

From what I heard yesterday, it seemed like the mercenary knew a lot about the customs of this world.

More importantly, I need the mage to wake up so I can hear his stories about magic.

If he is unable to wake up by tonight, I should seriously consider using the Elixir.

Other than the mage, who was still unconscious, I gathered the rest and brought out food from the dimensional bag.

The people seemed to be carrying meat jerkies or other dried foods. However, perhaps because they tasted the food I brought out last night, it seemed they were not even deliberating about bringing out their own tasteless dried foods.

We were all quietly enjoying the meals before the knight politely raised his hand.

"Can I tell the story while we eat?"

"...Please. No."

“Please keep your mouth shut while we eat. I beg of you.”

“You should be respectful while people eat, Sir Aruhan. Please restrain yourself.”

The knight was met with stern resistance from the three. The knight looked a little disappointed.

For a moment, it looked like he was going to say something. However, the knight gave up and started to eat.

Could it be that talking while eating is a serious violation of courtesy in this world?

Maybe they just wanted to plug that chatterbox knight's mouth?

I think it is the latter.

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

Chapter 97

Tutorial 16th Floor (5)

After breakfast, the holy knight was performing his after meal prayer. I asked him about his religion.

He gladly told me about his religion.

However, he casually skipped the parts about holy spells or holy power.

He seemed hesitant to tell me about them because they were directly related to combat.

I didn't want to insist on having him tell me everything. Instead, I asked about his religion in general.

The holy knight said the god he believed in was God of Balance.

Instead of asking about the God of Balance and his religious organization's complicated philosophies, I asked about the religion's common knowledge.

In Urphan Continent, which was the setting of the 16th Floor stage, people believed in many gods. On the contrary, only the people of holy temples worshiped just one god.

Also, he said that it was a common practice for people to pray to a specific god depending on the situation.

He said that because holy knights and priests believe in one specific god, they are able to use holy spells by borrowing the god's holy power.

Uniquely enough, there were priests and holy knights who did not

belong to any particular religious organizations.

In this world, it seemed that the relationship between the believers and the gods were more important than the organizations and the gods.

The holy knight said there are many great holy knights who never even walked up to the door of a religious organization's building. He also said there are priests who never once read the bibles of their churches and just run meditation temples or care centers for elders or children.

He said the religious organizations do not doubt the people's faith.

It was because the people would not be able to reach the gods if they lacked faith.

I found it intriguing.

All these were very new to me.

I was just as intrigued when I heard the knight's story yesterday, but I was reminded yet again that this place was a different world and not Earth.

While explaining about the religions, the holy knight said something else.

"It looks like you really don't know anything. I honestly thought you might have been a holy knight or a priest who does not belong to any particular religious organization."

Was there anything about my behavior that were becoming of a religious man?

I asked why the holy knight thought so.

"It's nothing unusual. I thought I felt a trace of holy power from your mana. Perhaps I was mistaken."

Now that I think about it, the Master Monk from the 13th Floor told me about this.

The priests could feel the holy energy from others' mana, and it serves as identification among the priests.

“You probably did feel holy power. I am not a priest, but I am going through the trial to become an apostle. I possess Power Skills as well.”

“An apostle! You also possess Power Skills! Are you talking about the power of a God?”

The holy knight was excited to hear what I just said. He drew the holy symbol with his hand.

“If you really are an apostle of a God, then I can understand your incredible power. The Priestess of Ausoli, the one who worships the God of Sun, is said to be an apostle of the god. Considering the amazing exploits she achieved, I am not so surprised by your strength.”

The knight snuck into the conversation and said that.

Could this Priestess be someone who completed the trial and became an apostle or could it be that she is still in middle of the trial?

I should ask the holy knight about the Priestess's history later.

“Excuse me, but may I ask about the god you believe in?”

God, huh...

I guess I can mention either the God of Adventure or God of Slowness.

He said priests only worshipped one god, so he will be confused if I mention both.

Let's see...

Who should I mention as the one I believe?

[God of Slowness is desperately trying to look casual while watching you.]

[God of Adventure is looking at you with high expectations.]

They are responding right away.

Let's think about this first.

Considering the characteristics of the God of Adventure, many people might know about this god in this world.

If there are many religious organizations about the God of Adventure spread across the continent of this world, I will look suspicious for not knowing about them if I tell the holy knight that I worship the God of Adventure.

On the contrary, I don't think the God of Slowness is well known.

When Kiri Kiri explained about God of Slowness, she said being an apostle for the God of Slowness is not something a human being should do.

Also, when I talked to the Master Monk at the 13th Floor, he said he never heard of the God of Slowness.

It's anecdotal information, but they all indicate that the God of Slowness is not well known.

I gave my response while hoping not much was known about the God of Slowness in the Urphan continent

"I believe in God of Slowness."

"Um... I have not heard of this god..."

"I have not heard of this god either. I know most of the hundred gods

of the continent, but this is the first time for me to hear about the God of Slowness.”

This is good.

As I thought, God of Slowness is a manor god who is not well known among the people.

“The God of Slowness values perseverance and patience. Most of the believers are isolated deep in the mountains, so our god is not well known. We don’t know much about the outside world either.”

“I see. I can understand why you don’t know much about the outside world. Did you come here after receiving a divine message? Perhaps you are here as a part of your trial to become an apostle.”

“Well, it is something like that.”

I haphazardly muttered.

[God of Slowness is flexing.]

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

[God of Slowness is making fun of someone.]

[God of Adventure is rushing out of someone’s room.]

* * *

“That is...! I am sorry, but my swordsmanship is... not something I can teach to an outsider...”

It seemed there was some secrecy involved in his swordsmanship.

That’s disappointing.

“Will you tell me after receiving a beating?”

“No. I’ll just tell you.”

The knight panicked and responded promptly.

Afterwards, he started explaining.

You should have done that from the start.

The mercenary looked dumbfounded, doubting if this man was really a knight. However, both the knight and I ignored the mercenary.

It’s good, so it is all good.

Eyes sparkling, the knight began his passionate lecture about his swordsmanship.

Starting with the basics, he explained while including his personal preferences and experiences.

It was a passionate lecture that grew from a small desire to avoid getting beat up and his strong desire to blabber mouth.

I didn’t know what was the average swordsmanship level of this world. However, I could easily tell that the contents of the knight’s lecture were definitely not on an amateur level.

He didn’t just talk about the basic swordsmanship. He also explained the meanings of the movements, their applications, and methods which were high level information.

Now, he was explaining in detail about things that I didn’t even ask. Looking at the man, the mercenary’s face was completely.

He was thinking, ‘didn’t you say it is a secret?’

Although the mercenary and the adventurer found the knight’s behavior to be ridiculous for a while, they eventually joined me and actively listened to the man’s lecture.

It was an extraordinarily high-quality lecture.

“We should have asked you to tell us about your swordsmanship sooner.”

Compared to some random story he told us about some master craftsman of dining utensils starting a family with a widow from some family, this is far more useful and educational.

I wondered if this man was born to be a storyteller who ended up becoming a knight instead. Anyway, I think he would be perfect as a swordsmanship teacher.

He explained things in detail interestingly, so it was easy to understand.

Because he was also a skilled swordsman, he explained the moves by executing them in front of us, so his lectures were even more effective.

I think I should have a duel with him later and have him teach me all of his moves.

Judging from the knight's attitude, I don't think he will say no.

“Explain the move you used yesterday too. The one where you focused your mana to the sword.”

“Yes!”

Before long, he was selling off his super move, which could be considered as the life itself of a knight.

However, it seemed the man had forgotten his words earlier about his swordsmanship being a secret to outsiders. He was only focused on explaining the technique.

“Isn't the Empire going to come after us if we hear this?”

“Who is going to know that we know if we keep our mouths shut?”

I calmed the mercenary who was concerned about this and directed my focus at the knight again.

It seemed the mercenary was also interested in hearing the explanation, so he didn't try to trip up the knight.

Meanwhile, the knight seemed unaware that he was leaking a critical information. He started explaining excitedly.

"The key is efficiently concentrating mana on to the sword."

From what I have observed, it seemed like you gave away the efficiency to your family's dog.

"Even with all of the mana focused on the sword, it is a difficult feat to achieve visible formation with it. So, you need to minimize the waste and efficiently pour in mana to the sword. First, if you look at the wrist area... You know all about the mana circuit's pathways, right?"

"No. I don't know about that very well. I only know about the heart and left shoulder areas."

The adventurer said he didn't know much about it, so the knight kindly explained the mana circuit pathways.

It was very interesting.

The pathways that the knight described were not the conventional ones.

The pathways through the wrist and palm completely different.

In addition to the mana circuit pathways, the knight also explained the methods for using the technique.

After hearing the explanations, I brought out a great sword and tried it out. My mana waste definitely streamlined, to a greater degree than I thought.

I think it will be useful when operating a smaller amount of mana in addition to pouring great amount of mana to the sword.

[You acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 16]

Wow...

“Sir Apostle... I think what the knight just described was a secret royal mana utilization technique. If it becomes known that we heard it, not just that knight, but all of us will be hunted down and executed.”

That would be bad.

Who is going to know if the group keeps their mouth shut? However, that knight is probably be able to keep this a secret.

He will run his mouth off somewhere and tell people that he told us about the secret technique.

Of course, I don't give a damn.

I ignored the mercenary and continued to ask the knight.

“I agree that the mana circuit utilization is very creative and efficient. However, don't you think this technique is too difficult to use in a real combat? The opponent would either run away or attack you while you prepare the technique. Also, instead of focusing such huge amount of mana to the sword, it would be better to use it by spreading your mana into the surrounding.”

“What are you talking about, Sir Apostle? This technique is incredibly useful in real combat. Most small fries bow down when it is used once. Also, it is really stylish. Don't you think it would be great to exhibit your power to the higher ups?”

“I agree. This technique is used more often than other complicated swordplay. Its power is proven too. The position of a knight within the Order of Knights changes depending on the mastery of this technique.”

Ah, so it is for just showing off one's power and looking stylish.

For knights, who are not warriors, I guess it would be useful.

Actually, how many people would be living their lives like I do, always being in middle of deadly battles?

The technique is probably extremely useful for knights who reached high levels like this man.

It could be used to convince the opponent to surrender. It was also stylish and powerful. I think it is the most important skill to have for the knights.

It would be useful to show off in front of the nobilities and for ceremonies.

Also, knights would have subordinates or comrades with them at all times, so they don't have to worry about being attacked while preparing the technique.

I understood what it was for.

The knight's swordsmanship lectures continued through the lunch and even the dinner time. The lectures were very useful.

In particular, the mana pathways he described were unnatural paths. This was a priceless information.

In the past, I never once thought about making the mana flow through paths outside their designated passages.

There was a lot to learn from the swordsmanship itself as well.

I learned swordsmanship from swinging the sword in battle for survival and roughly improved based on the spear techniques I learned from Idy.

The depth of my knowledge in swordsmanship was completely

different from the swordsmanship of the knight which was taught, used and improved upon through many generations for decades. It was incomparable.

I think it will be very helpful just to think about the meaning of individual movements of the techniques and studying them.

Thanks to the knight, now I have a lot of homework to do.

I brought out dinner from the dimensional bag.

There was someone missing in the dinner table, so I looked around. The holy knight was healing the mage who was lying on the ground.

If the mage does not wake up tonight, I think I should use the Elixir.

I don't know about the other people, but I have so much I want to hear from the mage.

“That man sure have a good heart.”

The mercenary said that. I turned to look at him.

“You know. During the battle yesterday, that mage used his magic even though the holy knight was within the effective area. Despite this, that man is taking such a good care of the mage. I think it is odd, so...”

I think so too.

When the mage shot the fireball at me, the holy knight was inside the area of effect, and he was utterly defenseless on the ground.

If I just avoided the fireball, the holy knight would have burned to crisp and died.

Afterwards, after raising the barrier, he didn't give a damn about the adventurer and the knight who were collapsed on the ground outside of the barrier. The mage just continued to recite the spell to prepare

the next magic which would have killed everyone outside the barrier.

Um...

Personally, I am most suspicious of the mage. He might be the doppelganger.

He did everything so far to fight me, but ultimately, he put not only my life but others' lives in danger as well.

The doppelganger's goal is to kill as much people in this dungeon as much as possible before being discovered. His behaviors so far align with that goal.

Still, I cannot be certain if he is the doppelganger either.

The knight over there is holding the adventurer hostage to his blather mouthing. I think the knight is suspicious too.

No, he is very suspicious.

I'm so suspicious of him that I would say in a calm voice 'I knew you were the doppelganger' if the knight revealed himself to be the doppelganger later.

As for the adventurer... I just don't like this bastard. He looks like the doppelganger just because I hate him.

I cannot exclude the mercenary either.

Whenever anyone showed suspicious behaviors, he whispered to me about it.

Also, the mercenary was inside the barrier. He was closely acquainted with the adventurer, yet that didn't stop him from deciding to sacrifice the adventurer.

The holy knight seemed to be the most unlikely character to be the doppelganger. He is maintaining conventional behaviors and

benevolent attitude. However, I have some doubts about this man as well.

Um...

Well, it is probably all right if I think about this later.

I still have six days left.

My priority is gathering information, not finding the doppelganger.

I organized my thoughts and approached the holy knight and the mage at the corner.

I was about to tell the holy knight that the dinner was ready. However, I noticed something strange.

Sitting on the ground, the holy knight had his hand on the mage's stomach and was using the holy power. The mage was laying down, limp.

The problem was the mage.

I didn't notice this before. The mage had long hair... and the curves of the body protruding under the clothing...

"A woman?"

Chapter 98

Tutorial 16th Floor (6)

“She is a woman. She must have been hiding her gender using the her magic or some kind of artifact.”

...Why are you saying it so casually?

You didn't even tell others that the mage was a woman. You had been looking after her with the excuse of tending to her wounds.

If this was the modern world, you would have been accused of being a sexual predator.

“...Who do you think I am. You are not even trying to hide your suspicions. It is unpleasant, so please don't make a face like that.”

The mage was a woman with eye-catching long curly hair.

“Anyway, isn't she too young? I think someone said she is the head of some Magic Tower. How could someone so young be in a position like that?”

I am not so surprised about the fact that the mage was hiding her true self.

She is a mage, so she could. I can understand that.

However, she looks too young.

She isn't just a little young. I think she is younger than me.

“I think she is the pupil of the Maruathen Magic Tower's head. It seems she was disguised as the head of the Magic Tower and sent in here.”

Before we reached a conclusion, the knight came by and said that.

“Pupil?”

“Yes. I have no way of knowing why. Perhaps it was because the Magic Tower’s head is very old. Maybe it was a matter of health.”

“But the disguise earlier didn’t look all that old either?”

“That was also just an embellishment. The Magic Tower’s head is actually over hundred years old. That’s what I heard.”

That’s really old.

After he heard us talking, the mercenary came by. He whistled and said,

“She is quite the beauty. Mr. Holy knight, were you having fun here by yourself?”

Having heard what the mercenary said, the holy knight shouted,

“***! ***, *** * *!”

What is he saying?

“What are you saying?”

“He was swearing curses. When people of holy professions must swear out of circumstance, they use this ancient forgotten language. That’s what I heard. I don’t know the meaning either.”

Thanks to the knight’s explanation, I got to at least figure out the essence of what the holy knight just spewed out.

Swearing using an ancient civilization’s language...

Is it impossible to translate even with the power of the knowledge, even before the time of Babel? Maybe it is because the skill’s level is

not high enough yet.

“Ah, oh my. I apologize, so please don’t be so angry. I was just joking. Aren’t you overreacting? Even though you are a man of religion, still...”

The holy knight was not able to calm his anger immediately. He grabbed hold of the mercenary and lectured him for a long time.

The mercenary was starting to get frustrated before the lecture finally ended.

Afterwards, grabbing the holy knight’s shoulder, the knight said,

“From now on, we should not approach this mage as much as possible. I understand that you stayed around her to heal her, but that was too dangerous. From now on, unless everyone is watching, don’t approach her alone.”

“...I got it.”

The holy knight agreed to the knight’s suggestion.

The response is rather calm for someone who was just angry for being suspected of indecency.

It seemed the knight read the puzzled look on my face. The knight explained again,

“I am not saying this just because she is the only woman in this dungeon. Showing consideration for a lady who is trapped here with men is only obvious. However, there is a doppelganger in this place. You must not forget this fact.”

“I don’t understand. What does doppelganger have to do with her?”

Ah, you don’t know this. It is like this: what do you think will happen if a doppelganger assumed a human form and forms an intimate relationship with someone of the opposite gender?”

“What happens?”

“A life will be conceived. It won’t matter if the doppelganger was the man or the woman. The conceived child will be born with the appearance of a human being. However, the child will be born inheriting the doppelganger’s existence and the abilities. The child will be even more dangerous because it will be able to assume the human form without stealing another person’s appearance. Also, as a way of survival and to increase their numbers, the doppelganger will actively attract the opposite gender.”

...It really is dangerous.

The danger rating for the doppelganger skyrocketed in my head.

I thought about a scenario.

A doppelganger in human form marries a human and gives birth to children.

The children will grow up and marry other humans, giving birth to more children.

After this pattern repeats for a few generations, it won’t be long before a small village would be full of doppelgangers.

Like that, as the doppelgangers increase in their numbers to the point where most of the population could be doppelgangers.

Everyone agreed to do as the knight said. Slightly anxious, we had our dinner.

The next morning, the mage woke up.

* * *

It was during the third day since the 16th Floor’s stage started.

I was preparing the breakfast, and the mage woke up.

The mage screamed in pain as soon as she woke up, and the holy knight rushed to treat her.

Her mana ran amok because her focus was interrupted in middle of casting a spell, so the damage was more substantial than I ever imagined.

After the pain was relieved, the holy knight gave a short summary of what happened so far.

The mage was panicking about the fact that her true appearance was revealed more than over the contents of the summary.

We told her it was all right, but she panicked and tried to use magic.

Perhaps due to the internal injuries, her magic failed.

She was very conscious about the fact that her appearance was revealed.

I was curious why she was acting like that. I figured that I might as well ask her to talk about herself so I can get the answer her answer.

Surprisingly, the mage barely said anything.

She only spoke in few terse words. When she said long sentences, she wrote them on the notepad she had in her bag.

Because of this, to listen to her stories, we had to invest a large amount of time.

“So, you are saying you disguised yourself as a man ever since your childhood? Why?”

According to her, ever since she became a mage, she had been living under the disguise of a man.

She said she was asked to come to the dungeon as a double for the head of the Magic Tower because she was used to acting due to her

experience.

The mercenary found her explanation questionable, so the mage started to diligently write something in response. Meanwhile, the knight stepped in.

“I heard that there are quite a lot of female mages who hide their feminine identity. There is no gender-based limitation on mastering magic. However, magic itself is an exclusive tradition of the nobilities. In the past, only males were allowed to master magic. The custom had been mitigated quite a bit now. However, conservative mages still don’t take kindly of talented female mages. Instead of facing such discrimination, I heard that female mages just live under the male disguise. In her case, she was talented and powerful enough to act as a double for the head of the Magic Tower, so she was probably under the same circumstance. I heard that the female mages first receive the disguise magic or artifact from the teachers and use their own magic power to keep up the disguise once they grow up. In her case, she probably received the help from the head of the Magic Tower. From social standpoint, it is a great misfortune for a woman to hide her feminine identity for the rest of her life. However, mages are not like the most people. The mages are not interested in dating, marriage or having and raising children, so I heard they make this kind of choice often.”

As usual, that was a great explanation.

I wonder if there is a way to have this man tag along with me at all times?

Like a Pokemon inside a Pokeball.

It seemed everything was as the knight just explained. The mage nodded in agreement to the knight’s explanation.

After hearing the explanation, I wanted to ask her to teach me magic. However, the holy knight strongly advised me against it.

He said she needed more rest because she had been unconscious for two days. So, I decided to wait a bit longer.

With the time left, I made a changing room and a restroom at the corner of the dungeon.

While it was just among men, we didn't care. We just went to a corner to change clothes or take care of our businesses. Now that we had a woman, we needed a blind for her.

* * *

We finished eating lunch and all of us sat at the center of the dungeon room.

It was the time for the chatterbox knight to continue. Now, this became a regular event after meals.

I brought out crackers and snacked on it while listening to the knight.

Calling it a simple blabber mouthing didn't do justice to the man's ability. It was closer to a stage performance.

The knight was like a stage actor. He told the story along with exaggerated movements.

His story was quite interesting, so everyone tuned into the man's story.

While the knight was giving realistic portrayal of the princess he saw at the coronation, I directed my gaze away and looked at the holy knight and the mage.

They were sitting right next to each other. Something was odd.

They looked too close.

It was as if they had known each other from before.

They became too close too fast.

It had not been that long since the mage woke up. It was just from the

morning to the lunch time. It had only been a few hours.

Of course, it was the holy knight who treated the mage while she was unconscious. I could understand that she would be thankful to the holy knight.

Also, if they are good fit to each other, they could become close easily.

However, we are inside a sealed room with a doppelganger. Is it still normal for people to become so close and so quickly?

I don't know the customs or common sense of the people in this world, so I am not sure if I should bring this up to the people or not.

No matter how I think about it, it is strange.

Let's organize my thoughts on this.

If I start with how the battle went during the first day, the friendly atmosphere between the two is strange.

First, when the holy knight and I were in the path of the fireball's effective area, the mage launched it without hesitation.

If I didn't block it using Talaria's Wings, the flame would have engulfed both me and the holy knight.

Afterwards, the mage fainted from being struck by me, and the holy knight healed her.

When she lost consciousness again because her mana ran amok, the holy knight healed her again.

From the mage's perspective, I guess this will be complicated.

She must be surprised. I bet she feels guilty about it and even thankful.

Is she being friendly with the holy knight because she feels sorry?

Um...

This is difficult to figure out.

My doubts never went away because I had suspicions about the holy knight's attitude since yesterday.

Since the battle yesterday, the holy knight was pristine example of moral righteousness.

He intentionally sought to create friendly atmosphere for everyone to get along and talk comfortably.

Honestly, his behaviors were in line with my goal of hearing stories from everyone, so I didn't mind it so much.

However, before the battle, the holy knight was concerned about eradicating the doppelganger more than anyone.

He guided the mood toward violence and anxiety. Instead of calmly talking about it while resting, he insisted on finding and killing the doppelganger immediately.

His attitude now was different from back then. Something didn't look right.

There definitely was a doppelganger amongst us in this dungeon room. How could he afford to act so altruistically?

Of all people, he was the one who was most concerned about the doppelganger, so why is he doing this?

The following was my theory.

Initially, he intentionally created violent mood and caused splits among the people to cause chaos.

During the battle, he acted selflessly to erase the suspicion in people's hearts and gain potential supporters.

Assuming the holy knight is the doppelganger, the two were aligning with his goal.

In this situation, I had plenty of reasons to think something was odd about the fact that the holy knight and the mage were becoming close so fast.

Just like the holy knight, the mage was also a strong suspect for being the doppelganger.

From her perspective, the holy knight was a generous man and also a tool she could take advantage of. Becoming close with him was going to benefit her survival.

One last thing...

From the stage's description, there was nothing about there being just one doppelganger.

This is Hell Difficulty, so I need to consider the possibility that there could be two doppelgangers.

I think I should watch the holy knight and the mage closely.

After I organized the thoughts, I remembered the God of Adventure's response when my gaze ran into that of the mage.

What was the God of Adventure's response?

At that moment, I was certain that...

[The God of Adventure is highly entertained while watching you.]

That was the response.

What's so entertaining to watch?

[God of Adventure is rooting for you.]

I don't need it.

* * *

I asked the mage to teach me magic as soon as the dinner was over.

I waited long enough.

I only had four days left until the stage was over.

Even if it was going to be a little bit, I wanted to learn magic from her. I could not afford to wait any longer.

“Impossible.”

[It is forbidden to teach magic to an outsider. A mage can teach only teach magic to pupils of the Magic Tower.]

The mage let me know in both spoken and written words that she could not teach me magic.

Yep. I knew you would say that.

People tend to not listen when asked politely.

In this circumstance when nothing can be helped, I will be using a way that is not so polite, so it is quite regrettable.

Chapter 99

Tutorial 16th Floor (7)

I added a flavor of threat to my demand, and the mage quickly changed her attitude. Reluctantly, she started to teach me magic.

The knight was watching the situation from the side. He joined and convinced the mage to teach me magic. His persuasion played a large role in convincing her.

The knight passionately convinced the mage.

He kindly explained why teaching me magic willingly would be good for her health.

Listening to knight explaining it all to the mage, I felt like I was a scum of the Earth and a violent thug who had gone all the way to the ultimate extreme of the villainy.

I already had threatened her earlier, so I couldn't even deny it.

Anyway, the knight's exaggerated description of me convinced the mage to give up on the idea of holding out without teaching me magic.

Also, my magic abilities were not even at the level of the beginner.

It was better to assume I knew absolutely nothing about magic.

What she had to teach me were the basics of the basics. Hence, the content was not going to be any different from the very basic education that would have been given by any other magic towers out there.

Thanks to this, the mage didn't have to worry so much about the

potential punishment from her Magic Tower. With lightened heart, she decided to teach me magic.

The mage started with the theories behind the magic and mana.

There were two problems with the lectures.

First, instead of describing things through speech, she was writing things on the notepad instead to explain. The second problem was that I could not read her language.

The mage's writing mixed and matched various different languages and special symbols.

Despite the translator ability from the knowledge before the time of Babel, there was a definite limit.

This might be a different story if my level on the skill was higher. Regardless, for now, it was difficult for me to fully comprehend the mage's writings.

I asked the knight to help me decipher the writings. However, there were words that even the knight could not read.

In the end, we thought hard to figure out the words in the middle of sentences here and there.

Soon, we gave up.

“How long will it take to learn all these linguistic characters?”

[It will take about a year.]

She may as well have been writing the passages from Iliad without teaching me the ancient Greek language first.

Still, I could not afford to study these linguistic characters.

I only had four days left until the stage was over.

I also could not afford to camp out and repeat the 16th Floor for a year.

“Just skip the theories and tell me how to activate the magic. Teach me the simplest and easiest one to master.”

The mage said she will teach me a magic known as a wind arrow.

First, she explained the basic theory about the mana's type and how to endow the mana with that elemental type.

Afterwards, we gave up again.

The basic theory behind elemental magic was too difficult.

Even when I barely managed to read the writing, I could not exactly understand the meaning.

Instead of calling it a scholastic study, the sentences were like words from a monk who trained through meditation.

The sentences were excessively condensed and philosophical.

“Usually, how long does it take for people to master this magic?”

[Talent can factor in, but half a year at least.]

“How long did it take you?”

[Half a year.]

“How long does it take on average?”

[A little over five years...]

The mage was a little embarrassed to say it.

What the hell is this? Is she boasting?

Is this one of those situations where the answer is already set and I just need to say the answer the person is expecting me to say? Should I praise you and say you are super talented?

“...Let’s skip all that and get to the actual practice. The real thing.”

The mage didn’t like the idea, but she didn’t complain. She promptly told me about the method of mana operation, the spell and the hand sign.

I could not comprehend the spell at all; I didn’t even understand a single letter.

It seemed the knowledge before the time of Babel is completely useless here.

All the words I could not comprehend in middle of the theory lectures seemed to be of the same language used in the spell.

Is it like an ancient language exempted from knowledge before the time of the Babel? Should I understand it as something like a machine language for a computer?

I could not be certain. However, I remained hopeful that I might be able to use this one day if I memorized the spell and the hand sign, so I thoroughly memorized it.

Afterwards, I sat at a corner for a while, recited the spell and tried out the hand sign as I operated the mana in the way the mage explained.

When operating the mana, the most important parts were the heart, mouth and hand.

The heart was the mana circuit’s center in the body. When the heart emanated mana, it had to be flown through a specific path.

While that happened, I had to recite the spell to form the desired construct.

Honestly, this last part was the one I understood the least.

Anyway, I tried it as instructed.

Surprisingly, just from reciting the spell, I could feel the mana being spent and disappearing around my mouth.

Does the spell itself have a special effect?

At the final stage, I spoke the activation words and focused mana in my hand.

She said I didn't need to use the hand for focusing mana.

However, since most magic were used through the hand or a staff that helped the discharge of the mana, she said the hand was used for the purpose of focusing mana.

Now, once I expel the focused mana to the outside, the magic spell will be complete.

“Wind Arrow.”

Of course, nothing happened.

I smacked my lips out of disappointment.

What I lacked was comprehension of the process.

I was lacking comprehension of the mana operation and the elemental-type characteristics that the mage was trying to teach me.

I've been handling mana for a long time, so when it comes to the mana operation I think I can cover it somewhat.

The problem is the characteristics of elemental-type magic.

Since the magic is wind arrow, it must be a wind elemental type.

The problem is how to endow this element into the magic.

...How would I know?

I opened my eyes. The mage was looking at me, surprised.

She quickly wrote something and said,

“Genius?”

[I never expected you to succeed in activating it already. You really never studied magic before?]

Really?

That just now was a success?

I asked the mage. She said it was not like I activated the magic perfectly, but she also said it would take two to three years of constant study since childhood to achieve what I just did.

[If you are interested in learning magic, please visit our Magic Tower.]

I am sorry, but that will not be possible.

Anyway, I properly used the spell and the hand sign. Apparently, my ability to operate mana was decent too.

Honestly, I was confident about handling mana.

Except when sleeping, I had been running mana circuit all the time, even when I'm eating or taking a dump.

I had utilized it in various ways for combat too.

I worked hard, but I had been thinking I am exceptionally good with my method of handling mana.

Because I had such confidence, I bluntly asked her to tell me the usage instruction first.

However, I could not resolve the problems I ran into with the elemental type.

I asked her to explain to me about the elemental type, the wind type in particular.

Of course, I couldn't understand it.

* * *

The sun rose up for the fifth day.

Well, since we are inside a sealed dungeon room, I guess that would be a weird way to put it.

Anyway, the morning came.

“I'm sure everyone had the same experience I had. The narrow pathway was big enough for one person to barely pass through. I had no choice but to take off my armor and crawl through it with just a sword like this. The pathway became narrower as I went in further, to the point where I had difficulty just crawling. There were comrades of my Order of Knights who were following behind me, but... I am worried if they were crushed by the ceiling when it collapsed.”

“I'm sure they are fine. From where I was, the trap's mechanism was exposed, so I can say this with certainty. The ceiling inside the dungeon collapsed, but on the outside, only the wall is blocking the path.”

As usual, we ate breakfast and gathered around to talk about junk.

It was very interesting to hear about the group's story regarding how they searched the dungeon for the rumored treasure as if they were on a competition.

To find the hidden pathway, they fought each other and eventually made amends and decided to collaborate. The process sounded like a scene from a fantasy novel.

In the end, they found the hidden pathway inside the dungeon. When the pathway eventually split to several directions, the group split up as well.

Although they all went their separate ways through these different pathways, as if it was by magic, they all arrived in this dungeon room at the same time and fell into the trap.

The story is like a game.

It had been a while since I questioned the background setting of a Tutorial's stage.

Is this an artificial situation created by the architect of the Tutorial? To assume that, the memories that these people have are too detailed and vast.

To put it simply, for a seven-day stage, the appearing characters have too many and too detailed settings.

I wonder, when I will be able to resolve this curiosity?

Perhaps I will never get the answer.

There was a bitter taste in my mouth.

I drank a sip of water and looked around.

Afterwards, I said as if I was spitting it out,

“Aren't you guys all being too relaxed?”

Having heard what I said, everyone turned to look at me.

On the surface, they looked rather leisure.

Could it be that they forgot about the fact that there is a doppelganger hiding here and we need to hunt it because the daily routines?

Everyone's face looked uncomfortable when I pointed this out.

It was not that they forgot. I see now.

They looked like students who were certain about failing the test that they were supposed to take soon. Because they were certain about failing the test, they didn't bother with studying for it, and instead, they played around until the very last day before the test. The group had the same look as students in such a situation.

They were just hiding the anxiety inside.

"I told all of you this before. There is a way to resolve the problem even if we don't find the doppelganger until the very last day, and that method is taking turns beating the crap out of one person until the doppelganger shows itself."

Now, the uncomfortable faces changed to anxious faces.

"Come on. I'm not saying this because I don't like everyone getting along so well. It's good that everyone is being friendly with each other. I like that too. Still, we need to hunt down the doppelganger. If possible, I would like to minimize the amount of blood on my hands."

Still, it was not like there was a way to find the doppelganger. I was just pressuring them to find the doppelganger because they were going to pay in blood soon.

I was the one who intentionally brought about such friendly atmosphere. Now, I was saying thing like this. I didn't want to say it. Still, we really had to find the doppelganger now.

We only have two days left until the rescue party arrives and the 16th Floor's stage ends.

"Km... The fact that we have no way of identifying the doppelganger is the problem, isn't it? Km... Mr. Apostle, in that case, how about we try the method you mentioned last time? What was that... Mabilia game or what not."

[TL: Misspelling of Mafia to Mabilia is intentional.]

The mercenary mentioned the Mafia game.

“You mean Mafia game? I proposed that just because I wanted to hear information from everyone.”

“Still, I can’t think of any other way, so what do we do?”

Everyone agreed to the mercenary’s idea.

There was no basis to claim that the doppelganger could be identified by playing the Mafia game. However, it was not like we had any other idea.

Like that, the Mafia game started.

* * *

About one hour passed since we started the game.

“What the! Damn it! Why are you saying I’m suspicious? Huh? You think you can say anything you want because you have an open mouth? You should say stuff that makes sense. This bullshit...”

The dungeon used to be in tranquil and amiable place. However, it was now thrown in chaos.

“Even so, there is no proof to say that you are not the doppelganger.”

“What? Damn it. Are you all accusing me?”

“Please cool your temper. Collecting thoughts after a calm conversation may not be enough as it is. Why are you being so temperamental?”

“Seriously. They are accusing me of being a demon and framing me. How could I stay calm! Mr. Holy knight, aren’t you are suspicious too?”

“Anyway, that mage is the most dubious one. Do you realize how many could have died as casualties of her spells?”

“Baseless speculation.”

[That’s an excessive criticism. We were in middle of a battle. Why are you casting doubts on people based on insufficient evidence? Adventurer, by any chance, are you the doppelganger?]

“Honestly, I am doubting the mercenary a little. He is only showing outlandish reactions. They say that overdone denial is an affirmation. I don’t remember where I heard it, but that’s how it is. The same can be said about the holy knight. There were a few questionable things about his attitude for the past seven days. He didn’t let us know when the mage turned out to be a lady. Of course, the most suspicious one here is the mage. I am not saying this because I almost died by her magic. It is definitely not that. Of the people in this dungeon right now, four people could have been hurt by her magic. If they were attacked, there would have been just the holy knight, the mage and the mercenary left. Isn’t that a great situation for the doppelganger?”

Meanwhile, the knight was bubbling with his obsessive compulsive explanation disorder potential.

“Would you shut the hell up!? I think you are the most suspicious one!”

“Agreed!”

Oh my, this is a complete mess; it’s as if a dog full of mud-stains came in and ran around wild.

I’m starting to think it would be more peaceful to beat the shit out of them all one at a time until the doppelganger reveals itself.

However, because there is no guarantee that there really is just one doppelganger, it is a choice that is hard for me to accept.

Even if one doppelganger is discovered, as long as there is the possibility of another one, I need to beat the entire group to pulp.

I cannot leave any exception.

I didn't like doing that, so I handed the problem over for the group to figure out, yet...

"Are you picking a fight here?!"

"That's right, let's go at it! Draw your sword you bastard!"

"Warning! Warning!"

"Lower your sword at once!?"

"Old man, why don't you lower your sword!"

I wonder if this is how it would feel to experience a soap opera in real life? I pondered about this for a moment and decided.

I don't think the situation would improve even if I interfered.

I will be able to put a stop to this chaos, but the situation will just go back to the beginning.

First, I should just wait until they come to a conclusion on their own.

I thought it would be better if I just stayed out of this. I went to a corner and practiced magic.

I thought I won't be able to focus if I hear them talk, so I intentionally blocked my hearing.

While they argued, I spent the time while practicing magic, but I could feel someone approaching.

I immediately opened my eyes and looked forward to see the entire group was there to staring at me.

"What the? Did you guys finish fighting?"

“Um? You couldn’t hear us? That’s an incredible focus. Um... About that...”

It seemed the holy knight had something to say, but it was hard for him to say it.

So, I looked at the knight.

Organize it for me, Mr. Compulsive explanation disorder patient!

What is it?

Feeling my gaze, the knight seemed to panic. He tumbled around for a moment.

However, it seemed he realized his role soon. He opened his mouth and started to explain.

“We spent the past two hours and succeeded in gathering our thoughts, although there were lots of arguments and fights in the process. We decided on the person who we thought was the most likely one to be the doppelganger.”

Oh, from that chaos, you guys came to a unanimous decision?

“Who is it?”

The knight paused for a moment. It was like a scene from a court drama with a surprise verdict. He raised his index finger and shouted,

“Mr. Apostle, it is you!”

“What?”

Chapter 100

Tutorial 16th Floor (8)

“Mr. Apostle, it is you!”

“What?”

This was totally unexpected. It made my head numb momentarily.

In that chaos, you guys came to a decision; that conclusion was that I am the doppelganger?

Are these guys nuts?

“We came to the conclusion that you must be the doppelganger. So...”

[Soul Steal]

First, I used the Soul Steal and assumed combat stance.

I was not panicking. I just found it ridiculous.

I’m sure the knight will explain, as usual.

He will explain how they came to the decision.

I’m sure he will kindly go over each and every reason.

However, before that...

I’ll hear their explanation after a beating.

[Blink]

First, I used Blink and moved to the middle of the group.

[Talaria's Wings]

The wings were spread open, and the Knight and the Mercenary were struck by the motion. They were thrown to the back.

As usual, I need to target the Mage first.

It seemed she was already aware that I was going to target her first. She cast a barrier in front of her to block me.

Is it the same one I saw the last time?

I looked at the floor. She even had the magic circles drawn already.

Inside the barrier, the Mage was reciting the spell.

It is the same pattern as the last time.

However, this time, I bet she isn't casting a magic that would fail with a trivial interference.

It seemed she was not concerned about me at all because I was outside of the barrier. She even closed her eyes as she was reciting the spell.

She must be pretty confident about the barrier's defensive power.

Let's see just how powerful your barrier is.

I focused mana at my fist. With all of my strength, I struck the barrier's surface.

Kwaaaang!

The barrier and my fist collided and generated a deafening shockwave. The Adventurer was trying to sneak up on me from the side, but he was pushed back and fell because of the shockwave.

The Adventurer was on the ground and defenseless, but I took a step back from the barrier instead of minding the man.

It developed a crack.

I can see a spider web of cracks emanating from the center of where my fist hit.

I need to aim for that area and deal a huge blow. That will do it.

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms and formed a hammer.

Unlike other high-floor challengers of Tutorial, I don't have a certain kill or ultimate move. That's because most of the skills I have are passive or long-duration skills.

If I had to have one, then the body slam with Talaria's Wings and Blink would be it.

However, that body slam move is too risky.

If I collided with the opponent by wrapping myself in Talaria's Wings and using Blink, although Talaria's Wings will protect my body, there will be a brutal shock from the impact.

If the opponent does not budge from the impact at all, then I'll be experiencing the shock of the impact coming back at me.

To reduce this risk, I came up with the idea of using Blink while swinging a weapon.

I successfully used this for the first time against Idy at the Fifth Floor. I had been practicing this technique diligently since then.

I maximized my mana, wrapped it around my body and focused.

The most important thing in this technique was timing.

I had to use the Blink at the right time, or I was not going to be able to deliver the momentum from the weapon's swing properly.

I held the hammer like a baseball bat.

The hammer's handle grip was formed from a type of metal that was different from the rest.

I could feel its rough texture. I won't have to worry about the hammer slipping out of my hand so easily.

As I practiced before, I adjusted into a baseball batter's stance.

After that, I swung the hammer.

I was able to swing the hammer smoothly. The motion was smooth and fluid.

The hammer was swung following a specific trajectory that I set. Before it reached the strike point, I used Blink.

[Blink]

A loud, violent noise filled the dungeon once again.

Instead of saying it was a sound that resulted from a clash, it was closer the sound of an explosion.

Actually, when the hammer and the barrier collided, there was an explosion of mana.

Because of the explosion, there was an intense light, and I automatically winced, closing my eyes.

It took me a while before I was able to open my eyes to check the aftermath.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms was rolling on the floor.

It seemed that I lost my grip during the impact.

My head is cloudy.

I cannot hear anything. Is it because I encountered such a loud noise so close?

Even though I wrapped my body in mana to prepare for the impact?

My hand was completely broken. It was drenched in blood.

There were blood leaking out of gaps in my nails. My hand, wrist and arm muscles were twitching violently.

Although they were not visible, I was betting that my joints were not in good condition either.

Other than those... My back was hurting a little. The right side of my pelvis was hurting.

My wing bone behind the shoulder is hurting too.

Well, this is not bad.

I have not been hurt in a while, but this is not something I should be surprised about.

The barrier was completely shattered.

The Mage inside the barrier was unconscious. As for the others, it seemed they were still unable to shake off the shock. They were all on the ground and rubbing their eyes or rolling around in a daze.

Ugh. I didn't think there would be an explosion when the barrier breaks.

Since it is a magic spell, did the mana contained within the barrier explode when it was destroyed?

I don't know how a barrier works, so I have no way of knowing.

I sustained more damage than I thought.

This clearly shows the drawback of the attack using Blink.

The recoil won't be so bad if the opponent gets thrown off or just explodes immediately, but if the subject withstands the impact for even a little bit, I experience the recoil.

I think I should refrain from using this method with a blunt weapon, especially in a batting stance.

To start with, I started practicing this technique with intent of using it with a sword to improve a swing's ability to cut through things.

The technique is not suited for blunt-strike annihilation. It is better for cutting with a powerful blade swing.

I rotated my wrist around to relax it.

Ah, my ankles are hurting too.

After a while, I could hear the beeping noises in my ears. I gradually regained my hearing ability.

The rubble of the shattered barrier were like broken glasses on the floor. Starting with the smallest parts, the rubbles became fainter, and they all disappeared into the air.

Around that time, the group finally regained their senses.

Of them all, the knight got a grip first and got up.

As I thought, he is the strongest of the group.

I picked up the Transmutable Thousand Arms that was currently in the form of a hammer and walked to the Knight.

“Uu... My head... Uh!? Wait... Wait! I... I surrender. Surrender!”

Stop making noises, you knight bastard.

Receive a beating first. We will talk later.

You don't have to feel like you were wronged.

Other than the Mage, who was unconscious, everyone is going to take turn to receive beatings, including that Adventurer over there who is lying down and pretending to be unconscious. Every last one of you.

* * *

“Come on. Why are you crying? You are making me feel sorry for beating you.”

This is awkward.

The Adventurer was crying non-stop for a long time now.

You are a grown middle-aged man. Why are you making a scene and crying?

“Come on, why... Uhhhuuk...”

I won't describe the pitiful cries that followed afterwards.

“Why... Why are you beating me harder than everyone else.”

Ah, so that's why you felt wronged.

You know, there are people you just hate.

To me, the Adventurer was one of those people.

It was not like I had a personal ill feeling toward... Actually, I did have a personal ill feeling toward him.

I struck him ferociously in the pit of the stomach. Today, I gave him a good mix of beatings everywhere.

For the grand finale of the beating, I used my elbow to strike him along his back.

The Adventurer rolled on the ground in pain for a long time.

For a while, he was having a difficulty breathing. Now, he was crying.

Something must have happened to his spines. He was not able to sit or stand. He was just lying on the floor and crying.

This was a middle-aged man with an epic beard like Jang-bi, yet he was acting so pathetic.

I felt like my eyes were rotting.

[TL: Jang-bi is one of the three brothers from the Romance of Three Kingdoms story. He is an ultra tough warrior with epic beard like many others in the story. Think Mr. T or Chuck Norris beard.]

The others in the group shared similar reactions.

They were all rolling around the ground and struggling.

I turned my head and said to the knight,

“Explanation.”

“...I would have explained even if you asked before you attacked us...”

“Explanation.”

The Knight's face was swelled up because he was struck on the jaw. He started to explain.

If I punched harder as usual, I might have completely turned his jaw

around.

He was holding the side of his waist. His pale face was cringing. His internal organ was most likely busted from the hammer impact.

The knight tried to speak, but he struggled due to pain. It seemed he was experiencing severe pain.

He was breathing heavily. His eyes turned up all the way and showing just whites. It seemed he had his feet inside the Styx.

I figured it could not be helped. I brought out a potion from the inventory and had him drink it.

Looking at this, the Adventurer looked even pitiful.

I ignored him.

After drinking the potion, the Knight was looking a little better, so I asked him to explain again.

“We had many reasons why we thought you must be the doppelganger. First, we had no idea how you got here or which pathway you took. Before the walls collapsed and the explosion brought down the ceiling, we saw numerous pathways. There probably were over ten different ones. We all came through one of these pathways. However, we could not figure out which pathway you came through to get here. We know the dungeon’s structures fairly well in detail. We had been exploring this place for a long time. Even if it is the pathway we had never been in before, considering the structure, there are plenty of dungeon rooms connected to the pathways. Still, even with those possibilities, we could not figure out how you got here. Second, you kept asking us for information. Clearly, you wanted to get information from us. Still, you didn’t ask at all about the members of the Order of Knights or their command structure or the members of the rescue party. You didn’t ask about information that the doppelganger needs. Also, you didn’t insist on us to answer about things we didn’t want to tell you. Of course, you did insist on us to teach you about swordsmanship and magic. Besides these, the information you wanted were mostly basic knowledge in this world.”

Too long...

Way too long...

It was not like he had a script in front of him to read from, yet he was saying them all in perfect order and logically too. The man has incredible talent.

“You can’t just use the interest in common knowledge as certain proof of someone being the doppelganger.”

“You are right. The doppelganger will get to have the knowledge of the person that it took possession of. However, if that person doesn’t know anything about the world, then the doppelganger will need to find out about the world outside. As you said, we can’t make the conclusion based on just that. We had a more definite proof. It was the fact that none of us saw you in the dungeon before this. There weren’t even any reports about you being seen by anyone. We had been exploring this dungeon for a long time together. The entrance was guarded by my comrades. There were many people around the pathways and large spaces. So, we theorized that you had been hiding here all this time, in this dungeon space to be precise. In that case, it made sense why you don’t know anything about the world.”

“And the being that had been in this dungeon all this time is the doppelganger?”

“Yes. That’s right.”

That’s a pretty convincing story.

Now, what should I do?

Wait.

They never talked about the time they ran into the doppelganger in detail.

The group told me so many stories.

Exploring the dungeon, going through the pathways to get to this place, and even the time when they were caught by a trap and unable to escape... they mentioned many things.

However, they never once described the doppelganger to me.

They didn't tell me about when they met the doppelganger either.

The message definitely said the group ran into the doppelganger.

However, they are saying now that I must be the doppelganger who was always here.

This is odd.

If they entered this place and saw me, then would they be able to say with certainty that I am the doppelganger?

He would just think that I was a human who was trapped in a hidden room.

After they entered this exact spot...

Now, again...

They must have ran into the doppelganger and confirmed its existence.

They never told me about this.

I didn't bother to ask about that moment all this time.

I didn't ask because I was not going to be able to answer if they asked me to describe that moment myself. I wanted to avoid being asked such a question.

I believed that the group got to this place through different pathways, confirmed the demon named doppelganger, and then fell to a trap where lost their sight inside the darkness.

In that chaos, someone was done in by the doppelganger, and the group was trapped here with the doppelganger that assumed the human form of one of the group.

There was no light when I entered the stage and everyone was scattered and moaning in pain. It was natural to assume the above.

However, listening to what the Knight said, it seemed that they never confirmed the doppelganger with their eyes.

If I was the doppelganger like the Knight said and if I had been hiding here all along, the group would have seen that I was the doppelganger when they first arrived.

Plus, as soon as they found light in the darkness they should have pointed me out as the doppelganger and attacked me.

However, none of them did.

The group, or the knight at least, had never seen the doppelganger.

However, the group was aware that there was a doppelganger in this dungeon.

I thought about this slowly to organize everything.

“In that case, how did you guys know there is a doppelganger in this place?”

“Pardon?”

“Someone must have told you that there is a doppelganger in this place, right? Who was the one that first mentioned that there was doppelganger here?”

That person had to be most suspicious one.

This person was claiming there was a doppelganger, despite never having seen it.

“That was me...”

The knight panicked and stepped back as he said that.

Chapter 101

Tutorial 16th Floor (9)

“Now... Wait, Mr. Apostle! You are wrong! That’s not it!”

I raised my hammer again. The Knight stepped back and shouted,

“I’m not the one! Really!”

“What is?”

“I am the one who said first that there is a doppelganger here, but that’s just because I saw it first. Why are you raising the hammer?”

Ah, so you did see the doppelganger? I lowered my hand that held the Transmutable Thousand Arms and asked him to explain.

“All right. Explain in detail.”

Instead of asking a bunch of questions, it is probably going to be easier understand if I just let the Knight talk freely.

“We all entered this dungeon room at almost the same time. I found the doppelganger that was sleeping in the center. When the doppelganger was approaching us, the trap was activated and trapped us here.”

“You said someone was attacked in the darkness and the doppelganger took on the skin of that person. In that case, it does not make sense to claim that I must have been in this place in hiding all along, don’t you think? You said you saw what the doppelganger looks like, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I did. We thought one of us attacked by the doppelganger in the

darkness. However, we thought of a new possibility earlier.”

A new possibility...

What is this theory accusing me of being the doppelganger?

“The doppelganger must have changed its form in the darkness. Instead of attacking the new people who just entered and assuming one of the people’s form, it changed to a form that it had from the past.”

Um... I think that is plausible.

The message didn’t say anything about anyone being attacked by the doppelganger.

It just says that the doppelganger hid in chaos.

There were so many pathways. When many people entered the dungeon room at the same time, the place fell to darkness.

In that brief moment of darkness, instead of taking on the risk of attacking someone, the doppelganger just assumed an old form that it already knew.

That makes a complete picture.

“Is that possible? When I asked you about the doppelganger earlier, you didn’t say anything about such an ability.”

“It is very rare, but there are records of doppelgangers doing such a thing. The records are not very credible, but... Actually there are so few records about doppelgangers, so...”

Um...

This is also a plausible theory.

It’s not a perfect proof that I am the doppelganger, but I cannot think

of any loopholes for me to point out.

“All right. Well then, what were you guys going to do if I am the doppelganger? If you really thought I was the doppelganger, then you should have ambushed me instead of just slowly walking up to me together.”

“About that... We thought you must be not a doppelganger.”

Now what is this all about?

“My head is starting to hurt. Hurry up and explain. Make it brief.”

“Actually, you were suspicious from the start. So, we attacked you without hesitation on the first day. However, the end result was our defeat. Also, instead of killing us and torturing information out of us, you kept us alive and wanted to hear our stories instead. On top of this, you didn’t even ask about information that were important or must be kept from the doppelganger. Also, for the past few days, your behaviors and decisions were far from a demon, so...”

“Make it brief.”

“...A long time ago, the doppelganger attacked you and hid itself in you. However, it failed in taking over your consciousness completely. That is our theory.”

Yet another unexpected idea popped out.

The doppelganger stole my body, but failed at taking over my consciousness.

I thought about the meaning of this.

“Explain in detail from there.”

“Yes. So, we thought the doppelganger snuck in this dungeon and was slowly eliminating your consciousness. Unless that was the case, there is no way that a doppelganger would be sleeping in a corner of this dungeon where the greatest treasure of the millennium is supposedly

hidden. Also, this dungeon is not even related to demons. The doppelganger must have brought up your appearance in the moment of danger. Because the doppelganger had not completely took over your consciousness, your consciousness that was chained by the doppelganger until now surfaced. That's our conjecture."

So in other words, both my own consciousness and the doppelganger's consciousness are within me.

"Actually, when we asked about your past, you didn't answer and just went over it with gave us a nonchalant response. You didn't tell us anything about recent history or the distant past."

I get why you find it suspicious, although that's because I am not related to this world at all.

"So, we came up with yet another theory. You must have lost your memory! The doppelganger had been erasing your memories gradually to completely remove your consciousness. If that is the case, that would explain why you don't know anything about the outside world. You are not completely ignorant of all common knowledge. You only know some things as if you have holes in your knowledge. The theory explains these as well. You won't know very well about how you got here, where this place is or what the outside world is. What do you think of our theory!"

Like an anime character, the Knight raised his index finger to the heavens and shouted in energetic roar.

After that, it seemed he felt a pain in his side. He held his waist and winced.

"By the way, can something like that happen? A doppelganger taking its time to possess someone's body because it is not able to eradicate the original's consciousness, the original person's consciousness surfacing when the doppelganger uses the form while being in that state, and, the original person not even recognizing the doppelganger's consciousness in the body."

"...Possible... It is possible."

The Holy Knight who was quivering in the corner answered for me.

“I have not heard of such a case, but the Holy Knight said it was possible. You are no ordinary person. You are being called by a God. You are very powerful as well, so I think it would be possible for you to not lose your mind completely and hold on. The doppelganger can also hide inside an unaware host. It already succeeded in attacking, and it took the body as a host. As for the host’s consciousness, it is losing memories, so if it is unaware of it, then it is possible for the doppelganger to stay hidden in the body. After all, a doppelganger is a high demon. I am not sure about these, but...”

“So... Kuluk... Couldn’t you go easy on us? My lung is not working well. I think my spine is broken somewhere as well. So... We assumed that the theory is correct and tried to force the demon out of your body. Even if our theory was wrong, we figured it won’t lead to serious problems. Also, if we were right, then we would have been able to save you as well. Of course, it would be hard to recover your lost memories... Anyway, we thought it was the most plausible idea. Also, nobody had to die in this scenario, so it was the most ideal theory.”

It was the most ridiculous idea.

The problem was that this dumbfounding theory might actually be correct.

So far, whenever I entered a stage, there were bits of information about my role in each message that described the clearing goal.

The ‘myself’ in these stages had unique roles that fit the themes of each stage. It was like a videogame character.

After that, the challenger continued to clear of the stage, assuming that role of a main character in a videogame.

It had always been like that.

At the Sixth Floor, I was a brave warrior. At the Seventh Floor, I was a guardian. At the 11th Floor, I was a tracker. At the 12th and 13th Floor, I was a challenger.

In that case, what is my role at the 16th Floor?

The message didn't define my character in this stage.

The message only told me about the people who arrived at the dungeon room and the doppelganger.

There was nothing about me in the description.

The theory is plausible if I also think about the difficulty of the stage.

Let's think about the difficulty of the 16th Floor.

If I am the doppelganger, I'll end up killing all of the people here in my search for the doppelganger by the seventh day before the rescue party arrives.

However, the doppelganger will not reveal itself.

I'll fail the stage if the rescue party arrives then.

If I realize that I am the doppelganger at the very last moment, but do not know how to draw it out, then I'll fail to clear the stage.

Let's assume I somehow managed to draw out the doppelganger.

Then I will have to defeat the doppelganger.

All by myself.

I am certain the doppelganger will be a tough opponent for an ordinary challenger to face alone.

The challenger must get help from the group to make challenging it easier. However, the group will still be wary of the challenger, who they suspect of being the doppelganger. They won't theorize about the possibility of extracting the doppelganger hidden inside.

Considering the floor level, it is a fitting difficulty.

“So, I’ll ask. Do you really not remember your past? If you do remember your past, then our theory is wrong. Please answer honestly.”

“...Wait. Let me think a little harder.”

First, I brought out potions and told them to treat the others who were still on the ground.

I think my brain will start to cramp soon.

As I thought, this is not my kind of work.

Instead of agonizing over this complicated issue, I opened the message window instead.

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: Can you get some information for me right away?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I can get you one before today’s evening and another one tomorrow or the day after that. What is it?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: Gather information about a demon named Doppelganger. In particular, how it attacks people and how it takes over the victim’s mind; how to identify the doppelganger and its combat abilities; and if it is possible to identify the doppelganger if the doppelganger had not completely taken over the body and the host’s consciousness had surfaced at the moment. If there is enough information allowance left after all those, send me other frivolous information like its tendencies.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I got it. Now that I think about it, I think this is the first time for you to ask us to gather information directly like this.]

I’m going to use a cheat key.

The Order of Vigilance had been providing information for the few rankers at higher floors to help them with their stage clears.

To be exact, the information came from the managers of the Tutorials, and the Order broadcasted the information.

The easy difficulty challengers at lower floors gather information by asking the requested questions to the managers when they clear floors.

They didn't really need much information to clear the lower floors in the easy difficulty. Even if they needed information, they could get them for free from the Order, so this arrangement worked out fairly well. Also, they were given small rewards after each round.

The Order had been managing the information gathering system by making a list of lower floor challengers' projected clearing days and information requests.

I should take advantage of their information system.

I have done a lot for the Order all this time.

If I don't use this now, when am I going to?

I closed my eyes for about 30 minutes and waited for Kim Min-hyuk's response.

The people at the dungeon were mumbling to each other, wondering if I was meditating and trying to see if the doppelganger was inside me.

Also, they were saying that the situation was unfolding just as they theorized.

They were talking about my self-reevaluation because I heard their theory.

The group, other than the Mage who was still unconscious, were glad for a moment that they got the right answer. They were also relieved. However, they readied themselves for another battle.

It seemed they were preparing themselves because they thought the doppelganger might rush out in middle of my meditation.

I was not actually meditating. However, it was not like I could tell them I was gathering information by contacting someone outside of the stage. I let them have the benefit of the doubt.

When 30 minutes passed, Kim Min-hyuk messaged me.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Doppelganger is a very rare demon, so the information was very expensive. The informant got the information by focusing only on the important parts and making it as terse as possible. First, I'll tell you exactly what the manager of the Tutorial said.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: All right.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Doppelganger. A demon. Uses claws and tentacles to neutralize the opponent and make the opponent lose consciousness. Connects a tentacle to the brain of the subject and gains information through brainwaves. Afterwards, it destroys the subject's soul. The manager didn't explain how the doppelganger destroys the soul. Next is... A doppelganger completely neutralizes the host and becomes a soul to take over the host's body. Because it is in a soul form directly attached to the host's body, it is sensitive to the pain experienced by the host. Therefore, to find the doppelganger, the host must be killed or subjected to an almost-fatal level of pain.]

There is one more information left that's important.

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: How about when the host who had not been taken over completely reveals himself? What did the manager say?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: The manager said identifying the doppelganger is still possible in that state.]

After reading his reply, I sat there vacantly for a moment.

This is incredible.

The theories proposed by the group were all correct.

They were theories that would have been difficult to come up with,

even in ordinary situations.

If we just tried to find and eradicate the doppelganger amongst the group, could we have come to this conclusion?

I don't think we could have.

This is the most unusual conclusion that they arrived at. It is like selecting a series of hidden choices correctly despite a selection of more than a dozen decisions that needed to be made consecutively to get to the final destination in a video game.

It had been five days since I entered the 16th Floor stage.

We had been laughing, eating, drinking, learning and teaching.

I don't know how the group felt about this, but I greatly enjoyed my time here.

Also, they thought I might be a doppelganger although my true consciousness probably isn't.

After that, they thought of this theory.

I'm a little overwhelmed by their caring thoughts. Despite their suspicious about me being a doppelganger, they came up with an alternative where I was still not the demon.

Am I being too sentimental?

I met people for the first time in a Tutorial stage.

Spending comforting times like this with people goes beyond simple joy and comfort. The time has a special meaning to me.

It's been over a year since I entered the Tutorial.

Most of the time I spent here are filled with pain and loneliness.

After that, all I had left was obsession and a sense of accomplishment.

Of course, I grew stronger through the hardship. I was able to find myself as I advanced.

Still, the past year had been extremely hard.

That must be why I treasured the time I spent with everyone. It was small and simple, but it was very enjoyable.

Perhaps I'm overreacting.

I slowly opened my eyes.

I saw the Mercenary's face. His eyes were black and blue.

I thought I gave him a plenty of potion. It seemed that it wasn't enough.

I feel sorry all of the sudden...

I thought that perhaps the past five days were not as fun for the group as it had been for me.

Tsk...

I swallowed my guilt and organized my thought for the last time.

I was actually still not certain if I was the doppelganger.

Given the situation, many things fit theory. However, they were not definite.

However, I should examine this as the people concluded.

Their theory could really be correct.

According to Kim Min-hyuk's message, a doppelganger is sensitive to

the host's pain.

The message said that the host needs to be killed or reach a near-fatal state.

In that case, there is only one option left.

“By any chance, is there anyone here who is good at torture?”

This person will have to be really good at it.

Chapter 102

Tutorial 16th Floor (10)

I can say this because I'm an expert in pain endurance. A near-death level of pain really means a degree of pain that could cause death from shock.

This meant the pain had to be of the most extreme kind, not the silly kind like bumping one's toe at the door and feigning severe pain while rolling on the ground in mock agony.

Also, near-death kind of pain could be induced only by skillful and detailed practitioners trained to harass the subject's body.

I knew about the method better than anyone.

However, from the experience, I knew how frightening my self-harm would look to the others.

So, instead of doing it myself, I asked the group to torture me instead.

Maybe I would be able to learn a new method of torture.

Now...

I cannot hide my disappointment.

"Ah, is that not hurting you?"

"...I told you to do it harder. I won't hit you back. I won't. You are doing it because I asked you, so why are you so scared?"

While shaking, the Adventurer was trying to pull the nail out of my finger. I told him he didn't need to worry about me hitting back. It seemed he was concerned I might get angry at him later for hurting

me. He was probably worried that I might let out my frustration at him by attacking him later.

At the moment, I was sitting at a chair that I brought out of the inventory. I had my left arm tied to the chair's arm rest.

Sitting in front of me, the Adventurer was fiddling with my hand.

Others were finding it difficult to watch, so they stood a little further away from me.

I told him he could hurt me at will. The Adventurer took a deep breath and started to pull the nails out of my fingers.

Ugh...

It doesn't hurt so much if you pull the nail out so cleanly in one swing.

You should do it slowly in a mess with twists. Only then is the raw sensation of a nail being pulled out can be felt.

I didn't know it would go this way. I might as well do this myself.

Still, the Adventurer knew the basics of the torture.

Before him, the Holy Knight brought out a punishing hammer or whatnot, which was the size of a little hammer used by a judge, and beat my wrist with it as if he was playing a game of whack-a-mole. Compared to him, Adventurer was doing a lot better.

After pulling out my nail, it seemed he gained a little confidence in this. He brought out sharp metal tool and tongs.

They didn't appear to be for medical purpose. Instead... they appeared to be tools for opening a safe.

The Adventurer cut open the top of the finger where the nail was pulled. He put in the tong there and messed with my flesh inside for a while.

“Are you really... not feeling pain from this? How could you not even flinch? Do you have a problem in your nervous system...”

Normally, if someone was just enduring the pain, their elbows, legs, spine or toes would be wildly trembling if their finger's flesh being dug out like this.

However, the pain resistance's effect erased such secondary pains. It was because they could be hindrances to battle.

Of course, the pain itself was not erased at all.

Actually, because of the effect, my senses never became paralyzed from pain, so I could feel the pain more clearly.

I told the Adventurer to continue. I told him everything was going well.

It seemed the Adventurer was determined. He brought out a black wire from the bag.

He cut a segment from it to a short length and stuck it on top of the finger that he just cut open.

He carefully adjusted the location of the wire and called the mage who was watching in the back with a pale face.

“Refuse.”

[Are you asking me to use Blitz magic at that wire? Are you out of your mind?]

Why not? I think it is a great idea.

The Mage panicked apprehensively and hesitated. However, I explained that I consented to the Adventurer. I insisted. Thinking it could not be helped, the Mage stepped in.

“That is a special wire that will amplify the power of the Blitz magic.

Adjust your power accordingly.”

It seemed the Mage was having a difficult time looking at my hand which was cut open with a wire stuck in it. After hearing the Adventurer’s explanation, she grimaced and used a magic spell.

“Lightning Shock.”

She used a Blitz magic at the wire. My hand and arm flinched from the shock. Electrifying sensation flowed through my nerve and went all the way to my spine.

It smelled like burning flesh. I felt being stabbed by needles and compressed by a crusher. The pain was not just on my finger. It was on my elbow and riding all the way up to beyond my shoulder.

It even reached the tip of my head. I felt like I was being slapped to my senses.

I had experienced Blitz magic before.

During the day of great harmony last time, I had asked Lee Jun-suk to use Blitz magic on me so I could raise my Blitz and great magic resistance.

I didn’t get to earn Blitz resistance in the end, but...

Anyway, compared to that last time, I don’t think this was much more efficient.

I was about to ask if there was any other torture method. It was at that moment when I could hear a quiet scream.

[...Uuuu... Kuuuuuuuu... St... Stop... What... are you... doing...]

Is this the doppelganger’s voice?

It was not coming from my ears. It felt like the voice was echoing in my head.

The voice sounded like one of those distorted voices of criminals in a movie. It was muddling and unpleasant to hear.

“I think this is effective. Try making it a little stronger.”

[You... insane... human...]

“Lightning Bolt!”

This time, not just the parts around the arm, but my entire body shook violently.

For about half a second, my vision suddenly went white before slowly returning to normal.

As I thought, the Mage’s Blitz magic spells are more powerful than Lee Jun-suk’s.

[Kuuuaaaaa... This... This fool! Are you planning to die together!]

Who’s going to die with you?

I won’t die from something like this.

I pressed in the wire deeper into my finger and said,

“Another shot. Make it a more powerful spell.”

The Mage hesitated for a moment before reciting the spell, and the doppelganger screamed.

[Kuuuuuuuu! How could such a dumbass... How... What kind of God is... trying to have this lunatic as the Apostle!]

Why are you treating me as if I’m insane?

You are spoiling my mood.

[God of Adventure is agreeing with you.]

The Mage brought out a paper, wrote on it and showed the paper to me.

[I'll shoot a really powerful one. You are going to be okay, right?]

I nodded decisively. The mage also nodded. She took a step back and started to recite the spell.

Considering that she had to recite a long spell, I was certain that this one was going to be a lot more powerful than the ones before.

[S... Stop. Are you intending to die too...]

The doppelganger kept on hissing at me to quit. However, I ignored him.

Meanwhile, the Mage, who had no way of hearing the doppelganger's whispers, finished her spell and cast it.

[You lunatic!]

“Lightning Strike!”

Right after that, I lost consciousness.

* * *

I checked my surroundings as soon as I regained my consciousness.

I am safe.

I checked the time. About two minutes had passed.

It seemed I fainted for two minutes.

Two minutes...

I had faint resistance, yet I was unconscious for two minutes. That meant it was a huge shock, something that would have left me unconsciousness for a very long time if I didn't have the skill.

The Blitz spells that the Mage used before this one were strong, but they were not as powerful as this.

I did ask her to use a more powerful spell. However, compared to the spell before this, the last spell was at least twice as powerful.

If it was not me, anyone else would have definitely been dead or on the verge of death. The magic spell clearly had beyond deadly power.

Um... Was it a simple mistake?

I should ask later.

I untied the rope that was tying my left arm to the chair's armrest. I opened the inventory to bring out a potion and drank it.

It looks like I won't have to worry about the aftermath of the damage.

I got up and tried moving my body.

I feel light.

I brought out both Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory. I made one form a straight long sword and the other one into a shield. I looked to the front.

There was a bizarre looking monster.

It was about three meters tall with twelve tentacles on each arm, which were very unique.

Also, the face didn't have eyes, nose, mouth or ears.

The tentacles on its shoulder constantly changed its length.

The tentacles' tips had sharp claws on them. The doppelganger's body and tentacles were thrashing around violently. Unlike their sluggish movements, they were very sturdy.

Kang!

I also could see the people fighting the monster.

The Knight's sword was blocked by one of the tentacles. Another tentacle came at the Knight, and he quickly retreated to avoid it.

The people were covered in dirt and blood. It seemed like they were being pushed back a little, but they were holding out pretty well.

The doppelganger must have left my body when I lost consciousness and started fighting the group.

I was probably defenseless while I was unconscious, yet I didn't have any injuries. I think the group must have started attacking the doppelganger as soon as it came out and put distance between me and the monster.

I'm thankful.

As of late, I've been too easily overcome by gratitude.

I became too sentimental.

[Talaria's Wings]

I summoned Talaria's Wings to enhance the combat strength of the comrades around me.

I stepped in right after.

"Hey. Were you guys able to hold out?"

"Does it look like we are all right? If you were just a little late, one or two of us would have died."

The Mercenary complained. His forehead was gushing out blood.

The man sure love to complain a lot.

“Fortunately, the Holy Knight used a holy spell as soon as the doppelganger showed itself and dealt a great damage to it. Right after that, the doppelganger disengaged its spirit form and quickly manifested its physical form to enter combat. We fought hard, but the Holy Knight and the Mage were running low on mana, so we had been holding out by just the three of us. We still need a bit of time before the Holy Knight and the Mage could recover enough mana. I’m glad you woke up just in time!”

As always, the Knight was one magnificent obsessive compulsive explanation patient.

*[PR Note: At first I thought he was referring to everyone as a regular noun but it turns out it's a proper noun *sigh* so I'm sorry everyone. I'll try to change it ASAP. By that I mean I'll beg Jaiki to.]*

J response: nope :D

As for the Adventurer who was holding his stomach that was struck by the doppelganger... Um... I just don’t like that man’s face.

Sheepishly, the Holy Knight and the Mage waved their hands at me before closing their eyes again to focus on recovering mana.

Now that I think about it, other than with Idy, is this the first time for me to fight with allies?

I think this is also the first time for me to receive assistance in the combat situation.

I had participated in the Tournament’s group rounds, but I never fought along with the group members during that event.

I rushed forward and blocked a tentacle that was swung at the Mercenary.

Toooong

A heavy shock along with the sound from the impact echoed in the dungeon room.

As I thought, those tentacles are moving with flexibility, but they were clearly durable.

With my gaze, I told the Mercenary to step back and said,

“Everyone, you held on well until now. I’ll finish this.”

There was the matter of the experience points, and I also found it easier to finish things by myself.

The three who had been holding the front line retreated. Having confirmed this, I charged in immediately.

The tentacles came at me at all directions.

[Battle Focus]

I calmly examined the trajectories of the tentacles.

They were swung like whips, so I had to be very cautious about predicting their trajectories.

Considering my speed, there were three tentacles that were going to get in my way.

I could block one with my shield and keep on advancing. However, I have to fight off the other two.

My mana flowed into the long sword and I continued to charge in.

After that, when the tentacles came within my attack range, I calmly swung my long sword.

I swung my sword at each tentacle, one at a time.

The tentacles were as tough as iron. However, they were cleanly severed by my longsword.

From the left side, a tentacle was trying to hinder my advance. I blocked it with my shield and continued on.

The other nine tentacles won't be able to trip me off.

I smoothly made my way to the doppelganger. It was within melee range. I swung my sword horizontally just below its featureless face, right at its neck.

Suuuuguk...

Like that, the doppelganger's head was cut. Green blood cascaded out like a water fountain.

The blood could be poisonous or acidic, so I jumped back to avoid it.

While I was jumping back, I changed the long sword's form into a dagger.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms had a constant weight regardless of the shape, so the dagger had considerable mass concentrated on it.

As soon as I landed, I threw the dagger at the doppelganger.

Kwang!

The dagger pierced the doppelganger and nailed it to the wall.

The doppelganger was trying to use its tentacles to pull out the dagger. However, it seemed to have difficulty pulling it out.

Oh ho ho... How sad. You don't have any hands.

Although I swung at its neck, its head was not cut off completely.

Watching the doppelganger, I changed the Transmutable Thousand

Arms on my left hand.

First, I formed it into a straight sword.

No, this is not right.

After a few trials and errors, I formed a great sword similar to the one held by the Knight.

I held the great sword with both of my hands and applied mana by following what I learned from the Knight.

It was like this, right?

The sword started to resonate with a sound. It started to shine in blue light. In normal circumstances, pouring in enough mana into a weapon until my mana became visible like this meant that sword had an excess of mana. It would have resulted in unacceptable amount of waste in mana.

However, when I tried it using the method that the Knight taught, the mana excess was significantly reduced.

The mana was shining steadily. It gradually formed a shape and fluctuated around the surface of the sword.

It looked cool.

I know that sounds simple, but what else would I call cool if I don't call this cool?

A sword of light has a mysterious magical power that compels the heart of a man. Although this one actually does have mana in it.

The scene was like something out of anime.

When the mana flowing inside the sword reached its maximum output, I clenched the great sword and took a stance.

After that...

“Ex...”

Inside my head, another me was urging me to not to say anything embarrassing. However, my split romanticism personality didn't stop me from saying the rest.

“...caliber!”

With all of my might, I swung the great sword. Afterwards, the reaction from the mana was so powerful that even I, the one who just swung the sword, had a hard time withstanding the shock. Along with wind like noise, the dungeon room was engulfed in blue light.

* * *

“Just where do you plan to use that? Just kill it quickly. That thing is a demon. If you are not up to it for some reason, then I'll end it with a holy spell.”

No, I can't let you kill it. I won't get the experience points.

I was holding the doppelganger's head on my hand. The Holy Knight looked at it and nagged me.

The doppelganger only had its head left, which lacked all facial features such as eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. However, the doppelganger was still alive.

“I was wondering if I could get information out of this bastard.”

“...No! Were you listening to what I have been telling you? That thing is a demon. What do you plan to do with information about demons and hell? It is dangerous, so you should stop!”

Is that something you should oppose so strongly?

I made an excuse by saying I want to learn about my past from the

doppelganger.

After that, the Holy Knight allowed me to continue without much opposition.

“Now, why don’t you say something, demon.”

However, the doppelganger didn’t say anything.

The doppelganger was sensitive to pain, so I thought it would be easy to make it talk.

However, it never spoke, even when all of its tentacles and body were cut off.

“This is odd. Isn’t this bastard supposed to be weak against pain?”

“That’s probably only when it is in its spirit form and being a parasite in the host’s body. When it is in its physical form, it is no different from being in a combat form. It probably won’t respond to physical pain.”

“Physical form is its combat form? Wouldn’t its spirit form be more powerful?”

“No, that’s usually not the case. In the spirit form, it does not have the protective power of a physical form, so it becomes much weaker against attacks that use mana. It’s substantially damaged when it is subjected to attacks like a holy spell that directly deals damage to the spirit. Of course, the spell that attacks the soul is the doppelganger’s weakness. Anyway, because of that, when the doppelganger is fighting while not being inside a host, it turns into its physical form like this. I am not certain, but according to what’s been known, that’s how it is.”

Thank you for the magnificent explanation.

An attack that affects soul.

Would the soul steal work?

This is a power skill as well, so it could be considered a holy spell.

Let's try it.

“Soul Steal.”

Until now, the doppelganger's head had been quiet. As soon as I used the soul steal, the head started to cry in pain.

[Kuuuaaaa... God of Death! God of Death... Are you an Apostle of the God of Death...]

What? God of Death?

Was it the God of Death that gifted me with Soul Steal?

Before I could think more about this, I could hear a sharp scream from behind me.

“Kuuuaaaaak!”

I quickly turned to look. The mage coughed out blood and started to collapse.

What is this now?

Chapter 103

Tutorial 16th Floor (11)

“Kuuuuuaaak!”

I saw the Mage collapsing to the floor as she coughed out blood. My mind felt numb.

Again? Why is she like that all of the sudden?

I pondered about it for a moment and disengaged the soul steal.

I paused for a second, before using soul steal again.

“Soul Steal.”

[Kuuuu... Stop...]

“Ke... Kek...”

I could hear the screams from both the head of the doppelganger in my hand and the Mage who was convulsing on the ground. That complicated the situation even more...

Before this, I had thought about the possibility of there being more than one doppelganger.

After defeating a doppelganger, we would waste time relaxing and waiting for the rescue party to arrive. After the rescue party arrives, I would fail to clear the stage because of the hidden doppelganger.

However, the fact that I was the doppelganger was a pretty mind-boggling trick in the stage already. Also, to think that there was yet another twist with there being more than one doppelganger...

As I thought, this is the Hell difficulty.

It seemed the architect was going to have a problem somewhere if the stage was easy. There was always trouble to the very end.

There was not just one doppelganger in the dungeon room. There were two.

One of them was the bastard that was hiding inside my body. The other one was the bastard that was twitching on the floor over there under the guise of the Mage's appearance.

“What’s happening?”

“Why is the Mage acting like this?”

After the battle, the Holy Knight and the Knight were resting, but they came to me and asked.

I explained to them that I used the soul steal to weaken the doppelganger and the Mage started to experience pain because of it.

“Um... As I thought, the Mage was also a doppelganger? Mr. Apostle, I’m sorry, but could you disengage that spell for a moment and use it again later?”

As the Knight asked, I disengaged the soul steal for a moment and started it back up again.

When the soul steal was canceled, the Mage gasped for air and breathed desperately for air. When I started the soul steal again, she was screaming in pain.

“...Oh no...”

It seemed the Holy Knight was very disappointed. He faltered and covered his face with his hands.

Was it that shocking?

“Well, I am not all that surprised that the Mage turned out to be a doppelganger. I thought the Mage was a doppelganger from the start.”

The Mercenary was here too before I realized and added a knowing statement.

As the Mercenary said, the Mage had done many things that made her a suspect for a doppelganger.

In multiple instances, she tried to use magic that was going to harm other people.

Moreover, she was seriously affected by the soul steal and had lost consciousness for three days.

When I was unaware of how much effect the soul steal had on the doppelganger, I simply thought it was because her mana ran out of control.

Now that I think about it, she was unconscious despite the Holy Knight's healing. I wonder if the Holy Knight's healing negatively impacted the doppelganger because of his holy power.

Lastly, she used a very powerful Blitz spell that was enough to make me faint.

Back then, I wondered if she made a mistake. However, now that I see her shuddering around on the floor, I am certain that she did it to kill me.

The doppelganger that was hiding inside my body also yelled and said, ‘Are you intending to die too.’

Looks like I could have died.

I was too complacent.

Other than the Holy Knight, everyone stared at the Mage as if they were suspicious of her the entire time.

I was the same.

Watching the Mage in pain, instead of feeling pity, I just thought,

‘As I thought, she was the doppelganger.’

Honestly, that Blitz magic earlier was obviously too powerful.

Anyway, this was like a cow walking back and accidentally killing a rat.

I didn’t know that doppelgangers could be identified with this method.

Soul steal only affected the ‘enemies’ around me.

Because of this, when I used the soul steal on the first day, the doppelganger inside me was completely unharmed by the spell.

I was not even aware of the doppelganger inside me, so...

The doppelganger inside me probably view me as an enemy.

It probably saw me as just a host.

That means the doppelganger over there which assumed the form of the Mage was regarding me as an enemy all this time.

Well, I guess that is obvious?

In the beginning, I told everyone that I was going to find the doppelganger and kill it alone even if it meant killing everyone else in the process. That doppelganger probably thought it had to kill me somehow if it wants to leave the dungeon alive.

“Do you think the two doppelgangers knew about each other? I wonder if they could communicate with each other. I don’t think this is the case, considering that the doppelganger who assumed the form of the Mage had constantly tried to attack you. Maybe they formed an agreement that just one of them leaving the dungeon alive was good enough. Hut! Mr. Apostle, looks like that doppelganger won’t be able

to stand this any longer. I think it will reveal its true form soon. Do you still have strength left for another battle?”

The Knight had been observing the Mage’s condition. The Knight asked me.

Do I have strength left?

Of course.

“Kuuuu... Kuuuk.”

The Mage’s scream turned menacing. Her arms and legs were cracking and creaking. It was about to reveal its true form.

The Holy Knight on the side started to recite a spell. I urged him to stop. I told him there was no need for him to overexert himself when he didn’t even recover his mana yet.

In most situations, giving the time for the monster to transform was not a good idea.

However, in this situation, I was confident that I could beat the doppelganger even if I fought it ten times consecutively.

Since that was the case, it was better for me to let it finish the transformation so I could get more experience points.

I changed the Transmutable Thousand Arms’ dagger form into the long sword form again and concentrated.

There was no way I was going to taste defeat when victory was already guaranteed.

* * *

“Hey, Mr. Apostle... It’s time for you to get up... Huh? Were you already awake?”

It seemed that it was my turn to keep watch. I was lying down with my eyes shut but the Mercenary interrupted me.

“I just got up. I thought it was my turn to keep watch, so...”

“Haaaaaaaam... I'll go to sleep now. You have done a lot today during the battles, yet you ended up with the watch duty at the most inconvenient time, so it must be tiring for you. Keep up the good work.”

It seemed the Mercenary was very tired. He mumbled and stopped talking as he reached his spot and laid down.

As for me, regardless of exhaustion, I always had a hard time falling asleep.

When I was in the middle of a stage, I usually stayed up for days. I took naps at the Kiri Kiri's field after clearing a stage or at the waiting room.

Standing watch was not all that tiring, considering that I've been doing this for fifteen floors now.

I was not intending to sleep anyway.

On the contrary, I was actually anxiously waiting for my turn.

During today evening, I wrapped my sword with the Holy Knight's holy spell and defeated a doppelganger.

Of the doppelganger that assumed the form of the Mage and the doppelganger that was in my body, the doppelganger that was in my body was dead.

I wanted to ask all sorts of things to that doppelganger under the pretext of wanting to know about my past. However, it was not able to answer anything.

It was not that it refused to answer. It was not able to answer.

The reaction was similar to when I asked Idy things related to the Tutorial, so I am certain of this.

The doppelganger was not able to tell me anything about the past of the character that I was currently playing as in the 16th Floor's stage.

I could understand why it couldn't answer since this was related to the Tutorial.

However, the doppelganger couldn't give me any information about the demons or hell either.

I think I should check out this problem later.

We didn't kill the other doppelganger that was pretending to the Mage.

The Holy Knight had been suffering from dehydration since the evening due to excessive use of mana, so we decided to postpone using another holy spell.

I could destroy the doppelganger by continuing to use soul steal, but there was no reason to do that.

So, we left just the doppelganger's head and trapped it inside the mana-restraining box that the Adventurer had. Since then, we had been taking turns to keep watch on it.

Now, it was early morning. Everyone was asleep, and it was finally my turn to keep watch.

In other words, only the doppelganger and I were awake.

I walked around and confirmed that everyone really was asleep before heading to a corner of the dungeon room.

I quietly opened the mana restraint box.

Although it was still alive, only its head remained.

[Kuuu...]

“Quiet. Now, listen very carefully to what I’m about to say. Depending on how well you do, I’ll decide how painfully you should die or if I should give you a chance to escape this place alive.”

The doppelganger moved the skin on its face to acknowledge my threat without making any noise.

“Tell me about hell and the demons.”

Of course, it was not able to explain them.

“Strike one. You lost one chance. If you disappoint me two more times, you will die right now. I won’t wait until the morning.”

[Ah... That wasn’t on purpose...]

“Just shut up. Don’t make loud noises.”

Actually, it didn’t matter if you made noises or not.

If the Holy Knight woke up because of loud noise, then he will complain that I’m listening to stories from a demon, but that was it.

Also, they had an intense battle against a doppelganger today, so they would be in deep sleep.

The doppelganger was not able to give me information about hell or the demons.

I couldn’t ask it about the human world outside the dungeon either.

What would be the point of asking it something it didn’t know?

I only had one thing left to ask.

The Mage’s memories and knowledge.

It even taught me magic under the guise of the Mage, so it should not have any problem teaching me magic.

Actually, the situation now is better than before.

The doppelganger wouldn't be acting like a mute and write everything to communicate anymore. It is also not bound by the restrictions of the Magic Tower either.

Ugh, I'm getting infuriated all of the sudden.

“Soul Steal.”

[Kek... Why... Why? Stop...]

“You little bastard. You are just a doppelganger, yet you tried to hide information about the Magic Tower or whatnot as the excuse? You brainless runt. What do you have to do with the Magic Tower? Also, why can't you talk?... Now that I think about it, you are so infuriating. I cannot stand it.”

I was well aware that doppelganger wouldn't sustain much pain from a physical strike, but just to quench my anger, I pressed my knuckle onto its forehead.

I did it with middle finger up and my hand wrapped in mana. My knuckle had a substantial amount of force behind it.

The doppelganger was already exposed to the soul steal. It seemed that getting hit by an attack that was wrapped in mana was quite painful. It started to make cracking noise.

[Please... Uk! Uk... I'll tell you want you want. I will tell you... So stop...]

The doppelganger pleaded, so I canceled the soul steal and said,

“That was strike two. You only have one chance left. If you disappoint me one more time, you will die right here.”

[I feel so wronged... No. I was wrong. I'll tell you anything you want...]

“I don't need you to speak anymore. Can you write with this?”

I brought out a pencil from the inventory and asked.

[W... Write? You want me to write?]

“Huh? You can't? If you cannot write, then tell me. It's all right.”

It was not able to answer promptly. It momentarily fell silent.

It definitely is not dumb.

If it said it could not write, then that was going to guarantee three strikes.

If it still wanted to cling on to life, then it had to write somehow.

[I can write...]

After the response, the doppelganger's facial expression twitched. On the side of its face, the flesh expanded a little and it became a wrinkly hand-like form that was the size of a hand of a newborn baby.

As I thought, it could transform.

Before going to sleep, the Holy Knight said the doppelganger probably still have enough strength left to transform its body.

So, he said that we should take turns to watch it even if it is trapped in the box.

So far so good. It's going just as planned.

“Now, write with that pencil, do you understand? I won't have to tell you what you need to write about, right? It's about magic. Write all information you have in your brain about magic. You got it?”

[...Excuse me. In that luggage, there are magic books that the Mage used to carry. Why don't you take them instead...]

“Shut up. Are you going to talk back to me? Do you want to die or are you going to write as I told you to?”

[I'll write.]

As the doppelganger said, there were magic books in the Mage's bag.

However, what use would I have with such books?

I couldn't even take those books to outside of this stage.

So, I had to copy the content onto papers I prepared before coming into the stage.

However, I don't even know their written language, so how am I supposed to copy all that word for word?

On top of that, do all that before the 16th Floor stage ends?

It was obvious. There was no way for me to get it done.

So, this was why I was asking the doppelganger to do it.

Kuuuu. It is such a logical and fitting choice.

[Where... Where am I supposed to write them?]

All right. This is very good.

Having heard the doppelganger, I opened the inventory and brought out gigantic notebooks that had been lying in the corner of my inventory.

They were notebooks I was going to send to the Order of Vigilance as supporting items.

Each notebook had over a thousand pages. I had 15 of these thick notebooks.

So, the total number of pages were over fifteen thousand.

Also, the pages were A2 size.

[PR: For reference, A2 is about 4 times the size of your regular 8 1/2 by 11 paper.]

“Now, from now on and before the morning comes, fill these notebooks with information until there is no room to spare. You can do it, right?”

[...]

“If you fill them properly, I’ll not kill you. I’ll let you live.”

[Really... Are you really going to let me live?]

“That’s right, so hurry up and start.”

The doppelganger fell silent again. It seemed to have realized that it had no other choice. Soon, it started to move the pencil and write on the notebook.

It was like a computer printer.

The pencil movement was incredibly, even mesmerizingly fast.

It had been a while since I ate a beef jerky. I brought some out from the inventory and chewed on it while watching the doppelganger write.

I watched it so it won’t do anything else or try to trick me. I didn’t forget to say something occasionally at it either.

“Don’t write again what you already wrote.”

“Don’t go gradually increasing the size of the letters over time either.”

“Minimize the spacing.”

“Don’t do double spacing.”

“When it comes to plots or figures, making it readable is enough.”

“I will say this again. If you write something you already had written already, you will die.”

“You will die also if you write it in crappy handwriting. Write it in neat handwriting so it’s comprehensible.”

I was reciting the lines I heard from my main teacher from the middle school days for a surprise homework. I used the lines to whip the doppelganger into shape.

The Adventurer and the Knight were the people who were supposed to be the next watches after me. However, I didn’t wake them, so the doppelganger could write until seven in the morning, which was the time for everyone to wake up.

The doppelganger was only given a few hours, but in that short period of time, it managed to fill 13 notebooks with words with little room to spare.

Its writing speed was ridiculous. However, in the end, it couldn’t fill all 15 notebooks.

“That’s too bad, but you failed your objective.”

[Wait. Wait! This was impossible from the start due to the time constraint...]

“Now, go back to the box.”

I placed the doppelganger’s head inside the mana restraint box, locked it and closed the lid.

It was time for me to wake everyone and eat.

I'll make it write the rest after the breakfast.

Like that, I faced daybreak in the sixth day of the stage.

* * *

After the breakfast, as usual, it was time for the Knight's chatterboxing.

The man always talked a lot, but now that the threat of unidentified doppelganger was no more, it felt like the Knight had grown even more talkative.

Others were very relaxed as well.

They had been spending time anxiously all this time. With the problem finally solved, it seemed their hearts were feeling light. They laughed and talked easily.

Now, we just needed to wait patiently until the rescue party arrived, so the group even took off their armors and changed to comfortable clothes.

Of the group, we no longer had the Mage with us. However, the Mage was probably ambushed and killed when we were trapped here on the very first day.

Instead of being shocked by it or being saddened by it now, they calmly recognized it.

With the Holy Knight leading the ceremony, they held a prayer. We decided to deliver her belongings to the people of the Magic Tower. That was all.

After the meal, I threatened the doppelganger and made it record information into the notebooks again. I was watching it from the distance, but the Holy Knight came next to me.

Through the morning, everyone was taking it easy. However, Holy Knight looked very uncomfortable.

It seemed he was agonizing over something. He kept on sighing through the morning.

He suddenly came next to me, so I wondered what this was about.

The Holy Knight suddenly sat down next to me as if he was plummeting down a trap.

“If you have time, will you please listen to me for a while?”

Chapter 104

Tutorial 16th Floor (12)

It was a bit out of the blue, but the Holy Knight just sat down next to me and started to talk.

In summary, what he told me was like this.

While he was treating the Mage, its face changed to a woman's face.

Also, the face had striking resemblance to his daughter who died ten years ago.

He was shocked, and didn't tell anyone about this. However, he confided to me that he couldn't make proper decisions since then due to the chaos in his mind.

He was saying that he was not certain if this was just a coincidence or if this was the doppelganger's trick to expose a weakness in his heart.

“Should we check? That bastard listens well when threatened.”

I pointed at the doppelganger who was diligently writing away on the notebook under my observation.

“It's fine. What would be the point now? It is meaningless. What's more important is that you almost died because of me. I would like to apologize again.”

He said he couldn't stop the mage from using the Blitz magic on me because he had been letting his guard down.

The Holy Knight was well versed in magic. He should have stopped the Mage from completing the spell as soon as he heard the incantation. However, he didn't and was beating himself up over this.

This old man has too strong a sense of responsibility, needlessly so.

Actually, that incident was my fault. It was because I was complacent with the stage, not because of Holy Knight.

In the end, that incident with the Mage's Blitz magic didn't screw things up royally, so I told him to not worry about it.

With the threat of the doppelgangers now completely dead, the atmosphere inside the dungeon room was surprisingly brighter.

I was also relieved by the fact that the problems were handled correctly. I was apologetic about the fact that I beat up the group needlessly, so I was even nicer to the group.

"Really? As soon as we leave this dungeon will come to our guilds with us?"

"Yes. I'll be the witness to your exploit of defeating two doppelgangers inside the dungeon."

"Ohoh! With an amazing exploit like this, I might even be able to snatch up the position of a local manager!"

I told the Adventurer and the Mercenary that I would go with them to their guilds and serve as a witness to what happened in the dungeon after leaving this place. They were very happy to hear my proposition.

These middle-aged men were in shambles, but they were breaking into joyous laughter. They looked happy, and unbecoming of their ages.

Of course, I was never going to be able to visit their guilds.

After seven days pass, the stage will be cleared, and I'll be leaving this place.

However, what harm was there in saying that I would go?

It was not like it was going to cause a problem.

I had no reason not to say it, but I also had no reason to hold back.

After the Adventurer and the Mercenary, it was the Knight's turn.

I asked the Knight while eating a sandwich for lunch.

"As you already know, I lost my memories. I don't have a place to go or stay. How about the kingdom that you belong to?"

"Are you planning on staying at the kingdom? In that case, please come with me. Someone of your skill will be greatly welcomed by the castle. You should not have any difficulty in obtaining a title either. Moreover, recently the monarchs have been..."

Through the meal, the Knight explained all sorts of advantages I would have for belonging in the kingdom.

His explanation did not end even after he finished his meal. He told me all sorts of interesting things about the kingdom.

He even told me the rumors about the king's personality and sexual preferences.

"Isn't it dangerous to have such information spread?"

"Come on. Everyone who could know already knows."

How could such a thing be so widespread? I don't think this kingdom is all that normal?

I suddenly became certain this knight must have made some critical contribution to the spread of the rumor.

Will you be all right?

The stories went tangent and even reached the beautiful and mysterious natural wonders of the kingdom.

"It is said that there are summon spirits living in this lake. I have

never been to the lake myself, but I heard it from other people.”

The knight explained famous tourist destination spots and even promised to go there with me in the future.

He sure liked people and loved chattering away even more.

After lunch, as I planned, I asked the Knight,

“It’s about the technique I used yesterday.”

“Ah, you mean that Ix... Caliber, like that?”

No, you need to give it the right accent.

“Anyway, when I used that technique, I feel like there was something missing in the instruction you told me. It is just a guess, but I’m right, aren’t I?”

The technique that the Knight told me was supposed to allow me to pour in mana into a weapon efficiently and easily.

When I used the technique during the battle against the doppelganger, I felt an unfamiliar sensation. Something was not quite right.

The sensation was completely different from how I used to layer weapons with mana using my old method.

When I layered the weapon with mana using the method that he explained, I felt like I was lifting a heavy barrel full of water.

It felt like the mana was going to spill out immediately.

At that moment, I mimicked the Knight’s move and swung the sword.

When the Knight used the move on me before, he came close to me and swung his sword, and I felt like I could not just move away from that spot.

In the end, I had no choice but to stand there and swing my own sword against his.

Also, unlike how the Knight did it, during the battle against the doppelganger, the mana in my sword was shot toward the doppelganger from a distance.

Completely by accident, I found a side application of the technique. Still, I could not help but to think there must be another step to the technique.

At the very end of trying out the technique, I was not able to figure out how to maintain the mana that was poured into the weapon. In the end, unlike how the Knight did it, I was not able to sustain it.

Instead, I swung the sword and shot the mana forward because the mana was not fixed onto the sword.

That was my theory.

“Yes. The technique you used was unstable. Actually, I didn’t even know that mana could be launched from the sword like that as if it was a magic spell. Also, I didn’t know it could generate such power either. It was probably because you poured in incredible amount of mana into the sword. It may also be a result of your proficiency in handling mana. Still, the technique was not meant to be used that way.”

“Um. That’s what I felt. I’m asking because of that. Can you please tell me the next step?”

The Knight hesitated and agonized over the thought of revealing his technique for a long.

That’s expected. Even this talkative man won’t be able to just teach an outsider such a high-level technique.

“From what I heard from you about the kingdom, I think it would be best for me to start a new life there. We will be a family soon, so why bother hiding it?”

That was not all that convincing.

Ordinary people would not have accepted it.

They would have refused and told me that I could learn it after obtaining the qualifications.

“I really should not be telling you this, but...”

It was as planned.

I baited him so heavily already. There was no way this chatterbox was going to keep his mouth shut.

Like that, another session of the Knight’s passionate lecturing began.

It started right after lunch, and his lecture continued beyond the dinner time. It went on until it was time to sleep.

Before long, the Mercenary and the Adventurer, and even the Holy Knight, joined us and focused on listening to the man’s lecture.

The Knight was very focused on the lecture. He didn’t care about keeping secrets anymore.

I felt sorry for the kingdom’s knights.

I wonder how hard it would be for them to keep this blabbermouth knight in check.

The Knight is pretty skilled on top of this, so they probably cannot even treat him carelessly.

Of course, I was not going to stop the man’s lecture just because of this reason.

His lecture was extremely valuable.

It was far more useful than the lecture on magic, which I couldn’t

comprehend very well.

I wish I could challenge the 16th Floor again and listen to more of the Knight's lectures.

I formed a great sword with the Transmutable Thousand Arms and poured in mana, following the Knight's instructions.

Soon, with resonating sound, blue mana manifested on the surface of the sword.

Just like what I had seen before, the mana was wavering.

It looked like dry ice sublimation.

Now, that I maintained the flow of the mana, I had to be careful with the mana circuit's pathways in my body.

I connected the circuit to the mana that was layered on the weapon. While the mana circulates, I must make sure the connection is maintained.

This is to make sure the mana won't dissipate or pour out.

The key was maintaining this connection.

I raised my focus and maintained the flow of mana.

After about five minutes in, a small change occurred.

The fluctuating mana had calmed down.

Maintaining the connection also became easier.

I felt like I could maintain this state for a long time even if I directed my focus elsewhere.

It felt like a vein that I had never known about opened up. The connection suddenly felt so much easier to maintain and comfortable.

I even felt like I was getting used to this.

Now, the oscillating mana on the sword came to almost complete halt. The manifestation of mana appeared to be almost fixed.

I thought it would be alright if I injected the sword with even more mana.

I was confident that I could maintain it.

I raised mana and poured in even more mana into the sword.

As I thought, I could successfully maintain it without problems.

The physical manifestation of mana on the sword now looked almost like a solid layer.

Mana was shining steadily like a layer of shining wax. Looking at the sword... It looks like an aura blade from a fantasy novel.

The Knight was watching me practice. I could hear him say,

“A... Aura? Aura Blade!?”

So, it really is an Aura Blade?

It could be that the actual name is something different.

The translation by the knowledge before the time of Babel must have chosen those words.

Like that, I tried swinging the sword.

The mana wasn't launched.

The mana was enough to obliterate even a doppelganger, a demon, in a single strike. Such a humongous amount of mana was condensed into the sword. It felt like I achieve something amazing.

I felt like I could cut anything by swinging the sword.

I retrieved my mana and put the sword away.

Again, I thought the Transmutable Thousand Arms was a great weapon.

Could I have accomplished an achievement like this in such a short amount of time if I tried with a different kind of weapon?

I don't think so.

Transmutable Thousand Arms didn't just transmit mana well. It felt like it was drawing mana on its own and amplifying it.

I could be imagining all this out of excitement.

"I never thought you would complete the Aura Blade in just one day... I wonder if you already knew the technique before you lost your memory because of the doppelganger. Unless that was the case, it would be impossible to master this so quickly."

There was no way for that to be true.

Anyhow, he is really buttering me up, so please go on.

"It looks like you're already guaranteed a place as a high nobility no matter where you go. Should I just quit being a mercenary and follow the Apostle..."

The Mercenary was mumbling at the corner. It seemed the ability to use the Aura Blade alone was proof of one's skill.

The Knight explained the usefulness of the Aura Blade.

Its effect went beyond just protecting the blade's edge and sharpening it with mana.

"So, you are saying I can cut mana with this?"

“Yes. Armors and weapons made with materials that contain mana, mana that’s haphazardly wrapped on a weapon, seals or barriers made with magic and others... You can cut them all without much resistance. Of course, there will be differences depending on the user and the subject’s abilities. Only another Aura Blade of equal level can stop an Aura Blade. I heard there are exceptions, but there are only a handful of them.”

This is great.

Shooting unstable mana from a distance demonstrated incredible power.

However, considering my combat style, which took advantage of my speed and skills, I was certain that the Aura Blade was going to be far more useful.

I was a little surprised that my skill levels didn’t increase from all these revelations.

I wondered if I would level up in mana circuit or obtain a new skill. However, nothing had changed in my status window.

Um...

Does this mean I was already at the height where I could have formed the Aura Blade even before I learned these methods from the Knight?

If this means I just never thought of the idea and didn’t know the instructions but had the ability to perform the technique, then I can understand why my skill levels didn’t go up. It is not so odd then.

I think I should ask Kiri Kiri.

I organized my thoughts as I stood at a corner of the dungeon room and practiced using the Aura Blade.

Not just on the great sword, but I also tried the technique on other weapons and thought about how to make use of the technique.

The group watched me practice for a while before they eventually scattered to get sleep.

As for the doppelganger that finished writing, it was trapped in the box again. Since I do not sleep, I volunteered to watch it through the night.

* * *

The final day of the 16th Floor stage arrived.

After finishing the breakfast, we completely destroyed the doppelganger that was trapped inside the box.

It finished tightly packing the 15 notebooks with writings. I had no more use for it, so I had no reason to keep it alive.

I felt somewhat jubilant after that. I was chatting with the people, but from the far end of the dungeon room, we could hear sounds from the wall that was blocked because the ceiling collapsed on the first day.

A small voice could be heard among the banging noises of the wall.

The group went right up to the wall and told the people on the other side about their current locations. Soon, we heard from the other side that they were the rescue party and they would be able to clear the walls soon.

The first rescue party to arrive were the people from the knights.

The Knight was overcome with tears because of the fact that his comrades came to rescue him.

“Aruhan! Are you all right? I hope nothing serious happened?”

“I’m all right! Actually, I was hurt, but I’m all right now! Nothing happened? Lots of incredible things happened. Listen to this, what happened was...”

The Knight was all excited and went on orating his story. It was obvious.

After ten minutes later, we could not see the end of the man's story. We could hear the voice from the other side of the wall. The voice had frustration mixed in.

“Aruhan! I am sorry, but we are busy with cleaning up the rubbles of the ceiling. You are bothering us, so please just shut the hell up and wait.”

The Knight's face was blooming with happiness because he was so glad to hear his comrades coming to rescue him. After being told to shut up, his face was filled with disappointment. He looked all gloomy. He crunched down at a corner and pouted.

As I thought, that was the kind of position he was in with his people.

The rescue party cleaned up the debris until they successfully entered the dungeon room a little past lunch time.

The group welcomed the rescue party.

The rescue party didn't just have the knights. There were people who appeared to be from the Holy Temple. There were also people who appeared to be mercenaries, adventurers and mages. There were many of them in the mix.

I took a step back and watched their reunion, and a message appeared.

It was the clear message for the stage.

[You cleared the 16th Floor of the Tutorial in Hell difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormalities and wounds will be recovered.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for being the first one to clear the stage.]

[Many Gods are showing positive responses to you. 3500 additional points were acquired.]

[Many Gods are showing negative responses to you. 1100 points were deducted.]

[Additional reward will be given based on your play record.]

[You acquired Paralysis Resistance Lv.11.]

[Paralysis Resistance Lv.11 was combined to Paralysis Resistance Lv. 14]

[You acquired Paralysis Resistance Lv.15]

Fortunately, there wasn't any final surprises like a third doppelganger. The 16th Floor stage was safely concluded like that.

I watched the group talking to the rescue party for a little longer and quietly muttered,

“Teleport.”

Somehow, I felt empty. I was going to miss this.

After a moment, my body left the dungeon room. I was teleported to bright, green field.

“Houuujaeeee! Houuujaeeee! Hello~ Hello? Hello, Hello!!”

For some reason, Kiri Kiri looked tense. She hopped and hopped as she greeted me.

Chapter 105

Tutorial 17th Floor (1)

“Hello! Hello!”

Kiri Kiri had always been energetic, but she was especially energetic today.

She hopped and skipped around as I watched for a while. She actually started to dash into the distance like an actual rabbit.

I watched her for a moment. She had gone far enough that I could not hear her voice anymore.

Why is she acting like this again? She hasn't been like this for a long time.

Instead of raising my voice to call her, I opened the store and purchased a cream cake.

As I thought, Kiri Kiri immediately turned back and hopped towards me.

You knew the moment I purchased the cake from that distance.

You must have the incredible nose of a dog.

Before long, she managed to recover her distance traveled. Eyes, twinkling, she asked,

“Can I eat it? Can I eat it too?!”

“Yes, eat it. I bought it for you.”

“Thanks!”

Excited, she rushed at the cake. I handed her a fork.

I knew this rascal was going to scoop out pieces bare-handed if she didn't have one.

“Why are you so excited today? Did something good happen?”

“Iiiiihiing. Yes, there was.”

She mumbled, stuffing herself with mouthfuls of cream.

It looks like something did happen.

This lass probably had been sitting around whole day at this field. What could have possibly happened that made her feel great?

Did someone else in Hell difficulty clear a stage and meet her?

I think I should send a message to Lee Hyung-jin later.

Did Lee Hyung-jin succeed in clearing the Fourth floor?

From what I've heard, he had been having a difficult time with the floor.

The Fourth Floor's mission was killing the Goblin King, who was at the center of the city surrounded by four fortresses. It was not going to be easy.

Lee Hyung-jin was an assassin, so it was not a bad mission for him, but there were so many enemies for him to deal with.

Kiri Kiri suddenly stopped eating cake, so I looked at her. It seemed she was rushing the cake, and now her neck was feeling choked.

I purchased a cup of coffee from the store and handed it to Kiri Kiri.

“Drink this and eat it slowly.”

“Hihing. Okay!”

She chugged the coffee like it was plain water.

After that...

“Uuuuuuk. It’s bitter...”

It probably was. It was americano.

Kiri Kiri made a disgusted cringe and put down the cup of coffee.

She looked adorable and fun to watch, so I smiled inside.

I brought out a sugar cube and gave it to Kiri Kiri to put in the coffee.

Instead of putting the cube in the coffee, she just put the cube in her mouth.

She was enjoying it. She smiled.

Could anyone like sweets so much...

* * *

“Hiiing. You will have to wait a while before you can read this.”

I showed her the book that I made the doppelganger copy, only to be greeted by those words.

Kiri Kiri looked at the book that was tightly filled with words and said,

“There is a lot of great information here. They are summarized pretty well too. Still, there are so many things written in Rune. You won’t be able to understand it by patterns alone. Even if it was possible, it will

take too long. It will be inefficient. You should learn Rune first, but you cannot purchase the textbook for Rune yet.”

“I cannot purchase it?”

“That’s right. You need to get to at least the 30th Floor before you can purchase it from the store.”

“There is a restriction like that? I never heard of such a thing from the challengers of other difficulties.”

“There are differences in not just the floor numbers, but also the difficulties. By the way, this is an expensive piece of information.”

That was an expensive piece of information?

Couldn’t you tell me that first before telling me the actual information?

Well, it is still good that she told me that after giving me the information.

Also, she probably told me because she thought the information would be useful to me.

Um...

I think I’ll have to put off studying magic for a while.

I’ll have to wait until I get to the 30th Floor or beyond at least.

“Ah, I learned a magic called Wind Arrow. I was not able to cast it completely. Can you tell me about that?”

“Yep... Wait. It is complicated.”

Kiri Kiri thought deeply and asked right away,

“If I explain this to you, I won’t be able to tell you about the

Tournament.”

Is that so?

There was going to be the second Tournament soon.

It was going to happen in the next Round, so there were only a few days left.

Obviously, the Order of Vigilance was gathering information about the next Tournament.

“It’s all right.”

However, the Order had already gathered quite a bit of information about the Tournament.

So, they were able to get information about the doppelganger for me as well.

“In that case, I’ll tell you. I’ll briefly tell you about it once, so listen carefully.”

“I got it.”

“Kum Kum.”

Kiri Kiri calmed her throat and started to explain.

“What you need is understanding of elemental types and their applications. It is impossible to master them at your skill level. However, you can master the wind element. Wind Spirit’s Blessing. That’s the all the information I can give you.”

So, in the end, she is advising me to improve my understanding of the wind element through the Wind Spirit’s Blessing.

The information was probably brief and short because it was about a new technique; it was a magic skill, on top of that. She was probably

restricted from telling me too much.

If I didn't have the Wind Spirit's Blessing, she probably couldn't even do that.

"Thanks."

"Hihiing. It's my job."

I opened the status window and checked the information about the Wind Spirit's Blessing.

[Wind Spirit's Blessing (Lv.5)]

Description: The Wind Spirit who just entered its childhood is with you.

Agility + 10

Stage One: You receive the blessing of the forest when you reach a certain speed.

Stage Two: You are further accelerated after you reach a certain speed.

Stage Three: The Wind Spirit is always with you. The Wind Spirit will cheer you on wholeheartedly when you are in danger.

The third stage of the skill, which used to be filled with question marks before, revealed its description now that I got to level five.

However, I didn't really care for these.

What would be the point of having the Wind Spirit, which was invisible to begin with, cheering me on?

"Kiri Kiri, it is not like there is a hidden effect in the Wind Spirit's cheering, right?"

“That’s right. There is nothing. I told you this before. If I must point out something, it is feeling better while watching an adorable spirit cheering for you.”

That’s right...

I had high hopes for the third stage of the skill, but I realized that it was meaningless. Since then, I had forgotten about the Wind Spirit’s Blessing skill.

The increase in agility and other boost effects were definitely effective. However, because it was a passive skill, I didn’t really need to actively think about the skill.

I had thought about the skill recently, when I obtained the Summon Spirit Assimilation skill.

[Summon Spirit Assimilation (Lv.2)]

Description: You will become a little closer with summon spirits.

Other than what it said in the description, there were no other effects from it.

Kiri Kiri told me the same thing about the skill.

However, what was the point of becoming close friends with Summon Spirits that I couldn’t even see?

I am not even sure how the skill increased to level two.

I had been forgetting about these skills like that. Now, they could be clues for using magic.

Whenever I use the Wind Spirit’s Blessing, the Wind Spirit will be around me, although I won’t be able to see it. Should I try to detect its energy and understand the elemental type through observing this energy?

Since the magic I'm trying to use is Wind Arrow, I think it definitely will help if I tried to "feel" the energy of the Wind Spirit.

I guess I could think of it as something like the holy power emanating from.

When the Holy Knight used holy spells, I didn't detect anything extraordinary from them.

However, at the 13th Floor, when the entire space had the God of Duel's power cast on it, I felt something similar to my power skills.

The Master Monk said it was the sensation of a holy power.

In other words, I could feel the holy power, but it had to be incredibly powerful, something from a god.

One day, once I get used to holy powers, I should be able to feel the traces of holy power from simple spells as well as from powerful ones.

So, like that, I should try to get used to the Wind Spirit's power and try to feel it.

If I magnify my focus and try to detect the energy around me, I should be able to feel something.

I concluded my thoughts and checked the time.

[Round 17, Day 24, 21:30]

I am not sure about the timing.

There are only a few days until the 30th day. That may or may not be enough time to challenge the 17th Floor. Meanwhile, I have too many days left to just stay at the waiting room and train.

Should I just set my mind to it and focus on training for the remainder of the time?

I thought profoundly about this, but Kiri Kiri poked at my arm.

“What is it?”

“Yes... I think it would be a good idea to challenge the 17th Floor right away.”

Um...

Kiri Kiri rarely gave me an advice when I didn't ask.

Could there be a reason why I should try challenging it right away?

If the stage's challenge time is exactly five days or even shorter, then her advice would make sense.

However, if that was the case, then that is not something Kiri Kiri would voluntarily advise me on. It is not that important.

I thought about this for a while, but I couldn't think of anything.

“Why? Can you tell me the reason too?”

Kiri Kiri looked troubled. She shook her head.

“You don't have enough allowances for information now, so I cannot tell you.”

I figured as much.

Usually, the information about the next stage is expensive, although it is not as expensive as information about the Gods or the Tutorial System.

“Using the remaining allowances, can you give me a simple clue?”

I probably don't have much allowances anyway. Let's use it to satisfy my curiosity.

Kiri Kiri still looked troubled, so I changed my phrasing and asked again.

“Is the reason something good for me or bad for me?”

I’m sure she can answer that.

However, unlike my expectation, Kiri Kiri’s concerned look didn’t relax.

She hesitated several times. She closed her eyes tightly and said,

“It’s on the good side. However, you won’t like it very much.”

I won’t like it very much...

That’s odd.

I usually don’t like the contents of stages.

There were plenty of stages where I was told that I would clear them without problems.

However, even such stages contained grinding, unsanitary conditions and discomfort. I didn’t like such stages.

So, there was nothing special about the fact that Kiri Kiri said I won’t like the stage.

However, what I find odd is her attitude.

In the past, she had said in ways that hinted at the stage possibility being uncomfortable, tiring or bothersome. She never said outright that I would despise the stage. This was the first time.

“In that case... As you said, I’ll try challenging it right away.”

I will be able to know about it once I challenge it.

I organized my thought and said goodbye to Kiri Kiri.

“Well then, I’ll be back, Kiri Kiri.”

“All right.”

With her brief words, Kiri Kiri saw me off.

Listening to her farewell, I was moved to the waiting room.

* * *

I panicked after entering the waiting room.

I had never seen Kiri Kiri see me off in such a serious mood.

She always waved at me brightly, like a kid and its grandparents.

She was also usually hopping and asking about more cakes in the future.

This feels super weird.

I feel anxious.

Heavy-hearted, I got on the portal at the corner of the waiting room and activated the portal.

Through the portal, I passed the bonfire room and went to the 17th Floor stage.

[Welcome to the 17th Floor stage in Hell difficulty.]

The stage was inside a huge building.

Other than that, I didn’t notice anything special about the place. I didn’t notice any problems either.

There was nothing here. It was just me standing here.

What is this stage.

[The 17th Floor's trial will start.]

[The 17th Floor's trial is ending.]

[You cleared the 17th Floor stage in Hell difficulty.]

[All status abnormalities and wounds will be recovered.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for being the first one to clear the stage.]

[Many Gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 800 points.]

[Many Gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 200 points.]

[Additional rewards will be given based on your play record.]

[You acquired 3000 points as the additional reward.]

What is this?

I don't get it at all.

Why did the trial end as soon as it begun?

Why was the clear condition met? What did I do?

There were so many things I didn't understand.

I was dumbfounded.

I pondered about it, but I could not think of anything to explain this.

I scratched my head for a moment and got on the portal.

I should ask Kiri Kiri.

I cleared the 17th Floor, so I can use its information allowance to ask her.

“Teleport.”

It hasn't been a single minute since I left the Kiri Kiri's field. I was back already.

Unlike when I came to see her after clearing 16th Floor, Kiri Kiri greeted me with a slightly gloomier look on her face.

“...As I thought, you came back soon.”

Chapter 106

Tutorial 17th Floor (2)

[Will it really be all right?]

[Don't worry too much. Do you have any idea how long I thought about the 17th Floor? The preparation is perfect.]

[Okay...]

[Check the usage instructions for the equipment I sent you once again. If you are still anxious about this, hold out at the bonfire room for another round and practice before going. You can challenge the floor during the next round.]

[I think that would be better.]

[I've been repeating this, but do not let your guard down. Once you start fighting it, you will see it is not as hard as you thought. Still, if you let your guard down, you will die immediately. Stay focused. Don't panic if it curses at you or tries to talk to you. Don't get played by its mental game either. Don't show any gaps in your defense. No matter what, don't let it dictate how the battle goes. Also, it will be most dangerous when you are about to finish it off. Do not forget this. Fortunately, I was still clumsy about using the Transmutable Thousand Arms, so you won't have to be so mindful of the weapons. It's flashy only in appearance. Don't worry too much about summons spirits in middle of the battle either. If it gets a wind of you worrying, it might try to exploit that, so... Also...]

[Yes. Mister, do not worry too much. I'll definitely clear it.]

[Okay... Don't die.]

“Can you explain it first?”

Kiri Kiri looked gloomy. She kept silent for a moment.

This is odd.

The 17th Floor was cleared at a nonsensical speed. I am speechless; I don't quite understand the situation.

However, besides that, I'm even more anxious about the fact that Kiri Kiri seemed so affected by this matter.

This is the first time seeing Kiri Kiri looking so gloomy.

No, this is not the first time.

She was like this once before.

It was for a brief moment that passed by in the blink of an eye, but there was a time when she looked like this. She looked sorry during that time.

When I cleared the First Floor and met Kiri Kiri for the first time, I asked her a question.

She said she could not answer that question. However, I asked and insisted on it anyways.

I asked... what happen to the people who die in the Tutorial.

I'm getting more and more anxious.

“Please wait, Kiri Kiri.”

“Um. I'll wait.”

Before Kiri Kiri gave me her answer, I wanted to reach my answer first.

The answer would have been the same anyway, but I feared that my mental strength would crumble out of my anxiety and her possible confirmation.

However, no matter how hard I thought about this, I could not figure out why Kiri Kiri was sad. I could not figure out what happened at the 17th Floor either.

I thought about asking for advice from others through the Community. However, I realized that it would be pointless.

Finding the answer on my own so I won't have to hear it from Kiri Kiri...

On top of this, asking another for advice to find the answer...

That was inefficient and illogical.

Damn it.

Still, I'm so concerned. What can I do?

Kiri Kiri had always been bright and energetic. Seeing her in this gloom-and-doom mood is completely inconsistent with her character. It is shocking to watch.

Even today, right after I cleared the 16th Floor, Kiri Kiri was as energetic and excited as ever.

She became gloomy like this after I started worry about the 17th Floor.

I kicked the dirt on the ground and turned over the poor grass that did nothing to deserve being pulled out that way. Kiri Kiri said,

"I'll tell you now. You will hear it eventually anyway, right?"

That's right...

“The 17th Floor stage’s theme was a duel.”

“Duel?”

“Yes. One on one duel. Although the opponent is a little unique...”

Ah...

Ah ha... That’s what it is...

Because she said the opponent is a little unique, I could understand the theme of the 17th Floor.

It was a duel between challengers, like the tournament.

“That’s right, it is like that.”

However, I was the only 17th Floor challenger in the Hell Difficulty. So, the stage could not proceed normally.

Therefore, it was immediately cleared and I was sent back here.

“Yes... But not exactly.”

“Not exactly?”

“That’s right... By design, the very first challenger to ever reach the 17th Floor will clear the stage without any trial. It is not a flaw in the design. If there was a flaw, then you would have achieved the conquest clear.”

“The first challenger gets to pass the stage safely no matter what? Then what about the next challenger?”

“The mirage of the first challenger... remains and the next challenger will be fighting a duel against it.”

A mirage? The first challenger’s mirage?

"I'm sorry, Kiri Kiri. Can you please explain it in detail? I'm so confused; can you explain it to me again?"

"Other than the very first challenger who reaches the 17th Floor, all other challengers after that must fight a duel against the mirage of the challenger who cleared the floor before them. That's the 17th Floor's trial."

My head is not working.

It was as if a nail was pierced a corner of my brain. My thoughts were not being able to process. They were stuck somewhere.

"In that case... What about that mirage? Tell me about the mirage."

"As for the mirage... It has the exact same powers as the challenger from the moment the challenger cleared the 17th Floor. Tendencies, strategic thinking, habits, and even items... Everything is identical from that moment."

[Battle Focus]

My thoughts were in chaos. I used the battle focus in a futile attempt to get a hold of myself.

My head was extremely disarrayed, lost in the confusion.

Let's focus.

This is an important matter.

Let's summarize what Kiri Kiri said.

She was saying that the challenger who reaches the 17th Floor after me will fight a copy of me that was made when I cleared the 17th Floor.

She was talking about a battle between the version of me from the 17th Floor and some other Hell difficulty challenger who reaches the

17th Floor.

...There is no way that challenger was going to beat me.

“What about the mirage... How is the mirage comprehending the situation?”

This was the most important part.

If the mirage could be convinced about the situation, the stage could be cleared without a battle.

“The mirage thinks that it must defeat the enemy it is facing at the 17th Floor so it can advance past the trial. It is not aware that it is just a mirage.”

“No matter who the opponent is?”

“That’s right...”

Perhaps because of the complicated thoughts in my mind, my urge to vomit surged.

I suppressed the urge and continued my questions.

“Tell me about what it is thinking in terms of defeating the enemy. How exactly?”

“Kill...”

I felt my legs faltering.

I plummeted.

Kill?

A mirage who thinks like me and has the same powers like me from the time I was at the 17th Floor is going to fight with intent to kill?

I know I had been trying to avoid taking lives needlessly; actually, I had been avoiding killing anyone even when there were benefits to be had and killed only when it was absolutely necessary, but...

This time, it was convinced that killing was necessary.

Therefore, my mirage will try to kill its opponent, and it will try without hesitation.

“Are you all right...?”

I was sitting on the ground and had my head lowered. Kiri Kiri came next to me and asked.

However, I didn’t have any mind left to spare to respond to her question.

My mind was already focused on someone else.

I feel dizzy.

I’m at a peaceful green field with nothing but the sound of gentle breeze, yet I feel like I’m hearing a violent sound of hurricane.

I still felt like I was going to throw up. Holding it in, I opened the message window.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Hyung-jin.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Yes, Big Bro. Oh, you are already at the 18th Floor. It looks like you cleared the 17th Floor with ease. You told me the 16th Floor was giving you a headache.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Big Bro, what is it?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Did something happen?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Big Bro, if you are busy, then please contact me later. I’ll wait for message.]

[Round 17, Day 25, 06:10]

In the end, I was not able to say anything to Lee Hyung-jin. I spent 24 days without saying a word to him.

At Kiri Kiri's green field, which comforted my heart, I spent the time and agonized about the problem. Over time, I started to see the answer.

My heart, which felt heavy as if it was filled with lead all of the sudden, became lighter to some extent.

I was certain that Lee Hyung-jin was going to be the next challenger to reach the 17th Floor.

Besides him, no other challengers in the Hell difficulty had cleared the First Floor yet.

Compared to these other people, who I was not even sure about when they were going to clear the First Floor, Lee Hyung-jin's speed of progression is overwhelming.

He is already at the Fourth Floor.

He will face a big obstacle at the Sixth Floor, but once he gets past that, he will be able to reach the 17th Floor safely.

The problem was when he gets to the 17th Floor.

Perhaps there won't be much difference between Lee Hyung-jin and myself in terms of stats.

He probably would have obtained a few power skills by the time he gets to the 17th Floor.

However, if we were about equal in skills and stats, does Lee Hyung-jin stand a good chance of winning?

I don't think he has much chance of winning.

What sets me apart from others the most is the fact that I obtained the Blink and the Talaria's Wings.

However, what if I didn't get them in the beginning?

Also, what if there was a challenger on higher floors who continued to advance to the next floors and gave me information about the ones he passed?

In that case, I would have taken about four to five rounds to clear up to the Fourth Floor.

Even if it took long, it would have taken six rounds.

I am certain I would not have died either.

After confirming that the power skills were world-defying cheats, I intentionally did not use the power skills through the Third, Fourth and Fifth floors.

The lack of power skills definitely makes a huge difference in combat potential.

However, the information is far more valuable than the power skills.

When I was in and out of the River Styx a few times because of traps, such instances were mostly when I didn't have information about the traps.

I obtained information about the traps by putting my body in harm's way.

I got to where I was by observing unpredictable attacks coming from unexpected places and responding and dodging them instinctively.

There is that difference between me and Lee Hyung-jin.

There is a difference in fundamental skills.

A mirage of myself from the 17th Floor that knows nothing about the situation will be fighting Lee Hyung-jin who does.

No matter how I think about it, I'm leaning toward the mirage of myself as the victor.

On top of that...

I am currently unaware of the limit of my own power.

If I let it go and use my full strength to fight to the death, what kind of foe would I be able to stand up against?

I don't know.

I don't even remember when was the last time I was pushed to the brink of death.

It's been a long time since the early days at the Sixth Floor, towards the end of the Seventh Floor, once at the 13th Floor.

There has not been another incidence so threatening since then.

There was a time when my life was in danger because I let my guard down. However, I had never been cornered out of an opponent's overwhelming power.

So, naturally, I had never been pushed to the limit.

At the 13th Floor, at the Master Monk's room, the theme was strongly focused on reaching and challenging the limits of the senses and mental focus.

My attitude during the battle against the Master Monk was not all that desperate.

My body's condition was extremely poor when the battle started, so I

was almost at the brink of death, but...

No, more importantly, the Master Monk's room itself is beyond the 13th Floor's difficulty.

The clear condition for the 13th Floor was getting past 15 rooms. The Master Monk's room was at 33rd room.

Damn it.

My head is whirling around again.

"Your assumptions could be wrong."

Kiri Kiri had been watching me quietly from the side. She said,

"The possibilities in the future are limitless. Instead of being despaired about what could happen, it would be better to make preparations."

Is that so?

I had not considered a single iota of chance that Lee Hyung-jin would be able to beat the mirage version of me at the 17th Floor when he gets there.

I was so stuck with the idea that he was going to lose. It is no wonder why all possibilities I thought of for Lee Hyung-jin were so pessimistic.

Instead, I should assist his growth until he gets to the 17th Floor so he could defeat my mirage.

The important things are the method and process for doing that.

I should evaluate my current powers and have Lee Hyung-jin grow in the direction that would enable him to win.

Also, the information that my mirage has about Lee Hyung-jin is going to be what Lee Hyung-jin was at the Fourth Floor.

The information would be very outdated. Lee Hyung-jin could exploit this.

There are plenty of ways, and there is plenty of time.

Also, Lee Hyung-jin is only at the Fourth Floor.

I don't know how long it would take him to get to the 17th Floor. Also, who knows how strong he would be by then?

My thoughts were all tangled up for hours, but strangely, they were organized in a single breath.

I looked at Kiri Kiri.

She turned around and crunched down. She was making scribbles on the ground.

They were strange-looking letters. I could not comprehend them.

I don't think I should mind what she is doing.

I cannot tell Lee Hyung-jin to give up challenging the 17th Floor and stay at the waiting room and stages before the floor for the rest of his life.

From now on, I should care more about his growth and help him clear the 17th Floor safely. That will do.

It will be difficult, but it was not like anything was easy in Hell Difficulty.

“Kiri Kiri, if the next challenger defeats my mirage, then what about the challenger that reaches the floor afterwards?”

“The third challenger will be fighting the duel against the mirage of the second challenger who cleared the 17th Floor.”

...If it progresses like that, then the mission will get increasingly

difficult as more challengers pass. After a few iterations, the 17th Floor will end up being far more difficult than other floors above it.

Isn't this a design flaw?

"No, it is not a design flaw... It was also intended to be so by the Architect."

My head was just about to calm down, but hearing Kiri Kiri's explanation enraged me again.

What kind of insane idea is this? Why did the Architect design the stage in a crappy way like this?

Lately, things were going well, so I had not been cursing at the Tutorial's design. I even regretted not cursing at it for so long.

I don't care what the Architect was thinking or what the intent was. The Architect is a piece of shit.

[The God of Adventure is agreeing with you.]

[The God of Slowness is watching you.]

See, even the God of Adventure is agreeing with me.

It's been some time since God of Adventure and I agreed on something.

Wait, is this the first time.

Phewwaaaaa...

My thoughts are organized now, but I don't feel all that refreshed.

Frustrated, I messed up my hair.

Ah, it's bleeding.

Damn it. I put too much strength into my hand.

I sighed heavily for a while. In the end, I opened the messenger.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Hyung-jin, let's talk for a bit.]

* * *

[The second Tournament will be held.]

[Please enter.]

[Time left until the mandatory summoning: 14 minutes 59 seconds]

Chapter 107

Tutorial 60th Floor (10)

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: All right... Don't die.]

I sent the message to Lee Yun-hye.

I'm sure she will do well.

She's made plenty of preparations. The rest is up to her.

I was about to close the large book on the desk, but I stopped my hand.

Instead, I flipped to the front page.

The contents at the beginning of the book were the records up to when Lee Hyung-jin challenged the 17th Floor.

Most of the contents were about plans and records for accelerating his development.

Also, the pages were filled with comparative analysis between him and the mirage at the 17th Floor as he continued to develop.

I flipped each page slowly as I read the contents.

Soon, I got to the part that was just before Lee Hyung-jin challenged the floor.

The day before he challenged the 17th Floor, the records showed a detailed analysis of his growth, simulation of his duel against the mirage, the result and his analysis of the simulation's results.

That was the end of the records by Lee Hyung-jin.

As for the records afterwards... They were not by Lee Hyung-jin.

Ugh...

I brought out a piece of candy from the inventory and bit on it.

I decided to correct my habit of signing whenever I felt uneasy.

As Yong Yong grew, he started to be even more disapproving toward my singing.

Does he hate it that much?

Whenever he heard me sing, he snarled like a cat who just heard the vacuum cleaner turning on. Thinking about his reactions to my singing shames me a little.

I could understand Yong Yong.

I was well aware that I was terrible at singing.

So, instead of singing, I decided to put something sweet in my mouth.

I've heard that sweet substances improve one's mood, although I don't think it is helping much.

I was thinking about this while remembering a friend who always looked happy to have something sweet. However, this turned out to be not all that great of an idea.

Thinking about the friend made me feel good for a moment.

However, right after that, I felt low again.

I have not seen that friend for such a long time now.

[What are you doing? Masturbating by yourself?]

This lunatic bastard. What did you just say?

[What are you doing all cooped up in your room? Why are your emotion in such chaos? You are making me get motion sickness, so calm down, will ya?]

Lately, the clone bastard said he wanted to have his own private life, so he had the mental and emotional links severed.

However, because he was my clone, he couldn't completely sever the emotional link between us.

In the end, he must have somehow felt the change in my mood. That must be why he is complaining.

Ugh...

As I thought, eating something sweet does not help calming my mind at all.

With the candy still in my mouth, I started to sing as my usual habit dictated.

Concerned that Yong Yong might hear it outside, I sang in a quiet voice.

I felt like I could calm down a little as I hummed.

With a slightly lighter mind, I finished reading the rest of the book.

Now, the records were detailing Lee Yun-hye's growth.

I carefully read to the very last page and closed the book.

The 17th Floor. I had been agonizing for a very long time because of the 17th Floor.

Actually, the theme of the floor was not particularly problematic.

Let's think about this based on the information gathered so far.

In a way, it could be said that the stage had a creative motive.

The 17th Floor was focused on analyzing the information about the challenger who passed it last.

It was the first stage ever to be about another challenger.

The battle was going to be decided on how well the new challenger analyzes the information provided about the past challenger at the time of clearing the 17th Floor and comes up with countermeasures to defeat the mirage of the past challenger.

The preparation for the battle was more important than the duel itself.

Besides analysis, communication, social skills and personal relationships were important.

If the past challenger who cleared the 17th Floor intentionally lies about one's own abilities, it could be fatal to the new challenger.

On top of this, it is not easy to provide detailed information about one's own abilities.

This has to be based on trust.

So, the 17th Floor is strikingly unique from other stages where the challenger grinds and struggles to clear the stage. It recognizes that the Tutorial system is a society of its own, and the preparation for the duel is done using this assumption.

This method of clearing the 17th Floor could be easily implemented because of the characteristics of the challengers.

Challengers grew through acquiring skills, so they usually developed specializations.

Some lacked close-range combat skills, so they were defenseless against close range attacks. Some were weak against flanking attacks. Some were weak against magic. Some were weak against mental attacks. Some were weak against a drawn-out battle or a short battle. Some were neutralized by specific items or skills.

Exploiting such unique weaknesses, the challengers could clear the stage in order like playing rock-paper-scissors.

Challengers in the American server my advice and clearly established the specializations of the challengers. They picked orders and challenged the 17th Floor.

So, most challengers were able to pass the 17th Floor without much trouble.

In our server, the problem was me.

Unlike other servers, in Korean server, we had an irregularity named Lee Ho-jae.

I didn't exactly have any specialization when I was at the 17th Floor.

Perhaps because I had a tendency to not want to have any weakness, or perhaps I happened to have been gaining skills I needed at the right times, but...

I didn't have any particular weakness back then.

I was good at everything: drawn out battles, short battles, fighting against many, few, fighting a surrounding formation, difficult battles, I was strong against everything.

I was immune to mental attacks. I even had resistance to curses.

In addition, I could ignore most status abnormalities.

Against ranged fighters, I could get close in an instant with superior movement skills. Against the close-range fighters, I squashed them with my attack power and ability to take on beatings.

I was also good at fighting against magic. Skills like stealth were no use against me.

On top of this, I was quick, so I always got to deal the first strike.

I really didn't have an answer on how to fight something like me.

On top of this, I was firm with split-second decisions. I had great senses, and I had quick reflexes.

I never hesitated to fight dirty when I realized the opponent was powerful.

Moreover...

When the situation turned against me, I used moves that harmed both my opponent and myself.

In such situations, relying on my pain resistance, faint resistance and etc. and my mental strength and focus, I charged in risking both of us getting hit and possibly dying in the process.

I really am a mad dog.

Also, the 16th Floor had the doppelgangers, and this was a problem.

The mirage at the 17th Floor has fresh memories of the doppelgangers.

If the challenger tried to convince the mirage by explaining the secret behind the 17th Floor and ask it to help the challenger pass through the 17th Floor...

The mirage will smile, say 'ah, yes. That totally makes sense. Haha,' and stab the challenger.

Convincing the mirage was not going to be possible.

Even if the challenger tried to mention some distant memory that

might trigger a response from the mirage; the Tutorial system won't allow it.

The mirage won't comprehend it or delete it from the memory immediately.

In the end, to fight the mirage of myself from the 17th Floor, there is no point in aiming for the specialization.

The challenger has to fight me by having superior stats, although even that won't guarantee victory.

There is no other way.

[That's true.]

Didn't you sever all links with me?

[I reconnected them. I was wondering what was going on.]

Is that so.

Um...

Hey, what would my mirage at the 17th Floor think when it meets someone of Lee Yun-hye's caliber as the opponent?

[It probably will curse at the difficulty.]

That's probably it.

It will promptly swear at the gods.

[It might lose. Out of 100 fights, about 80 of them.]

What about the rest?

[They will both die in about 15 fights, and maybe it will manage to

win in the over five?]

That's probably right.

No matter what, it was not possible to raise Lee Yun-hye's chance of victory any further.

Her power was in no way insignificant.

Lee Yun-hye was already significantly more powerful than my former self at the 17th Floor.

[What could we do now? We did everything we could. Lee Yun-hye grew as much as she could as well. This is the limit. Nothing is going to change even if we delayed this any further. I am certain about this.]

Still, I am so worried.

[By any chance, if something goes wrong this time again, don't go kicking yourself and dig a hole on the ground. It is so unsightly to watch. You have Yong Yong now.]

Do you have to talk to me like that?

Aren't you anxious?

[I don't have much thoughts on the matter. To begin with, I was born at the 60th Floor and have been living here since. It was an incredibly boring life. Still, since Yong Yong was born, I felt like I could enjoy living. I had been living well since. When I can go outside, that would be fun too, but I won't be so shocked if I cannot.]

It must be great being you since you don't have any worries.

[Why don't you come out soon? Yong Yong is waiting.]

Having heard what he said, I checked the time.

It was almost time for dinner.

After dinner today, we were going to have Yong Yong try out polymorph magic.

Yong Yong was very excited about the prospect of transforming into a form that was similar to me and the clone.

Yong Yong had been waiting for this for days and focusing on polymorph magic.

He will want to finish dinner as soon as possible and challenge polymorph magic.

Thinking about Yong Yong who was probably anxiously waiting for me to join them for dinner, I got out of the room.

* * *

“Shall we start?”

Having heard the clone bastard, Yong Yong stepped onto the magic circle. He bobbed his head up and down eagerly.

Actually, it has been a while since Yong Yong mastered the polymorph magic.

It's been two rounds... So, two months?

However, Yong Yong wanted to look completely human.

Also, he did not want to show his progressive iterations to us.

He obsessively tried to hide his intermediate forms of being about half human and half hatchling.

The clone bastard thought of it as a teenager who would not want his parents to see him changing clothes. I thought it was because Yong Yong was a perfectionist when it came to magic.

Anyway, we never saw Yong Yong in a polymorphed state.

Of course, if we wanted to peek at Yong Yong's polymorph training, it's not like he could stop us, but we didn't because we were certain that Yong Yong would hate that.

Perhaps it was something unique to dragons, but Yong Yong was especially sensitive to privacy.

Slowly, Yong Yong started to recite the incantation.

Although polymorph was a high-level magic, the incantation was completed quickly.

“Polymorph.”

With the activation word, white smoke was generated and hid Yong Yong.

Actually, polymorph magic didn't have such a smoke effect.

It was a special effect added by Yong Yong.

Could it be that he is embarrassed about the transformation sequence, just as the clone bastard thought?

I could hear cracking noise and Yong Yong's faint cries.

It seemed his mastery was not high enough to go through the polymorph painlessly.

After a while, the white smoke was gone. Yong Yong looked human. He shouted brightly,

“Success! Dad! I succeeded!”

He was excited. Yong Yong was running toward me. I wanted to smile back at him, but the tip of my mouth refused to move because of one problem.

Yong Yong looked unrealistic. He looked like something straight out

of a fashion magazine.

First, as of a hatchling of a silver dragon, he had silver hair and silver eyes. He was short, reaching around my waist.

Also, he was wearing extravagant clothing, something that people from the days of Rome wore.

[PR Note: Basically your super-cute adorable anime kid with silver hair and silver eyes wearing a toga.]

Silver hair and silver eyes were common in anime. However, seeing them in real life looked very unrealistic.

I was not saying they were odd. I was just saying his appearance was that mesmerizing.

Actually, that was not the real problem.

I was panicking for a completely different reason.

It seemed the clone bastard was panicking for the same reason. Confused, the clone bastard said,

[Was Yong Yong a girl?]

* * *

She was sitting on my lap. Yong Yong was curious about having ten fingers on her hands now. She fiddled with them as I watched her.

I still could not recover from the shock.

No matter how I looked at her, Yong Yong's polymorph appearance was not a boy who happen to look really good and fair. Yong Yong appeared to be a girl.

[I thought she was a boy because you told me Yong Yong is your son.]

I thought so too.

Damn it, how did I screw this up?

My brain was not running properly because of the shock.

No matter how I look, she is a girl.

Her long hair was coming down to her shoulders.

The skull structure of her face, the shapes of her facial features...

Also, below her head...

Kang!

Yong Yong suddenly got down from my laps. She generated a transparent barrier.

It was a seal that prevented mana from approaching her.

“No!”

She created a barrier between me and her. She showed her palm toward me and shouted in a stern voice.

If anyone else saw this, they would have been reminded of a policewoman who was directing the traffic.

“...That’s right. If someone tries to examine you with mana, block it like that.”

“Yes! I did well, right?”

“Yes, yes. You did well, our Yong Yong. You remembered my words well. You are so smart.”

I praised her like that. Yong Yong disengaged the barrier and smiled

widely, thinking she accomplished something monumental just now.

I stroke her head and sighed inside.

Ugh...

I was too thorough in protective education.

[Should I try to examine her without her knowing?]

Don't bother. If she notices still, then how are you going to explain that to her?

Considering Yong Yong's caliber, it won't be easy to get past her barriers and examine her internal organs while keeping her oblivious.

Also, I taught her that examining another person through mana is very rude. I also taught her that it should not be done to anyone except to enemies.

On top of this, I told her that she could not let down her guard, especially among those close to her.

Yong Yong hated doing this in the first place as well.

I was glad that Yong Yong thought what I did earlier was just a test like the ones I had been giving her in the past.

Ugh... The early education is coming back to haunt me.

[Check after having Yong Yong turn back to the hatchling form.]

Check what?

[Check the thingy. She is wearing clothes in polymorph form. Won't the thingy be visible if you flip Yong Yong in the hatchling form?]

...It is not possible to check the gender via visible inspection.

[What? How could that be?]

It turns out there are some species of lizards where determining the gender through visual inspection is not possible.

[...In that case, let's check in the current form.]

What?

[It's easy to determine gender for human beings.]

Having said that, the clone bastard bravely approached Yong Yong.

“Yong Yong, try holding still for a bit.”

“Okay, Uncle!”

Yong Yong smiled and responded.

It seemed the clone bastard was relieved to hear that. He relaxed his face a little and grabbed Yong Yong's clothes.

At that moment, Yong Yong showed an extreme response.

She snatched the clone bastard's wrist and twisted it behind his back to neutralize him. She then shot a powerful shockwave at the defenseless clone bastard's back.

The quiet residential area was filled by a violent sound of explosion. The centerpiece of it all was the clone bastard, who was thrown to the distance and plummeted on the ground.

“No! I hate it! Stop!”

Yong Yong shouted those words in loud, exhilarating voice as if they were the one-liner for a magical girl's transformation scene. Yong Yong then looked at me.

She looked like she was expecting me to praise her.

...I think I was way too diligent in sexual education.

I struggled to hide my troubled mood as I held Yong Yong's hand.

"Yong Yong, you should say 'No' first and then attack. You reversed the order of things."

Yong Yong panicked a little.

"Still, you did well. If anyone tries to take you to a corner or offer candy and asks you to go somewhere or grab your clothes without your permission, then..."

"Shout NO and then attack!"

"That's right. That's right. My Yong Yong is so smart. You remember everything I taught you. Well done."

Perhaps because I tried to examine her with mana earlier, it seemed she was assuming the clone bastard's move was also a test.

I taught Yong Yong to fight off any suspicious individual who tries to approach her; it could be an attempted kidnapping or sexual assault. I taught her to promptly declare that she is refusing such treatment and then attack with full force.

Yong Yong seemed to be in a great mood because of the two consecutive praisings. I stroke her head and said to the clone bastard who was thrown to the distance.

Hey, are you all right?

[...]

Are you not all right?

[What the... She is not even two years old. Why did you teach her such things.]

I heard that things like this should be taught early on.

[Who said such bullshit?]

I read it from a book about raising children.

Chapter 108

Tutorial 61st Floor (2)

The bottom line was that Yong Yong is a boy.

Of course, there was no way I would mistake something as important as this.

The health report from the moment of Yong Yong's birth clearly stated that he was a male.

I am relieved.

[What's there to be relieved about?]

I should be.

Can you imagine the idea of raising a girl as a boy because I was mistaken about the child's gender?

When she grows up, she will resent her dad.

[Instead worrying over something ridiculous, what are you going to do about my wounded heart? I got beat up by Yong Yong and was thrown to the ground. Do you know how that feels?]

Of course I do not know that. How does it feel?

[I felt like crying...]

From the distance, I could feel the clone bastard's emotions.

He was disappointed and surprised. With the two in the mix... I could clearly feel his desperation.

I didn't know what to say back to him, so I didn't respond.

Instead, I put away the Yong Yong's health report and picked up the newspaper.

Before I go out, I should check what's happening in the outside world.

I wanted to hear about what was happening with Kim Min-hyuk. I heard that he established a clan of Awakened Warriors. However, there was nothing about this in the newspaper.

This month's newspaper does not have much overall.

Still, there was an article that drew my attention.

[Park Jong-shik the SS Rated Awakened Warrior completes his contract with Singapore. He refused to renew his contract with Singapore. Where will he go next?]

The article was explaining Park Jong-shik's expired contract with Singapore and making guesses on his next destination.

The guesses actually listed all countries he might be interested in making a contract with.

The article was not very detailed, but it was interesting still because the article was about someone I was close to.

The Awakened Warriors usually signed contracts with individuals, private companies or countries based on their abilities and performed assigned tasks.

Usually, Awakened Warriors who signed contracts with countries did it for life or in intervals of decades or so. However, the Awakened Warriors from Korea signed short duration contracts even with countries.

The worth of an Awakened Warrior was measured by how much the contract was.

They could earn more money more easily with short contracts. Also, they were treated better that way.

Of course, the countries who signed contract with such Awakened Warrior didn't like the idea, but...

In the Korean server, the challengers already had an organization among themselves inside the Tutorial. It was not like the Awakened Warriors united after they graduated from the Tutorial. So, unlike the Awakened Warriors of other countries, they were able to escape the influence of the Korean government with relative ease. I wonder if the Korean Awakened Warriors are able to get short contracts with countries because of this.

I'm sure there are other reasons, but this is my guess for now since I don't know much about the outside world anyways.

Regardless, Korea is producing world-class Awakened Warriors, but Korea only got to keep very few as a result.

So, instead of calling Korea as the country with the world's finest Awakened Warriors, I heard that many people see the country as the one that produces the best mercenaries.

Many Awakened Warriors who go overseas maintain their Korean nationalities. Also, there is a clause that makes it mandatory for them to return to Korea in case of national crisis. However...

The world is entering the age of Awakened, and Korea is definitely in the center of this.

Regardless of what's happening, the fact was that Korea did produce the largest number of the best Awakened Warriors.

However, the era was such that a country's power was measured based on the Awakened Warriors that the country had.

Because the Awakened Warriors from Korea were being contracted out to other countries, it was hard to claim that Korea was leading the scene.

Well, what are they going to do?

The other countries give a lot more money.

I heard the conditions of work are better too.

I put away the newspaper and got up.

From the closet, I brought out a set of clothing and changed.

It was about time for me to head out.

I was going to the 61st Floor today.

[Didn't you say you were going there during the next round?]

Lee Yun-hye postponed her challenge of the 17th Floor. She will be going during the next round.

I decided to go to the 61th Floor and come back before that.

[Is that so.]

After I finished changing, I got out of the room.

It was not like I need to make a special preparation for going to the 61st floor.

I just needed to change clothes and get going.

I got out of the shelter, but I didn't find the clone bastard or Yong Yong.

What are they doing?

I could not sense them through detection. They were most likely playing hide and seek.

I decided not to get in their way and instead go straight to the 61st Floor.

It was not going to take me a long time to come back anyway.

Grumpily, I walked to the portal that lead to the 61st Floor. However, I felt a presence behind me.

I instinctively tried to raise my power. However, I realized the identity of the one behind me, so I suppressed my power.

I just quietly walked to the portal.

When I was almost at the portal, I suddenly turned around and extended my hands out toward the presence.

Yong Yong was hiding his presence with magic, but he was revealed.

It seemed he was not aware that he was found out. Yong Yong looked surprised and he unconsciously put on his puppy eyes. I picked him up.

“My Yong Yong, I caught you!”

Panicking, Yong Yong struggled and he got out of my grasp.

He then fell to the ground.

He moved his hand to feel his back. It seemed he forgot about the fact that he didn’t have wings in his human form.

“Are you alright?”

I bent my back and dusted off Yong Yong’s clothes.

As I looked at the clothes while dusting it off, I realized I was not familiar with the clothes. It looked strange.

He was wearing clothing that had extravagant laces and ribbons.

It looked like a girl's clothes. However, because he was still young, he looked pretty good in it.

He looked so adorable as well.

I had two reasons why I found the clothing to be strange.

First, it was not the clothing that he was wearing when he performed the polymorph before. Second, it was not a piece of clothing that I bought him either.

[It seems he created it himself with magic.]

...Is that so. I am a little worried about our son's preference.

However, there was another problem that concerned me even more at the moment.

No matter how I looked at it, his clothing was for outdoor adventure.

Also, there was a cross bag on Yong Yong's waist.

He was wearing it with cross-straps. I didn't know what was in the bag, but the bag was full of something.

He looked like a kindergartener who was going on a field trip.

Yong Yong confirmed that there was no more dust on his clothes. He said in a loud voice,

“Dad! I want to go with you! To the 61st Floor!”

[I tried to stop him as much as I could.]

Before trying to stop him, I hugged him and picked him up.

I leveled my eyes with him and shook my head.

“Yong Yong, let’s do that next time. It is still too dangerous to go together.”

“No, it is not dangerous.”

“It is dangerous. I’ll go with you when you grow up just a little more.”

Yong Yong was proclaiming that it was not dangerous as if he had been to the 61st Floor multiple times. I told him again that it was dangerous.

Yong Yong brought his hands together at his chest and started to fiddle with them.

He looked so adorable.

“Still, I want to go.”

“No.”

Having heard me say that, Yong Yong sounded disappointed. He buried himself in my chest.

I wonder why he wanted to go to the 61st Floor?

[I wonder if he just wants to go somewhere that’s not here?]

I guess that might be the case.

“I really cannot come with you?”

“You cannot come with me.”

Once Yong Yong grows up... just a little bit more, then I think I should take him to the 61st Floor even if it is just the very beginning of the place.

It is not a good environment for a child to play in, but for the sake of going somewhere other than here, I don’t think it’s a bad idea.

There was a wet sensation on my chest.

It seemed Yong Yong was crying.

Oh my... my son. He must be so disappointed that he cannot go with me.

I thought he would cry a little and stop, but considering how wet it feels, I think he is going to make my clothes soggy.

I think he is crying his eyes out.

“Yong Yong, we will definitely go together next time, promise?”

Yong Yong, with his head buried in my chest still, nodded.

It seemed he was still not feeling better. He continued to cry.

I don't know why, but looking at him like this made me smile.

Usually, seeing one's own son cry should invoke a sense of sadness, but...

Looking at Yong Yong in my arms, I just thought he was adorable.

He was adorable in his hatchling form, but watching him moving around in my arms in a human form... His adorableness is going beyond my wildest imagination.

I know he is my son, but could anyone really be this adorable?

No, am I wearing permeant beer goggles because he is my son?

[Hey, why don't you get going to the 61st Floor already? Hand over Yong Yong to me. I'll hug him.]

In middle of all this, why are you acting jealous?

I ignored the clone bastard's nonsense.

I held him up in my arms and lulled him until Yong Yong fell asleep.

When Yong Yong fell asleep completely, I gave him to the clone bastard. I was finally able to go to the 61st Floor.

* * *

I was at the top of the snow-covered mountain. It was hard to see even an inch in front of me through the blizzard. I placed my hand at a portal there.

Soon, my body was teleported to a gigantic castle made of transparent ice.

When I was teleported, for the instant, I felt the gazes on me disappeared.

However, right after I was teleported to the castle, I felt their sticky gazes again.

Ugh, I'm sick of this.

I wonder how I lived 24 in this stage with these ominous gazes.

Of course, back then, I didn't even feel it properly. Still, it gives me the creeps just thinking about this 24/7.

"Enter."

The castle's gigantic door opened.

Unlike a castle that was engulfed in lava, the ice castle had numerous sculptures and decorations inside. The castle was significantly larger than the other one.

I need to walk for a while before I can reach the former queen's location.

Of course, I could get there without walking, but that would be rude as a guest.

I was sick of seeing this castle, so I was not interested in its beauty. I just walked forward.

I walked for about ten minutes before I reached the core of the castle.

I approached a door that had a beautiful engraving. The door opened by itself.

[Welcome, King.]

An ice giant, who was sitting at a giant ice throne, greeted me.

[It's been a while.]

"I know. It's been a while, granny."

[I told you to address me as Big Sis.]

Big Sis? Is that appropriate considering your age?

That would be going too far.

[This is unexpected. I was certain that you wouldn't come alone this time. Has that hatchling not grown up yet?]

"Not yet. Also, I have something to discuss with you regarding him."

[Be at ease and tell me.]

"I think it will take some time."

[Do you plan on not bringing the hatchling?]

"Yep. How did you know?"

[I figured it would be more becoming for you to wait for that woman instead of bringing the hatchling. It is just that I didn't know you had the luxury of time.]

"I do. No, I found it."

Lee Yun-hye is already challenging the 17th Floor.

Of course, there is a possibility that she may not get past it, but I don't want to prepare myself for the worst even before she tries challenging it.

As if she was intrigued, the former queen looked at me.

Her gaze was similar to an aunt looking at her little brother or a nephew.

No, it was more like she was looking at her grandkids.

It feels awkward.

[You seem to be in a good spirit. Is it because you have a new friend?]

Although the news I brought was implying that their confinement to this place was going to be prolonged, the former queen was not infuriated.

Instead, with a benevolent smile, she asked that.

"More like a new family member. My mind is at ease, so I was able to make a breakthrough in my development as well."

The former queen's look on her face changed to a mischievous smile.

[I think the former king would jump up and down and cause a ruckus if he heard about this. Considering his personality, he won't just overlook this.]

Now that you mentioned it, that's true.

I was already getting a headache, thinking about that old man who would shout at me with his ridiculously loud voice.

It is possible that the old man already knew that I was going to make this choice.

Since a long time ago, the old man had been bringing up my indecisiveness and warning me.

Since I'm breaking my promise, I should be prepared to hear some nagging.

[It is your choice. We cannot overturn it as we wish. Let's talk about something else. I sense that you had grown stronger. Is that right?]

"That's right."

[You are growing stronger without bounds. Can you demonstrate your power a little?]

Having heard the former queen, I smiled a little.

Even if she didn't say so, I wanted to show off my power.

* * *

I took a moment to make preparations and activated an isolation barrier.

I felt the sticky gazes disappearing.

It feels refreshing.

At the same time, I am detecting a strong will from the outside of the isolation barrier.

Is it a threat?

[This is...]

“This is an isolation barrier. It blocks all power from outside, including holy power.”

The former queen didn't say anything for a moment.

[As I thought. Betting our fates on you was the right answer.]

I'm glad to hear you praise me like that.

[I can only say that this is incredible. So, at this moment, no beings outside the barrier can look inside my castle?]

“That's right.”

[I'm so glad. Although this will be a temporary measure.]

“Well then, I'll disengage the isolation barrier.”

[Does it take a lot of strength to maintain it?]

“It is not difficult to maintain the barrier. The problem is that there are many higher-ups who would find it uncomfortable to have their view blocked. It seems they are quite angry about not being able to see inside the residential area already. If I maintain the isolation barrier even in this place, then they might decide to demonstrate their power to curb my ‘insolence’”

[Such rude beings.]

To begin with, they are voyeurism patients.

I raised my hand to disengage the isolation barrier. Immediately, I felt over a hundred gazes on me

Over one hundred...

Chapter 109

Tutorial 17th Floor (Unknown 1)

[Lee Yun-hye, 17th Floor: Yes, I'll start the preparations.]

I sent the message to the mister and moved to the bonfire room.

[TL: I'm sure calling someone 'mister' is a bit odd and outdated. However, I could not think of a good replacement. She is talking to Lee Ho-jae, and she knows his name is Lee Ho-jae. However, she addresses him as 'Ah-jur-shi,' which is a title that people in Korea use to address someone of mid-age male who they do not know very well. It is not 'sir' either. All men of Lee Ho-jae's effective age would absolutely refuse to be called 'ah-jur-shi,' which is borderline being called an old man.]

Phew...

I'm shaking.

Is it because I'm feeling anxious?

Perhaps it was due to the diligent training. Nothing appeared to be wrong with me.

The tips of my hands were coolly still and ready. My senses were sharp.

My entire body was still and collected.

However, I could feel myself shaking, even when I wasn't.

Around the time I got a little used to the Tutorial, I had been hearing stories about the 17th Floor.

Since then, all of my hardships were for the sake of clearing this 17th

Floor.

Of course, this was not going to be the only difficult trial to reach the 60th Floor. However, I was certain that this was the most dangerous one.

On top of this, this stage was traumatic for the mister. So, I was constantly told to be wary of the 17th Floor and prepare for it.

When I felt like I was having a little easier time in clearing other stages, I had to handicap myself to increase the difficulties in the stages. Even during the waiting periods, instead of resting, I had to focus on practicing.

I don't think I am a perfect student, but I think I've done all things the mister has told me to do, within realistic limits.

I was now facing the very reason for all of my dedication.

Since I'm about to challenge the 17th floor, perhaps it is only normal for me to feel nervous and shaken?

Phew...

I can't seem to calm myself.

Mister said I should put my hand into the bonfire in times like these and get a grip from feeling the pain.

Isn't that nonsense?

Anyway...

It is time for me to focus. I should get rid of useless thoughts.

Mister said I am significantly stronger than his former self at the 17th Floor.

Mister didn't praise me easily because he was concerned I might

become complacent. Considering this, that was a rare occurrence.

Anyhow...

Even I think I'm stronger than what the mister was at the 17th Floor.

As he put it, I am significantly stronger than his former self.

When he got to the 17th Floor, it was still at Round 17.

To borrow how people put it in the Community, the time period around Round 17 was now treated like the stone age where the cavemen walked around with wooden mace and mumbled 'wooga wooga.'

Back then, nothing was known about the mechanism behind casting. Nothing was known about methods for acquiring skills or items.

Without settings or growth methods for classes or skill trees, people passed through trials on their own and got rewards from clearing the stages. That was all they had back then.

It is obvious that there are huge differences in what we know and have now in comparison to past challengers.

On top of that, I am being supported by mister, so this is especially true now.

However, he never stopped worrying.

He thought there definitely was a chance that I might be defeated by the mirage. To minimize this chance, he painstakingly agonized about every little thing.

There was a time when I thought he was worrying excessively because of a trauma. However, I am certain that is not the case now.

Now that I am actually at the 17th Floor, I came to know with certainty just how much of monster he is.

What in the world...

He got to the 17th Floor in just 17 rounds.

That is ridiculous.

That means, on average, he progressed one floor per round.

In Hell Difficulty...

Where was I at my 17th round since I entered the Tutorial?

Around the Sixth Floor?

I think I was stuck at the Sixth Floor.

If I was to get to the 17th Floor by the 17th Round since I entered the Tutorial, I wonder how much more work and hardships would I have had to endure?

How much luck and talent would be needed?

I cannot even get a feel for it.

Also, I'm sure these differences are what's making mister worry so much.

No matter how far ahead I am in specs, a complacent attitude will be poisonous.

As he said, I'll die right away if I let my guard down.

I must focus.

I brought out the necessary items from the inventory in order.

I looked at the paper with the list and brought out the items. They ended up filling the entire bonfire room.

Now, I have to eat all of these.

I think I'll turn into a pig.

It was fortunate that most of them were liquid medications.

First thing is...

They were pills that minimized my urge to defecate and urinate.

They were high quality medicines that allowed absorption of all nutrition and eliminate only the waste of the waste.

I don't know how it works in detail.

Um...

I was wondering why I had to eat these first. However, after seeing the items all over like this, I think I know why now.

If I take such a large amount of liquid medicines, my stomach and intestines will be full.

I swallowed the pills and checked the second list.

There were seven different kinds of self-strengthening liquid medications.

I had to take them in the right order. Mister made them in rainbow colors, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, dark blue, and purple. In that order, I drank the liquid medicines.

These are a lot...

I only took the second list liquid medications so far, but my inside feels too full already. It tastes bitter too.

There is a faint taste of strawberry. That's making me feel worse.

He didn't need to include such a fruit flavor...

The room was still full of liquid medicines on the floor. I sighed.

...Drink them and die.

* * *

The liquid medicine was flowing back up through the neck. I quickly covered my mouth.

My throat was refusing to swallow the medicine. I forced it to move and barely managed to swallow it.

Finally, I drank them all.

If this is not a prime example of human will's victory, I don't know what is.

Numerous empty bottles rolling around the floor were the proof of my fighting spirit.

The preparations were not over yet.

Now that I finished drinking the medicines, the next thing to do was to put on the various equipment that he sent me.

I brought them out of the inventory and put them on in order.

I have used them several times before, so it was not hard to put them on.

He minimized the use of the equipment to maximize stage difficulties for me. However, once it became clear that I could clear a stage, he allowed me to actively utilize the items.

I could not afford to be unaccustomed to utilizing the equipment. It would be terrible if I was still clumsy about their use in the most critical moment.

On the wrist guard, I placed several accessories with precious stones. I was wearing ten rings on my fingers. I was wearing loads of bracelets on my wrists as well.

With so many accessories on me, I won't even be able to use a bow properly.

“Activate the combat state.”

With the pre-established activation words, the accessories on me disappeared.

They didn't just become invisible.

I touched my fingers, and I didn't feel the rings there.

The accessories were literally gone.

Despite that, I could still get the effects of the accessories. How intriguing.

Now that I finished wearing all equipment, the next is... performing the ceremony.

I drew a magic circle on the floor dabbed a drop of blood on it.

It is generally known that most summon spirits are not related to sacrificial ceremony. However, the summon spirits actually greatly prefer a ceremony where the contractor pays one's sacrificial tribute in their own blood and flesh.

I heard that this is the purest way for the summon spirits to consume the contractor's mana. I honestly find it creepy.

Watching the magic circle slowly resonating, I sighed again.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Is the preparation not done yet?]

[Lee Yun-hye, 17th Floor: It is taking longer than I thought. I think it

will take until tomorrow morning, so please rest until then. I'll contact you when it is ready.]

Drinking all medicines took longer than I thought.

It cannot be helped. The challenge will have to be postponed until tomorrow morning.

* * *

[Welcome to the 17th Floor stage of the Hell Difficulty in Tutorial.]

The interior was empty.

It reminds me of an empty cargo storage building.

There was a transparent barrier at the center. Beyond that was a man standing there.

The man looked around the place with dumbfounded look on his face. As soon as he saw me, he brought out two spherical shaped objects that were each the size of a palm.

Soon, the spherical objects each turned into a long sword and a shield.

Although this was just a mirage, seeing mister in real life like this... It was strange.

He looked similar to what I have seen on televisions before I entered the Tutorial.

He was not exactly the same.

In my memories, although he looked a little sharp, there was a gentle student-like side of him. Unlike that, his mirage was... How should I put it...

He looked a little wild.

That was if I put it nicely. Honestly, he looked a little scary.

[The 17th Floor's trial will begin.]

Description: The Temple of Trial located at the top of the Vetus mountain range had been producing guardians for the holy land of a certain god who refused to reveal the name.

Of many candidates, to select the most powerful guardian, the temple...

I ignored the explanation window that gave me useless backstory.

This was not important at the moment.

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds.]

As soon as the mirage saw me, it changed its attitude.

It looked like it was going to charge at me the moment the barrier disappeared.

This is different from what we anticipated.

Mister told me that the mirage probably won't charge in to attack right away. His former self liked having conversations with people. He said the mirage wouldn't give up this chance to have a conversation so easily.

If possible, it will try to have a conversation, even with someone who it is supposed to fight. He figured that the mirage will try to strike a conversation for the sake of just chatting before the battle really starts.

However, what's with that attitude?

The mirage looked unable to suppress its murderous intent.

It seemed like it couldn't even wait 30 seconds for the barrier to

disappear. It came right up to the barrier and stared at me.

Did it go completely berserk because of the system?

There was nothing about that in the information we obtained from the managers.

I should start the preparations for the battle right away.

First, I drew a magic circle on the floor.

“Pantoo. Silia.”

As if it was intrigued from watching me drawing a magic circle, the mirage smiled.

It really looked like it was purely enjoying watching me.

After that, I recited the incantation for the strengthening magic.

All strengthening spells prepared in skills, liquid medicines and equipment were activated.

Next was the summon spell.

The summon monsters that were to be summoned first were the water spirit and five wolf spirits.

The water spirit was over two meters tall. With its ice and water magic spells and its body, the water spirit will stop the mirage from gaining distance on me. As for the five wolf spirits, they will charge at the mirage to hinder its movements.

[The trial will begin in 10 seconds.]

I wish I had more time.

If the mirage wasted just one more minute on useless chatter, I could have prepared even more things.

The situation was not rolling along as smoothly as I hoped. However, it was not like this was completely unexpected.

I was fully prepared for situations where a part of the preparations went to waste.

I brought out the bow and arrows from the inventory.

I placed an arrow on the bow, and my anxiety disappeared completely.

I just needed to place one arrow at the mirage, and that was going to be it.

It didn't matter how it happened. As long as I made one direct hit, that was going to be the end.

The mirage's defensive abilities could not stop my arrow.

With a skill's power added to the arrow, each shot was close to the power of magic casting.

There are also the additional effects by the arrows and the bow themselves.

The arrow could cleanly penetrate even SS rank armors. Also, the attack was going to continuously deal magic based attack on the penetrated subject.

This may be the mister's mirage, but it won't be able to stand more than one shot.

Even mister was certain about this.

On top of this, the mirage had never experienced an arrow of such speed and power.

The mirage had not experienced much magic spells yet either. It won't be able to respond properly to my arrow.

[The trial is starting.]

With that message, the barrier that separated us dissipated.

Precisely when the barrier disappeared, I launched the arrow.

Surprisingly, the mirage responded to the arrow.

It lowered its head to dodge the arrow that was flying at it. It was charging toward me without a moment's delay. Looking at the mirage, I thought,

Did it read the trajectory?

Considering the speed of the arrow, dodging it by looking at it was ridiculous.

During the brief moment it took me to place another arrow on the bow, one of the wolf spirit was cut and disappeared.

That was too clean.

I never thought it would be able to destroy a wolf spirit with a single blow.

The mirage was continually demonstrating moves that were different from our analysis and predictions.

I launched an arrow through a gap between the wolf spirits charging at the mirage and the water spirit that was blocking its path.

I shot it precisely aimed at the mirage's neck.

It seemed the mirage was not hindered by the spirits' interferences at all. It dodged the second arrow again.

After that, it struck the advancing wolf spirits down and continued to advance.

The water spirit's movements were unable to keep the mirage from advancing further even for a moment.

Instead of trying to put the third arrow on the bow, I drew distance to the back and prepared a magic.

[Battle Focus]

My focus was heightened. The world was moving extremely slow.

The mirage was probably in the similar state.

From now on, each moment is going to decide the duel.

Before making any move, I need to think as much as possible for a precise decision.

“Flame Wall!”

Flame surged up from the floor and blocked the path between me and the mirage.

As if the mirage was thinking it definitely should, it jumped into the flame without hesitation.

As soon as I confirmed this, I shouted the activation words.

“Pantoo Raka!”

To where I was standing a few moments ago...

I moved to the back of the mirage.

The mirage had thrown its body into the flames.

It definitely will not be able to dodge this time.

Thinking that, I tried to place the third arrow at the bow. However, I

had to change my plan immediately.

The mirage, which was inside the flames, suddenly turned and threw its body in my direction.

Its response is too quick.

This is not through feeling or seeing my movement while being in the flames.

Did he know I was going to move to this place?

How?

It does not know magic, yet it predicted this movement?

“Silia Raka!”

The wind spirit joined my body.

As I felt the wind spirit moving my body to the back, I launched the third arrow that was hanging on the bow.

Kiiing-

I felt a sound in my head.

It was a warning sound by an artifact that detected the use of an active power skill.

The mirage only had two active-type power skills.

Blink and Soul Steal.

Of the two, the one that would cause this artifact to sound an alarm is the Blink.

The water spirit was not able to catch up to the mirage's speed. I

moved the water spirit to my location.

Phook-

The mirage moved using the Blink. Its blade struck the water spirit instead of me.

I was teleported to where the water spirit was.

The water spirit didn't buy me much time.

The mirage destroyed the water spirit in just two strikes.

It precisely aimed at the summon spirit's core and destroyed it.

The mirage is driving me nuts.

With the little bit of the time gained by sacrificing the water spirit, I launched the fourth arrow.

Again, the mirage moved its body to the side and dodged the arrow.

I can be certain now.

That mirage is looking at the arrow and dodging it.

“Explosion!”

I shouted the activation word, and the arrow, which was flying to the side of the mirage, exploded mid-air.

I succeeded in an attack for the first time.

Kiing-

Another Blink was used.

Blink also negated all momentum of the subject.

Instead of being blown off by the reaction from the explosion, is it intending to come in close and attack?

Even so, it already is affected by the shock from the explosion.

Is it ignoring the damage head on and approaching me?

It's my turn to make a prediction.

The mirage's stance is seriously compromised because of the close proximity of the explosion.

It only has limited options for attack in that stance if it uses Blink in the current state to attack me.

It could use the Blink to simply avoid the shock from the explosion. However, considering the mirage's personality, it won't waste the Blink for just dodging the explosion.

The duel was dependent on maintaining distance.

Also, the Blink, which could instantly close in the distance, could be said as the most critical element in the battle.

After using the Blink five times, there was a waiting period before it could be used again. The mirage won't try to waste it.

Highkick.

From that stance, if it used the Blink to approach me, only something like a high kick could deal a critical strike to me.

When I finished my thoughts, the mirage, which was drenched in blood from the explosion, used the Blink and appeared in front of me.

As I predicted, a high kick was coming at me. I blocked it with my right palm.

By the power of the artifact I had on my left wrist, the impact of the

kick was negated. At the next moment,

Kwang!

The shockwave contained in the artifact launched. The mirage was thrown to the back.

Due to the shock's reaction, I was forcefully thrown to the back, rolling on the floor.

I felt impact on all over the body.

Back, waist, wrist...

After the kick's impact was neutralized, but before the shockwave was launched, the mirage moved its leg again during that brief moment.

The leg was pressing down hard as if it was going to cut through. My wrist, which was blocking this move, was overexerted.

In that state, I had to endure the reaction from the shock, so the damage to the wrist was quite substantial.

Until the wrist heals, I have to fight with just casting magic.

It won't take long.

Even if it did, 15 seconds at most.

I just need to hold out for one turn.

Thinking like that, I put forth my right hand and got up.

I was thinking hard about which magic to use next. Meanwhile, the mirage on the other side got up and said,

“...Strange.”

Limping on one leg, the mirage got up. It seemed like it was not intending to charge in right away.

Since the beginning of the battle, the mirage had been focusing only on fighting.

I was curious about what it was saying.

In my head, I thought I should ignore it and attack already. However, my curiosity preceded those thoughts.

What would it say?

Would it ask about my abilities?

It might complain about the unjustified difficulty of the 17th Floor.

“No matter how I think about it, I don’t remember you.”

What the mirage said was something a little unexpected.

"Yet, you know me?"

Chapter 110

Tutorial 17th Floor (Unknown 2)

[PR: This is from Lee Ho-Jae's mirage's perspective, who is functioning just like Lee Ho-Jae would if he actually participated in the stage.]

Wow... Look at my body...

Isn't this too much?

I slowly got up and checked my leg's condition.

It is completely busted.

I think it will be hard to move my leg right away even if I drank a potion.

That means I'll have to drink an elixir.

However, I don't think my opponent will let me have the chance.

The opponent utilized both archery and magic. She was constantly trying to keep at a distance, and I was constantly dashing into close that distance. This cycle repeated itself again and again in the battle.

I'll end up with an hole in my head if I carelessly tried to drink an elixir.

Wait, maybe it won't end with just an hole in my head?

I looked at the arrows that were stuck on the surrounding.

They were the arrows that I dodged so far.

They all had blasted the ground with terrifying impact, leaving a one-meter crater in its wake.

Does that make common sense? Those?

Is that really an arrow? Even a cannon won't be able to make a round crater like those on the stone floor.

Anyway, what's even more surprising is the arrows that are still stuck at the centers of these craters.

What are these arrows made of?

There was mana swirling around the arrows. It seemed that the arrows dealt damage over time even after its initial impact.

I'm certain.

I'll definitely die if I get struck by one of these arrows.

I can see the woman bringing another arrow toward the bow.

Let's try to buy some time.

"...That's odd."

I was half gambling at this point, but the opponent responded.

I'm so grateful that you did.

It looks like she is interested in having a conversation.

[Battle Focus]

Let's drag this on and formulate my plan while she talks.

"No matter how I think about it..."

Kiri Kiri definitely said that 17th Floor would end quickly.

Did she say that because 17th Floor stage only has a short duel against one individual?

It is odd.

The difficulty is off the charts; it is excessive.

Even the Master Monk at the 13th Floor was not this hard.

It is even weirder that Kiri Kiri didn't give me any advice despite its incredible difficulty.

It looks like I'll need more information about this.

If this happened simply because Kiri Kiri made a mistake, then I shall have my revenge.

This time for sure, I'll purchase each and every kind of cake and eat them all in front of her!

"I don't remember you, yet..."

That woman knows me.

She definitely knows me.

She is familiar with my skills and attack patterns.

Not only does she know recognize my Blink ability, which is a power skill, she has accurate knowledge of my physical strength and speed and had been responding accordingly.

On top of this, she had been preparing things as if she knew what I was going to do ahead of time. This cannot be more trickier.

I could understand it if she is a special kind of opponent who can find out about my stats. In addition to that, she could be quick at figuring

things out or possessing a cheat-like power skill of premonition. In such a case, they would make sense.

It is a ridiculous idea, but just how many things in Hell difficulty were not ridiculous?

However, it was hard to accept the look on her face before the battle when she looked at me.

I am pretty good at reading people's faces.

To read the opponent's face and make preparations, I trained myself by practicing. I got used to reading faces so I could understand various non-human beings that I was going to continue to run into in the future.

That woman was definitely glad to see me, or she was happy.

However, right after that, she panicked. She looked a little disappointed too.

She seemed a little petrified during the battle, but well, I've been seeing such faces all the time, so I don't find it surprising.

Anyway, I don't know how, but that woman is not just able to see my stats.

Somehow, directly or indirectly, she knows me. That is highly likely.

I wrap my head around this.

How does she know me?

Is she like a manager?

Like Kiri Kiri, had she been watching the challengers and entered as the boss monster at the 17th Floor?

If she is someone related to the SYSTEM, then Kiri Kiri probably could

not tell me the information about her.

I'll need more information regarding this too.

Instead of Kiri Kiri... it would be better to hear from her directly.

At the moment, it is not important to know how she knows me.

I can ask after the battle is over.

What's important now is babbling on with keywords that work well with her responses and buying myself more time.

What should I say next?

I collected my thoughts for a moment and decided,

“You...”

I heightened my focus even more.

Before I finish this sentence, I should think of as many things as I can.

I don't think I'll have the time to think about things besides the battle after this.

She really is a ridiculous opponent.

She is superior to me in each and every aspect. It seems she even has information about me.

Still, I think I can beat her.

She appears to be impossible to beat only when stats are concerned, but now that I have fought her, I think it is feasible.

If it was me from the usual days, I would have died a long time ago.

However, I'm facing a life-threatening danger now. It's been a while. It feels like the senses that were asleep for a long time are waking up.

As I thought, a human being needs danger in their lives to reach greater heights.

Lately, I had not experienced any danger in particular.

Let alone danger, I didn't even feel nervous.

When I was fighting the doppelganger at the 16th Floor, even then, I was no more nervous than how it was when I played rock-paper-scissors with Kiri Kiri.

I mean, I was not nervous at all.

Despite me saying to myself frequently that I should not become complacent and let my guard down, it was only natural that my attitude became loose with the lack of challenge.

However, now that a life threatening danger was breathing down my neck, my old senses are coming back online.

Desperately wanting to survive, I was analyzing and planning.

In less than five minutes, I was able to achieve growth that were more than what I gained from the training in the past few days.

I was able to use the Aura Blade with greater stability. I was able to feel the cores inside the summon monsters that the woman summoned and successfully destroyed them.

Through mental tactics, I was able to predict her next move and survive.

Not only that, I was able to even counterattack.

All right, all right.

I sure sound like a crazy bastard, but really.

It feels amazing.

“...you know me?”

I have more than enough chance for victory.

That woman is not able to fully utilize her power.

Even with that, she is overwhelmingly stronger than me, but...

I am awakened from the danger of the situation; adrenaline like no other is pumping through my veins. Even though her overwhelming power skews victory toward here, her unfamiliarity in her own powers is greatly affecting my chance of victory.

Even her shockwave, which destroyed my leg, was an example of her unfamiliarity with her power.

If I didn't turn the leg at the last moment, I would have been more heavily injured.

Actually, if I didn't partially dodge the arrow, I would have been open to further attacks and lost the battle.

The shockwave was that powerful.

What if that woman could adjust the shockwave's angle at a precise moment?

Instead of destroying the leg, it would have cut off my leg.

That woman definitely possesses incredible power, but she is lacking in finesse.

Usually, those in a hurry to try out new powers that they just acquired show these kinds of weaknesses.

Many challengers in Tutorials were like this.

I should aim for this flaw if I can.

Also... Oh I forgot.

I need to continue to talk.

If I don't, she will think something is up.

I must not let this conversation's flow be interrupted.

"I'm disappointed."

I said the wrong words!

Word selection was completely wrong!

Disappointed? What's disappointing?

That does not even sound relevant to what I was talking about earlier.

Due to this mistake, I felt like I was about to roll off a cliff. At that moment, I saw the look on the woman's face.

She was panicking.

That's working?

Someone so strong is unnerved from me saying I am disappointed?

Wouldn't it be more becoming of her to snort and say I am pathetic to say such a thing against her?

Anyway, let's go with it.

"You possess great powers, yet is that all you can do with them?"

The woman's face is crumpling.

She is more shaken up than I thought she would be.

Anyway, I gained time, shook up the opponent's mental game and even grabbed the lead.

The conversation was a success.

Now, let's try it.

There are three wolf monsters left. However, they are not able to catch up to my speeds.

The distance between me and the woman is not significant too.

As for my leg... It is not healed yet.

From what I feel, I think my bones are completely shattered.

I think it would be best for me to fight assuming I don't have one of my legs.

The woman was moving her mouth. It seemed she wanted to say something in protest.

I don't have a reason to listen to what she has to say.

Actually, I should aim for the right timing instead.

When she is about to do something irrelevant to the battle; when she is focused on something else, I should aim for that moment.

"I..."

When she started to talk, I used Blink.

[Blink]

Kang!

I moved to the front of her and swung my sword. However, the sword was blocked by her wrist band.

It sounded like metals clashing, and there were sparks.

Damn it.

Above the wrist band, it seemed a transparent circular shape blocked my sword and stopped the attack.

From what I feel, it is a small round shield.

It was a surprise attack, but it was neutralized because of this strange wrist band.

[Blink]

Instead of drawing distance, I used Blink to move to a half a step closer to her to take the lead again.

Now, I was using Blink to close the distance, and the woman was trying to put distance between us again. The cycle was repeating itself, just when I thought I had broken it.

I didn't know for certain how many ways the woman had to avoid my attacks. I had no reason to play along with her battle of attrition.

I saved the Blink and continued another attack.

I used the shield on my left hand and smacked her.

After that, I turned the sword on the right in to a short sword and tried to stab her stomach.

Kang!

It sounds like metals clashing.

It was not by a layer of mana.

The sword was blocked by something that closer to a magic shield.

Damn it. She sure has all sorts of abilities.

Instead of falling over from the shock, she maintained her stance.

She threw a counter right away.

With the center of weight pulled to her back, her kick came at me like a whip. I blocked it with my right hand.

My stance was not sturdy at the moment, so this was the best I could do.

I was pushed far back.

My right arm was done for.

From that move just now, I confirmed that she was superior even in raw physical strength.

The problem is the next one.

The problem that was bigger than my right arm was the fact that I could not move my left leg.

I was pushed to back, and I could not move one of my legs. This meant I could not respond to the next attack.

However, it seemed the woman didn't realize this. Instead of continuing to attack, she retreated.

It was the skill where an invisible object lifted her and moved her back.

I must not let this drag on.

I saw the wolf monsters charging at me.

I changed the shield on my left to a sword.

[Talaria's Wings]

With the flight effect of Talaria's Wings and the right leg, I dashed forward, and while I was in the air, I used another skill.

[Soul Steal]

It was going to have a direct effect on the opponent. I hoped to draw her attention away with it. However...

There was a strange magic response from her body, and the Soul Steal's effect was nullified.

The woman saw me leaping, and she started to form a barrier in front of her.

She used a barrier instead of avoiding. It seems there is a waiting time until she can use her dodge skill.

However, that's not a good move for her.

In a time like this, she should aim for melee combat instead or move her body to dodge and buy herself more time.

She is physically stronger, and she is faster, so that is far more effective.

It seems her ability to make right decisions is struggling because I took command of the battle's flow.

Against the barrier that was forming rapidly, I swung my sword layered with Aura Blade.

The incomplete Aura Blade that I created has a special response when it collides with a defensive measure such as a barrier that's

strengthened with magic.

When it collides with another's mana, it explodes.

Booooooom!

[Blink]

Promptly after the explosion, I used Blink to the top.

I think I'm going to die, seriously.

My body is wounded all over.

I'm enduring a full-frontal explosion in this state.

The woman was also within the explosion's range, but she was standing behind a barrier, so she was probably protected to some extent.

In other words, the attack just now was really close to a suicide attack.

After using Blink to teleport above her I looked, and the woman had her eyes closed.

Was she not able to keep her eyes open because of the explosion?

Perhaps she didn't expect the explosion, or she had a slow reaction time. It is one of the two.

Anyway, thanks to that, I think this will work out easily.

I quickly recited a magic incantation, desperately hoping it would work.

I got a feel for it from feeling the sensation from the magic that the woman used and the cores that the monsters had. However, I'm trying this out without any practice.

I don't know what's my chance of success.

As I fell from towards the woman from above, she looked at me.

She was lowering her stance and moving her arm. It seemed she was going to block it with the wrist band like earlier.

“Wind Arrow.”

With that, a wind arrow was shot. The woman blocked it by opening a magic shield from her wrist band.

However, because she was stopping the magic attack, her guard had a gap.

That was enough. The wind arrow served its purpose.

The blade on my left hand was already enhanced with Aura Blade.

Unlike earlier, it was completely calm.

The blade was quickly swung downwards, and it cleanly cut off the woman's shoulder.

Blood gushed out from her shoulder like fountain, and the dismembered arm fell to the ground. Watching this, I became certain.

I won.

Chapter 111

Tutorial 17th Floor (Unknown 3)

Kwaaaang!

The mirage's kick threw me to the back and I rolled on the floor, hapless.

“Hey, hey. I kicked a human being's body, but it's not the sound of flesh; rather, the sound of metal. What is it? I wonder what you are hiding.”

Kwang!

My back was kicked again, knocking the wind out of my lungs.

I was protected by the armors, yet I was suffering this much shock. It meant I would have died right away if I had to take it without any armor.

“If you don't pull it out, you are going to receive more beatings.”

“Wait, wait! I'll pull it out, I said I will! It is just the effect from my equipment!”

If that's the case, why didn't you just ask me to disengage it?

Why are you hitting me first and then asking later?

I took off the armor from my shoulder that was attached in invisible mode.

The armor only covered a part of my shoulder, but its magic effect enhanced my entire body.

Of course, this was not the only invisible item that I was wearing at the moment, but I hoped he wouldn't notice.

The mirage observed the armor here and there and raised its leg again, threatening to kick me again.

"You have more, right? Disengage them all."

...Damn it.

I put down five pieces of armor equipped in invisible mode.

Of course, I still had many more items I was wearing.

"You have more, right? You hid some, right?"

I desperately shouted at the mirage.

"If you kick me in this state, I will really die!"

"Is that so?"

It seemed the mirage was considering his situation. It was not doing anything for a moment.

After a moment, the mirage seemed to finish organizing its thoughts. It brought out another potion from the inventory. It said as it drank the potion.

"If you do anything suspicious from now on, I'm going to attack. Don't do anything foolish."

"..."

It was not like I never thought about the possibility of things coming to this, but I really thought it would not come to this.

Ugh.

Really, you are so strong. It's sickening.

Are you human?

After my arm was cut off, the battle turned one-sidedly into his favor.

I tried to gain distance in any way possible, but the mirage just refused to give up and continued to chase me and attacked.

One of the mirage's arms was neutralized and it could not use one of its leg, but to think such a difference resulted from it...

I was at a disadvantage, and I was being dragged around while giving up the cards I had one after the other. As the situation continued, I realized it would be better for me to just give up the battle.

Now that it came to this, I'll go with the second plan.

First, the mirage tossed a potion bottle to me and told me to drink it.

"It hurts a lot, doesn't it? Drink that."

"I'm all right..."

"Drink."

Judging from the engraving on the bottle, it is a type of pain medication.

A pain medication reduces pain, but it also dulls my senses, which is a drawback.

It could be a critical drawback in a situation like this.

I hesitated to drink the potion, and the mirage raised its sword.

Hopelessly and with a crestfallen expression, I drank the potion.

As I thought, it was a pain medication.

That was not all.

It even had paralyzing substance.

Poison?

My necklace was starting to detoxify it.

“Now, I don’t know how long we have left. I have much that I want to hear from you, so let’s get started right away. Answer honestly to all questions I ask.”

As I thought...

Instead of killing me right away, the mirage wanted to get information out of me.

“...I have conditions.”

Dumbfounded at my demand, it snorted derisively.

“Old hag, I don’t think you are in position to place conditions?”

I didn’t want to, but I flinched inside.

He called me old hag.

Does he have any idea of what my age actually is?

I know this is mister’s mirage from when he was young, but I am younger than the mirage version of mister.

Old hag!

I have never had been called that in my life.

I desperately strained to maintain facial muscles and tried to maintain the composed look.

However, it seemed that it didn't work.

"Oh my, look at that expression your face. Hey. If I called you an old hag one more time, I think you will hit a human. I'm so scared that I don't think I'll be able to even stomach hearing your condition."

"I have two conditions to ask. First, give me back my arm."

I was talking about my arm that was slowly rolling around on the floor.

"I think not killing you right away would be enough?"

"I am well aware of the worth of the information I have. It is more than enough to get additional rewards besides being kept alive."

The mirage was going to say something, but it closed its mouth again.

The mirage thinks the clear condition for the 17th Floor is killing the opponent.

For it, the option for letting me live does not exist.

So, just now, it probably obtained false information that I am not aware of the clear condition.

It probably harbors a suspicion that I am not a part of the Tutorial system, although it probably won't believe it completely.

"All right, let's hear you talk for a bit and then I'll think about it. What's the second condition?"

"Help me pass this trial."

Since I'm tricking it, I might as well add more to make it certain.

I acted like a character who would appear in the 17th Floor stage.

It was such a bold demand, but the mirage will pretend to grant it.

Its goal is gaining information. Once it gains information, it will not give a damn about my trial and promptly kill me.

It will probably think that affirming a false promise is a good idea if it can get information from me in a more sincere manner.

“All right, but I don’t know much about the trial.”

“It’s all right. I’ll explain it to you.”

Afterwards, I started explaining about the background of the trial.

Over about ten minutes, I described the backstory to the trial and the goal of the character I was acting. The doubt in the mirage’s face faded.

You have no idea how many times I read the script to memorize this setting.

“If it is only that much, I think I can help.”

“Well then, please give me back my arm.”

“Why do you need it?”

“I want to treat it with magic as soon as possible. I can attach it back when I receive treatment.”

The mirage was interested in the subject of magic treatment on the arm.

“I have many things I want to ask about that magic.”

“Give me back my arm first. I’ll explain as I do it.”

“I have another thing to ask before that.”

What’s left?

Before he asked, I went over the projected answers list in my head as fast as I could.

“Tutorial... Do you know about the system?”

They were the key words.

How fast I responded would be critical to whether I lived or died.

First, I should put up a dumbfounded face as if I’m trying to say I have no idea what it is talking about.

Like that, maintain hardened face for one second.

After that, a blank face like a retarded patient.

Maintain that for four seconds...

After that, recover the original expression that I had before the question, and ask back as if there is nothing wrong with it.

“I am not sure. I never heard of such. What does it mean?”

There was a glimpse of sympathy in the mirage’s face.

Mister told me he felt sorry for the beings who appeared in stages.

Their fates were enslaved by the system, and their life and death repeated regardless of their will. Mister said he felt sorry for their fate.

I tricked him successfully.

As I thought, instead of becoming a professional archer, I should have become an actress.

One thing I was surprised a bit about was that the mirage did not ask how I knew about its skills and how I responded to them.

I thought it would ask me about them.

Does it intend to figure me out later slowly?

I wondered about this, so I asked,

“Aren’t you curious about how I knew about your skills?”

Having heard my question, the mirage’s facial expressions took a strange turn.

It was the same look that I made earlier.

If the mirage asked that question, then the theme of the answer was going to be about the true identity of the mirage and the 17th Floor stage.

It seemed that the mirage could wonder about them, but it was not allowed to actually converse about them.

Also, if the conversation led to it, then the conversation was stopped by the system.

Its consciousness faltered for a moment. That thing is definitely nothing but a fake creation.

The mirage picked up the arm and handed it to me.

After receiving the arm, it felt really odd.

It was not everyday for anyone to hold and feel one’s own arm that was dismembered from the body.

Although, in reality, this is not my first time.

I placed the arm on the floor and drew a circle that was about 2

meters in radius with the arm as the center.

It didn't really have any meaning.

I just wanted to put the mirage away from me even if it was just a little bit.

“Are you going to start?”

I nodded to the question and activated my magic power.

Watching this, the mirage took a step back.

It was as mister explained.

The mirage is definitely complacent, especially after the battle is decided.

Ugh.

It was a dangerous gamble, but it is working out more easily than I expected.

Taking a knee on the right, I placed my hand on the floor and recited the technique.

Of course, it was not the incantation for healing my cut off arm.

With my cut off arm as the sacrifice, I bring forth the Summon Spirit King!

It was such a tacky line, something that could be from the Yu-gi-Oh series. I shouted the line in my head and opened the link. As soon as it was established, the mana around me started to resonate crazily.

[The God of Nature is overjoyed by your action.]

The mirage charged at me as soon as it realized the sudden commotion.

I calmly put my hand at the artifact I had equipped on my left knee.

White light was spreading to all over the place.

Its effect paralyzed all senses of the opponent for a moment.

In addition to all five senses such as sight and hearing, it even paralyzed energy sensory.

It didn't last long, but it was enough.

After that, I put my hand on my forehead.

I recited the activation word, and all wounds on my body were recovered completely.

It was not the kind that grew a new arm and closed wounds.

It literally reverted the body's state to before it incurred any wounds.

Although the mirage's senses were all paralyzed, it charged at me.

It remembered my location.

I took a stance and dodged its sword.

After that, I was going to punch the mirage's face.

Kwang!

Instead, I got struck on the side of my face.

This is ridiculous.

Is this is even possible without any senses?

Impossible.

It remembered my position and came at me.

That alone is hard to believe.

It lost all of its senses. It means the mirage is not certain about where it is going and if it is going there properly.

Even in this state, the mirage baited my first response with its first attack, predicted my counterattack and even attempted the next attack.

On top of this, the second attack made a direct hit.

I gave up the battle right away and threw myself backward.

It didn't matter what the condition was. Fighting that monster in close range was suicide.

However, it seemed the mirage even figured out my retreat path. It spread its wings open and chased after me.

I am already linked to the Summon Spirit King.

It will take a bit more time for the King to appear, but as the one who made the contract, I can borrow the King's mana and use it.

I summoned spirits between myself and the mirage.

In addition to beast type spirits, I also summoned elemental types. I summoned anything and everything that came to my mind.

In just a brief moment, I summoned forty elemental spirits.

They were not just enough to stop the mirage, which lost its senses. They were too much.

As I thought, the mirage was unable to shake off the summon spirits.

It seemed it was regaining its senses little by little. It was starting to

attack the summon spirits, but it was unable to charge at me right away.

Goooooooooooo

With a light, vibrating sound, the space was distorted.

The Summon Spirit King made the entrance.

The King made entrance as he revealed his mana, which could only be described as humongous. However, its existence felt faint to me.

I felt a stronger existence from the mirage, which was fighting desperately while being surrounded by the spirits.

Instead of feeling the sense of security from the Summon Spirit King's existence, I felt a chill down my spine as I watched the mirage put up a smile as if he was enjoying vaporizing the summon spirits one after the other, eyes burning with flames.

* * *

[You cleared the 17th Floor stage.]

Anyway, I cleared it.

I feel like that.

I cleared it, so that's enough.

In the end, the mirage destroyed all summon spirits.

It dodged all the attacks I threw at it from the distance, killed forty summon spirits one after the other and tried to charge at me.

At that moment, the Summon Spirit King started to move, and the mirage tried to stab the King with its weapon. It immediately exploded from just touching the Summon Spirit King.

Phuuuuuaaaaaa.

That was too much.

I felt like I just survived a near-death ordeal. However, after checking my condition, I realized that I was not in that bad of condition.

There were many items that I did not use yet. Moreover, I used the full recovery only once.

I thought I might die once, but I didn't use the revive either.

The battle didn't go as planned, but the end result was good, so all is well.

Giving up on the battle in the middle and leading the mirage on to let its guard down was the key.

I'm glad I memorized the script. When mister sent me the script and told me to practice memorizing it, I honestly questioned its necessity.

I think I handled it pretty well on my own.

I wonder if mister would praise me.

I organized my thoughts and looked at the Summon Spirit King.

He was looking down at the corpse of the mirage.

What are you doing?

It seemed the King noticed my question. He responded for me.

[I wanted to remember this man's appearance. Contractor, I must warn you. Do not get involved with this man.]

With that as his last words, the King disengaged the summoning independently and returned to his own realm.

I got to hear some unsettling words in the end, but today should be celebrated.

With happy heart, I got on the portal.

Soon, my body was transported to the green field.

“Kiri Kiri!”

After seeing me, Kiri Kiri hopped and hopped to run away from me. I chased her and caught her.

“Let me go! Let me go!”

Um. No.

I need healing today.

I tightly hugged Kiri Kiri who was struggling. I didn’t let her go.

As I held her like that for a long while, Kiri Kiri gave up trying to get away from me. She sat quietly.

I hugged her tiny frame from behind.

Ah... I can feel the healing.

It feels like hugging an adorable little puppy... no... bunny in my chest.

I wish the time could stop like this.

I placed my chin on top of Kiri Kiri’s head.

I could feel Kiri Kiri’s two long ears on my cheeks. They were tickling me.

“Hiiiiing. I feel trapped.”

Kiri Kiri complained, but I ignored her.

I have a lot of stress today.

I raised my hand and touched the back of her ears. They were soft.

I could feel the back sides of her ears.

She hated being touched in the insides of her ears.

I was like that for a while before I realized that I had not contacted mister yet.

I should tell him about this soon.

Thinking that, I opened the message window.

At that moment, Kiri Kiri said to me,

“Wait a minute. Before that, I have something to tell you.”

The tone of Kiri Kiri’s voice became serious very quickly. I felt it was strange.

Kiri Kiri vacantly looked up the sky.

[Vote so far: In favor 2207, Oppose 196]

What is this?

I was dumbfounded by the message that appeared all of the sudden.

This kind of message only appears after clearing a stage. Why now?

“Hiiiiing... I voted against it.”

“What is this?”

Kiri Kiri's long ears fell down all the way.

With gloomy voice, she started to explain.

“The gods want to make a special proposition to you.”

“A proposition?”

Kiri Kiri didn't answer right away.

She made scribbles on the ground for a moment, organized her thoughts and then started to explain.

“Hear me out to the end and then decide. What? What is it? Ah why! This much should do no harm.”

Now, she was even saying things on her own.

Who is she talking to?

“First, what the gods can give you are power skills. Also, unlimited allowance for information will be added. There might be other gods who want to give you even more depending on your actions, but those are what I can promise at the moment. Also...”

I feel like her mood is getting darker by the moment.

I was hugging her from the back, so I could not see her face, but that's what I felt.

“What the gods want from you is the information about the 60th Floor in Hell difficulty.”

It was unexpected. My mind became vacant for a moment.

“Can you explain that a little more?”

“...Actually, we had been hiding information about him.”

Him? We?

“It may sound like an idea that’s over the river now, but we were aiming for opportunities to monopolize him.”

“Him? Who are you talking about?”

Kiri Kiri didn’t respond to my question.

“However, recently there was a bizarre phenomenon at the Hell difficulty’s 60th Floor, and other gods became aware of him too.”

They were talking about mister.

I wanted to hear more of what Kiri Kiri was going to say, but I couldn’t help interrupting her to ask.

“Bizarre phenomenon? What are you talking about?”

This time, there was an answer.

“Recently, the link to the Hell difficulty’s 60th Floor was completely severed. I think it is because of his attempts at trying to escape the Tutorial. Although it seems he didn’t manage to escape.”

Link was severed?

I got messages from mister even just before entering the 17th Floor. I even sent him messages too back then.

Also, what do you mean by escape?

“Don’t send him a message yet. Listen to the rest of the explanations first and we would like you to make a decision first.”

“Before that, what do you mean the link was severed?! What do you mean by escape?! Explain those first.”

I felt like I just swallowed a lump of flames. My body was heating up.

I felt like I won't be able to hear anything else unless my curiosities were satisfied first.

“...He always had been trying to find a way out of the 60th Floor. He actually tried various ideas. This time, his attempt to leave the 60th Floor seem to have affected the system.”

System?

“To escape the 60th Floor, no... To escape the Tutorial, he turned the 60th Floor into his private territory.”

Hearing more explanations only added to my chaos.

What are you talking about?

What's happening?

“Right now... in theory...”

Kiri Kiri took a moment to calm her breath and said,

“In this Tutorial, the Hell difficulty's 60th Floor no longer exists.”

Chapter 112

The Tournament (7)

[Round 17, Day 25, 15:40]

[Welcome to the 18th Floor's waiting room.]

As soon as I entered the waiting room, I put away the armor inside the inventory and lie down on the bed.

The timing was not good for entering the 19th Floor anyway. Also, I didn't feel like training.

I just wanted to lay down and rest.

I didn't think I would feel this relaxed and at ease.

Anyway, I feel great.

Let's rest today like this and be lazy for a day, just for today.

I pulled up the blanket and thought about Lee Hyung-jin.

There was plenty of time left until he would reach the 17th Floor.

There was no reason for him to not able to beat the 17th Floor if he made preparations as planned.

No matter how big of difference in our abilities is, doesn't that mean he just need to work twice or three times harder?

Also, if I send him items I will get in higher floors too, he should be able to get past the floor.

I already thought about all these when I was at Kiri Kiri's field, but I organized them in my head once again.

It's all right.

It's possible.

Lee Hyung-jin will end up having tougher days ahead of him, but well, what else could we do?

He entered the Hell Difficulty, so he should just accept it as his fate.

I brought out a chocolate bar from the inventory and tried to console myself.

I wonder why, but for some reason, I suddenly really want to eat sweet stuff.

I usually don't really care for sweets.

I only ate some when I ate cake with Kiri Kiri...

Um...

It could be that I just want to eat some sweets.

Let's just eat some chocolate and empty my head.

* * *

When I woke up, it was the next day morning.

I thought I went to sleep around the dinner time last night...

I think this is the first time for me to sleep so soundly in the waiting room.

Yesterday, I ended up eating five chocolate bars before going to sleep.

It was the perfect behavior to turn into a pig.

However, it was no big problem.

It was not like my body was going to get fat from doing that.

The problem was...

Everything is such a bother. I mean everything.

Also, I keep on wanting to eat sweets.

I purchased a candy stick and put it in my mouth.

It tastes good.

Only if there was a gentle breeze...

How come this god damn waiting room is always inside a building?

I wish I could sleep while feeling the breeze while lying on green grass.

If there was a warm sunlight for me to bathe on, that would be placing flowers on a table made of gold.

I should have napped at Kiri Kiri's field.

That's too bad. So, I decided to take nap at the waiting room's bed.

* * *

I got up, and it was the next day.

Lately, why is it always the next morning when I close my eyes?

I thought it was strange, but I didn't think too much of it.

Instead, I ate soft ice-cream as I watched the community.

I spent the time like that for a long while, and eventually, even reading the articles on the community became a bother.

Like that, I went to sleep again.

* * *

I got up, and it was the next day again.

Now, I could not help but to think it was weird.

Even though I had become relaxed a little, it was odd for me to waste my time away so much like this.

I wondered if I ever spent days away doing nothing like this inside the Tutorial.

Is it a mental illness?

If it is an illness due to stress, I think that is possible.

I checked the symptoms.

Everything was such a bother. I want to sleep, and I want to be outside.

Also, I want to eat sweets.

In middle of all these, fortunately, my mind was still sharp.

Even if it is a mental illness, I literally feel like I'll go insane from the symptoms.

When did these start?

I was able to figure out the answer as soon as I thought about it.

It started from Kiri Kiri's field.

When I was not able to organize my thoughts and was in chaos, suddenly, all of my thoughts were organized perfectly.

After that, I sent a message to Lee Hyung-jin and explained the situation.

Next, I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri and came straight to the waiting room.

I didn't even think about getting more information from Kiri Kiri.

After entering the waiting room, I decided to organize my thoughts some more and rest.

Right after that, I felt that everything was such a bother.

Before this, I don't think I was feeling like that in particular.

I suddenly started to feel the desire to eat sweets.

It started right after I saw Kiri Kiri making scribbles on the ground.

My mind, which was in a disarray, became clean in an instant so that it would be easier for me to organize my thoughts.

After that, when my thoughts ended, these symptoms started to show up together.

Is it a form of magic?

If this is done by Kiri Kiri, then she was probably not intending any ill effects on me.

This is Kiri Kiri after all.

She probably did it, thinking it would help me.

I thought about main symptoms.

First, my head was calm. I could organize my thoughts with ease.

After that, it became such a bother for me to think.

Also, I developed a desire to sleep.

It does not make sense.

However, when I thought this was Kiri Kiri's doing, one thing crossed my mind.

Kiri Kiri had warned me about my stress several times in the past.

She said I need to rest by emptying my mind.

Of course, I did not listen to her.

Could it be that she forced me to rest with this method?

Also, she watched me getting stressed out, so I thought it was very likely that Kiri Kiri did so on purpose.

First, clear my mind and have me organize my thoughts once, and make me kick the idea of thinking about anything anymore and just rest.

That's plausible.

In middle of all these, there are also the desire for sweets and sun bathing. Thinking about them...

It is very Kiri Kiri like magic.

Of course, this is just my conjecture.

I should check again when I clear 18th Floor and meet Kiri Kiri.

What I should organize is that Kiri Kiri used a direct method on me, it is not to restrict me but to provide me with a form of help, and the fact that I cannot think of anything that was given as the payment for this help.

As for the last two things, in addition to asking Kiri Kiri, I think I should inform the Order of Vigilance.

Like that, I organized my thoughts and opened the message window.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Do you have time?]

The reply didn't come right away.

Looks like I'll have to wait for a bit.

Maybe because I had been sleeping while not caring about anything for a few days straight, inside of my head was surprisingly peaceful.

I felt very refreshed as well.

I purchased a bag of marshmallow from the store and opened it, and the reply arrived.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor:...]

What is this?

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: What's up?]

Kim Min-hyuk kept silent without any reply for a moment.

I was able to get a response by the time I ate the third marshmallow.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Hey, why didn't you respond for so long? Why, why! Why in this critical timing... Why did you go silent all of the sudden!]

Ah...

It looks like he must have contacted me while I was asleep.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: I'm sorry. I was sleeping.]

For a long while, Kim Min-hyuk's hysteric messages continued.

He complained that he had way too much work that he was sick of them.

He complained how could I be taking naps in middle of all these and make him worry.

As I listened, I wondered if he was not trying to express his frustration but just wanted to complain to someone.

It's probably difficult for this rascal to complain about anything to anyone because of his position.

Thinking like that, I read his message and ate marshmallow.

It's delicious.

Would it taste even better if I roasted it on fire?

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Are you ready for the tournament?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: It's not like I need to prepare anything. I just need to wait for it.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor:... Damn it. I envy you.]

I told him the new information I obtained from the manager.

Kim Min-hyuk only said that he will record what I told him.

It seemed it was difficult for him to think about this side because he was so busy.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Anyway, from now on, don't go radio silent on me. Be on standby. Synchronise your sleep schedule as well. If anything happens, we will let you know.]

I sent a message to Kim Min-hyuk saying I understood. I closed the message window after that.

It seemed he was busy with preparing for the tournament.

I was embarrassed about myself for having spent the days doing absolutely nothing.

I should do something too.

The sense of bothersomeness that surrounded my entire body had subsided to some extent now.

I still craved sweets, but it was not a problem for starting training.

First, I should start with magic.

To pick two most important information from what I obtained in the 16th Floor, they are the Aura Blade and magic.

Fortunately, I was able to understand and execute the Aura Blade. However, it was different with magic.

Let alone understand it, I couldn't even get a feel for it.

The clues for taking a step forward was understanding the elemental type for using the wind arrow magic.

Also, as for the elemental type, I need to feel the sense of existence of the wind summon spirit to tell apart the feeling.

These two were the clues.

The first task was sensing the existence of the wind spirit who must be around me.

According to the wind spirit's blessing skill's description, the wind spirit was always around me. However, I was not able to feel the spirit.

First, I should figure out at least if cannot feel the spirit because I obtained the blessing when my senses were still lacking or if I'm just not able to feel the spirit.

Thinking that, I sat on the bed in meditation pose and focused my mind.

I increased my focus.

I brought back the feeling that I had when I was at the 13th Floor's Master Monk's room.

I isolated my mind inside the slowing time.

My senses were slowing down, and soon, it felt like I could not feel anything. My thought had accelerated that much.

Slowly, I tried hard to find my senses that could not be felt anymore.

Inside the time that was flowing slowly, I found a sense, and I found the other sense.

As I identified each sense that I found, I started to observe myself.

* * *

[Round 17, Day 29, 23:55]

I had wasted a few days being lazy. However, I was able to spend the remaining days productively.

First, I was now able to somewhat sense the wind spirit.

It was difficult to notice the spirit at all because the spirit was with me through whole day everyday, but I could feel the presence becoming

stronger when I received the blessing and acceleration effect from the wind spirit's blessing skill.

I focused on that presence and tried hard to be able to feel it at all times.

However, I was not confident about if I could call this presence as the elemental type.

Moreover, even if it is the elemental type...

What could I do with it if I did feel the elemental type?

It is not like I could do anything with it.

It was not like I could utilize it for something either.

I think I should be satisfied with this for the magic training and stop for now.

First, I should acquire the rune related magic textbook that's said to be obtainable after reaching the 30th Floor. After that, when I can understand the magic knowledge obtained from the doppelganger, I think I'll be able to resume magic training only after that.

Since then, until the round 17 ended, I spent the days practicing the utilization of the Aura Blade.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Are you all ready?]

Like I said before, I don't have anything to prepare.

It seems that he was asking out of habit.

I bet he is spreading the same questions to everyone beside me.

[The 18th Round is starting.]

[Round 18, Day 0, 00:00]

[The Tournament is commencing.]

[Please enter.]

[time let until the mandatory summon: 4 minutes 59 seconds.]

During the last tournament, I spent the time away and entered late in leisurely manner. However, it was different this time.

As soon as the message came, I activated the portal below me.

From the waiting room, I was transported to the place of the tournament. The place had bright sunshine. As soon as I got there, there were new messages.

[Please decide about your participation until the tournament starts. You can decide at the entrance of the arena.]

[Tournament Day 1, 00:00]

[You acquired the Tournament Rule Book (2). Please check the inventory.]

[You acquired the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel Lv. 1. Please check your status window.]

I already heard from the Order of Vigilance that the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel was issued for free to everyone for the second tournament which was going to be held with servers from other countries.

Instead of reading the message, I moved first.

The strike division members of the Order entered the place as soon as the tournament started. They gathered up in their divisions and surrounded the main plaza, the place of summoning, in a large formation.

The scene setting for the second tournament was the 60th Floor's

residential area.

The ground was made entirely of marble blocks. The main plaza had a highly decorative fountain.

The water fountain was made of an ivory color marble stone.

The buildings around here appeared to be made of stones instead of wood.

There were high rise buildings here and there. There were street lights on the streets as well. It seemed the place was made based on quite a developed world.

The buildings and the street were clean and sparkly. They looked pretty.

Also, there was bright sunlight which was raining down on us. It was the best.

The place could not be compared to the waiting room which made me feel confined.

I felt the urge to go on a stroll on the street.

Ah...

Why does the sunlight feel so good?

The gentle breeze also feels so great.

Could it be that the magic that Kiri Kiri placed on me still has some effects left?

I closed my eyes and enjoyed the happy feeling. When I opened my eyes, my eyes met with one of members of the Order.

He looked like he was panicking.

I cleared my throat by doing a fake cough and hardened the look on my face.

After a moment, the people really started to arrive at the tournament.

They are not from Korean server.

Other than the Order's strike division members, everyone else planned to arrive when there was only 30 seconds left until the mandatory summon.

The people who were arriving now were from the servers in foreign countries.

There were two foreign servers who were going to participate in the tournament with us.

It was fortunate that there were not many foreign servers.

If there were over ten foreign servers participating in the tournament, the Order of Vigilance would have had to give up on their plan or make serious adjustments.

The people from foreign servers were generally divided in Asian and Western worlds.

They were talking, but they all sounded Korean to me, so it was hard for me to tell which countries they came from.

They looked at the message windows, checked the status window or inventory. They looked around to find others they knew.

While doing those, some found us, who were surrounding the main plaza.

Some started to voice their questions about us, and...

The members of Order of Vigilance all drew their weapons.

Chapter 113

The Tournament (8)

The members of the Order of Vigilance surrounding the plaza drew their weapons, to which the people responded immediately.

Others who didn't initially notice the Order also drew their weapons and joined others around them who they knew.

Even those who just got summoned here also quickly evaluated the atmosphere and watched the situation.

It had been 18 rounds. I think there had been enough rounds to reveal the situation in their servers.

There were old people with white hairs. There were young children who didn't even appear to have reached the 7th grade. However, they were all wielding weapons and wary of the surrounding.

The Tutorial system did not care about age or gender.

During the early days of Tutorial, we saw the old or ill people in the system, which should be protected.

However, as the time went by a little, when strategy for even those people to get past the early stages safely, the situation had changed. Of course, the Hell difficulty was an exception.

People started to think that even old people can have power rivaling that of young people once they develop far enough.

Their aged body and slowed cognitive ability were covered by the system's adjustments and healing effects.

As for the children and teenagers who had not fully grown up, they

also received adjustments for their smaller frames.

In Tutorial, a person's body frame and weight didn't have a significant impact on their raw muscular strength, so having a smaller frame was actually an advantage.

Having a smaller body meant it was that much harder for opponents to land a hit. Also, being shorter meant having lower center of mass. This greatly affected the outcomes of battles.

Soon, the gender also became meaningless.

Some people even claimed that women who were either casting-based mages or healers were at a greater advantage than the rest of the challengers.

Still, most of the Order's strike division were male.

Most of them were big and muscular men in 20 to 30s.

Although people could overcome their physical limitations through growth in Tutorial, still, the fact that they were ahead of the pack since the beginning could not be ignored.

It was only obvious that young men with relatively stronger bodies could adapt and develop faster than the rest.

Based on above, Kim Min-hyuk had a theory.

Unlike the young men's age group, old and ill require help until they can overcome their physical penalties.

Minimal amounts of food, information, equipment, potions and etc...

Also, the difference between the two groups starts to narrow only after such help is provided.

So, Kim Min-hyuk theorized that we could get a feel for the situations in other countries' servers by estimating this difference between the

two groups and observing its state in each server.

Honestly, I didn't think it would work, but now that I am seeing the people from other servers for comparison with our own, I could not say that anymore.

Besides the Korean server, there were two more from other countries.

I still didn't know where they were from. One group was from an Asian country. The other one was from a Western country.

The Asian group drew their weapons and stayed alert at the surroundings. Everyone, regardless of gender or age, were ready to battle.

There were slight differences in the quality of equipment among the people, but that was about it.

However, only a few people of the Western country's group drew their weapons.

Even at a first glance, only the men with bulging muscles, dirty looks and tattoos, the kind that looked like street thugs were the ones with weapons.

Other than those people, woman, elderly or those who were weak didn't draw their weapons.

How could people in this server have developed so unevenly?

I could not even say that their developments were held back. It was more like these other people looked almost as if they were still just civilians with no experience in the Tutorial.

I'll have to find out about the exact cause, but it was hard to see this observation as something positive.

In the Western country's group, there definitely was a disparity among the people.

Also, it was so easy to tell them apart.

I could tell them from the weapons, armors, attitude, expressions on the faces and volume and tone of the voices.

I saw a fix like this before in Korean server.

The Order of Vigilance surrounded the main plaza so people won't scatter to outside of the place, but it was also done so we could deliver our message to them in one place.

We figured that people won't rush into battle without understanding the situation if everyone drew their weapons in a standoff like this. We figured that people would merge together among their groups and stay alert.

The first goal was to elect representatives from each group and start the conversation with them.

Of course, the whole arrangement was excessively rude as the mean for a conversation. However, nobody in the Order's strategic command opposed it.

We had less than 5 minutes until the rest of the people from the Tutorial were going to be summoned here by force.

We didn't want to risk having them being summoned suddenly and defenselessly into a chaotic battlefield. So, the Order decided that we should have the situation wrapped up before they arrive.

As we anticipated, the people from two foreign servers gathered up amongst themselves. We could identify the representatives among them as well.

Even if the particular individual didn't step forward, just from how people were glancing around, I could tell who had speaking authority and power.

After that, through conversations, we just need to explain ourselves and get to the next step based on their responses, but...

The Westerners were the problem.

The group was clearly divided in two. The differences in strength and class were also too obvious.

Moreover, even though people grouped together based on the servers, the Westerners who were not wielding any weapons didn't even think about going near those thugs-like bastards.

The situation didn't appear to be at the level of having something like the Representative Federation that once existed in Korean server. It looked like a few thugs flexing their muscles around. However, I was certain that some of the Order's members must be seriously agitated to see this.

Right now, even Park Jung-ah was...

Um...

I turned to look at her. With a hardened face, she was watching the Westerners.

Because Park Jung-ah usually had emotionless look on her face, others didn't notice, but this was different from her usual look.

Her right hand's index finger was flickering. It looked like she was pulling the trigger to the handgun that she was not holding at the moment. It made me anxious.

Although it appears she got better lately, I could say that Park Jung-ah was the most extreme and dangerous person in this place.

I'm worried. This lass isn't just a little insane either.

Damn it.

Trouble is brewing from the most unexpected place.

I'm being painfully reminded about Kim Min-hyuk not joining us for

the crowd control.

Even at this very moment, time is flowing. We now have less time until the mandatory summon.

In a situation like this where neither Park Jung-ah or Kim Min-hyuk can decide, I need to make the move.

I walked as I called Park Jong-shik.

“Big Bro, please handle the people over there. We will talk to the people over here first and join you afterwards. I think the people over here seem to be relatively stable.”

I led Park Jung-ah toward the people as I hollered at Park Jong-shik.

“Cool your head. Let’s talk to those guys first.”

Park Jung-ah pointed at the Westerners with her eyes. However, I ignored her gaze.

“Later.”

For now, Park Jung-ah agreed with my response.

It was a wise choice of word.

I saw that Park Jong-shik took a part of the strike division members and was head to the Westerners. Meanwhile, with Park Jung-ah, I went to the Asian group. I checked that a few of the strike division members followed us and said to Park Jung-ah,

“Should I talk?”

“It’s all right. I will.”

I turned to check if she was really up for it.

It seemed Park Jung-ah already found composure. She looked calm.

I was glad that it didn't end up with me carrying out the conversation.

The people from Asian country were gathered at a side of the main plaza.

To be precise, they appear to be from Northeast Asia.

If I am to make a more specific guess, I think they are from Japan.

They had distinct characteristics for me to make that guess.

There were many people carrying a traditional Japanese sword.

[PR: I think he's referring to a katana. The Japanese have different types of swords, so I'm not sure what he's referring to. But if you remember the girl at the very beginning of the Tutorial who chose the katana, I think that's what most people here are carrying.]

Thinking about how useless it is to have a swordsman with just a longsword in a party battle, the ratio of people with that particular weapon was absurdly high.

I also checked out their other characteristics.

They are all gathered in one place, but they were not completely united.

I got a strong feeling that they were divided into smaller groups within.

It didn't look like they had a large organization that represented the server. It looked like they were gathered up in smaller groups from the same waiting rooms or party.

Still, it didn't look like they were weary of each other.

There were a few people who seemed to be solo players, but even such people all joined each other to form groups.

I think this is how students during overnight trips who got partnered up with friends look like.

Of course, this is just a guess, but this is how it feels like.

Instead of hostility, there were more people who looked anxious.

Still, their overall armaments are not bad.

There was someone who appeared to be the center of the people.

The man appeared to be in 30 to 40s.

One thing unique about the man was the long beard. Its length reached below his neck.

I don't get it.

He didn't look like the most influential leader of the group. He looked more like a popular high ranker.

Nobody was stopping him from stepping forward and standing in front of everybody else. However, he didn't have a group formed around him either.

Could it be that he was considered as the most powerful one in the server and ended up stepping forward because of it?

Maybe he is the emotional support and leader for the people of his server.

I should observe them more.

I don't know very well about their server, but they probably do have various choices in their swords' length and type. Despite this, the people here all had very similarly-shaped katana.

They were all similar to the one that man was holding. Even the sheath and armor were often similar.

Ah, that must be it.

Is he like the trend setter?

Even in the Korean server, for a brief time, a particular arrangement of armor or weapon became trendy or ridiculously popular.

The high rankers on higher floors were the ones who led such trends.

To say that such Korean rankers were famous people in SNS, I think that bearded old man is popular enough to be at the level of an idol?

There is nothing special about his appearance.

He just has a slightly sharp-looking face.

In that case, he must have leadership qualities in his abilities or personality.

Maybe he is popular because he is simply a funny guy in the community.

He is a unique one. I should learn more later.

“Excuse me, but could you please tell us your nationality?”

It was Park Jung-ah’s question that started the conversation.

“If you think you should be excused, don’t you think you should offer an apology first?”

The bearded old man retorted at Park Jung-ah.

As I thought, he didn’t appear to be scared.

The translation by the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel is quite clean.

It was only at level one, so I was concerned that it might have been lacking in many ways.

For example, I thought the translation might have come like it was put into a translation machine.

However, the bearded old man's words were translated to perfect Korean.

Park Jung-ah ignored the man's retort.

"I'll get straight to the business."

Her attitude said she didn't give a damn about their nationality to begin with.

I'm actually curious though.

"Huh..."

The man was finding her response to be ridiculous. However, as if it was perfectly normal, Park Jung-ah didn't respond to the man.

"For the six days, while the tournament is taking place, we forbid all criminal activities in this place. Also, during the tournament, use of excessive cruelty against another participant and interfering with the opponent from declaring surrender are both forbidden."

"If anyone violates those rules?"

"That person will be punished. By us."

The man closed his mouth and looked up the sky for a moment.

It was not a gesture that had any meaning. It seemed he just wanted to organize his thoughts.

I thought the man would object and question our authority to oversee the situation, assess the weight of the crime and execute the

punishment. I thought he would oppose the proposal.

Declaring to have the three authorities listed above was no different from declaring that we were going to stand above their heads.

We surrounded them as soon as they arrived and aimed our weapons against them. Only after that did we initiated the conversation. It must be difficult for anyone to acknowledge and accept proposal from such people.

However, instead of questioning these, the man asked something else.

“What’s the standard for judging the crime?”

“Based on common laws and ethics.”

The man stopped talking and started to stroke his beard.

For some reason, it was fun to watch him doing that.

“It is a good thing to forbid crime. I won’t object to that. I will cooperate. However, what if we discover a crime first? We have been dealing with crimes and punishments internally.”

What an optimistic old man he is.

We just met and tossed out a few words to express that we will punish anyone who commits crime. However, the man was responding to us as if it was a friendly negotiation.

We didn’t explain anything about the method of punishment or judging the crime. In such a situation, it would be only natural for anyone to be concerned that we might abuse our authority or have an ulterior motive.

Maybe this old man was also concerned about crime happening in the tournament where other servers join.

“If your side apprehend the criminal first and gives a suitable

punishment, then we won't punish the individual again."

"Even if the criminal is from your side? How about setting different jurisdictions over people? Won't that be better? If a foreign criminal is apprehended, for example, then you should hand over the individual to the original group."

"I refuse. Also, if you misjudge and attack an innocent individual, we could see that as an act of crime instead of justice."

"I can say the same to you. All right. Let's wrap it up here. However, if you make unreasonable demands to innocent people or try to frame someone, I won't let it pass. Do not forget that you yourselves are included in the rules you proposed."

"Do as you wish."

She said 'do as you wish.'

It didn't mean that she understood or will keep it in mind.

It seemed the old man didn't find any problem with her response. He just moved to the next subject.

Maybe he thought it was the limitation of the skill's translation ability and was not thinking too much of it.

"Let's postpone making detailed introductions of ourselves to each other. Let me say this to you once more. When everyone is summoned here by mandatory summon and everyone from all three servers are here, crime is forbidden. We should have chance to have a conversation after that. Well then, excuse me. I must go talk to the people on that side as well."

Park Jung-ah said that as she pointed at the direction of the Westerners.

In the direction, the Westerners and Park Jong-shik were... Um... What the hell are they doing?

They were arguing.

“89th Floor! 89th Floor! You said the bastard among you who got to the highest floor is only at the 71th Floor? We have someone at the 89th Floor!”

89th Floor.

He was talking about Lee Chan-young’s floor. He was at the highest floor in the Korean server.

“That’s just in the Easy difficulty! Isn’t that right? I am right, aren’t I? You are bragging about the Easy difficulty floor? We even have Hell difficulty challengers!”

My head is pulsating in pain.

Park Jong-shik and the bald head from the Western group were arguing as if they in kindergarten.

They looked like elementary school kids who were boasting stuff about what their family had, claiming to have a golden toad at home, someone’s father being very high up, great grandfather owning a mountain in the countryside... and etc.

[PR: Basically the golden toad is a bearer of good news in Asian culture (Chinese, Korean, etc.) usually related to wealth. Here’s a picture if you need some fortune in your life.]

Why in the world are they doing this?

“Hell difficulty... W... What floor?”

“6th Floor!”

In that instant, Park Jong-shik looked relieved. Also, he had the pompous look on his face as well.

Before the bald head man had the time to express his anger at Park

Jong-shik, he turned to look at me.

Other Hard difficulty members of the Order all turned to look at me.

Even the Westerners all followed their gazes and looked at me.

“Hooooooooooooooooojaaaaaaaaaaaaaeeeeeee!! Right now!!!! Which floor did you say you were attttt?”

In incredibly loud voice that echoed through the main plaza, Park Jong-shik asked about my floor. I felt embarrassed.

Chapter 114

The Tournament (9)

Of the westerners, the challenger of the Hell Difficulty's Six Floor was a very tall black man.

He looked sharp and quick. His arms and legs were a little too long. Those were his special characteristics.

He didn't have a weapon out either, so I could not figure out his class.

Compared to me, who reached the 18th Floor, being at the Six Floor may seem like not much, but he is still incredible given that he got to the Sixth Floor alive.

That incredible black man was glaring at Park Jong-shik with bloodshot eyes.

The argument was started by Park Jong-shik and his side, but I could see why he got infuriated. It was because he was the laughingstock of the argument.

It looks like the man is pointing at Park Jong-shik with an index finger and giving him a warning.

Of course, Park Jong-shik ignored the man.

"Hoooooooouuuujaaaaaaaaa! Sixth Floor! This runt says he is at the Sixth Floorrrrrr!"

Please... Stop that already, big bro Jong-shik...

Why are you bringing up my name?

At first, I was going to go to where Park Jong-shik was with Park

Jung-ah. However, I stopped walking and just stood there.

I could not work up the courage to go over there.

Big Bro Jong-shik who was playing around like a child. Why is it my role to be embarrassed with him?

I turned to look at Park Jung-ah. It seems like she was not interested in getting involved over there either.

“Here, a Hell Difficulty challenger at the Sixth Floor! Just one!”

The black man was talking quietly with his teeth clenched at first. Now, his voice was gradually getting louder.

It was not as loud as Park Jong-shik’s voice, which was echoing through the entire plaza.

I was going to intervene once the situation calmed down a little. However, it looked like the situation was only going to escalate if they were left to their devices.

I think I’ll have to get in there even if it is embarrassing, before even more humiliating situation comes.

“About that side... I’ll wrap it up and come back. Tell Kim Min-hyuk about the situation here and have him take over the command.”

There was no need for Park Jung-ah to go over there too and roll on the mud.

I should go there, organize and wrap it up.

“Yes, I will. Also, for captain Park Jong-shik... please say something to him.”

I definitely will.

I’ll let him have a piece of my mind.

I firmed my resolve and went to where Park Jong-shik was.

As I got closer, I could observe more of the scene there.

First of all, there was a clear divide amongst the westerners.

There were the people who looked like gangs, and there were the people who didn't look like gangs.

Also, the people who were not gang members looked much brighter for some reason.

Second, the situation was a little different from what I expected.

I thought Park Jong-shik and the strike division members of the Hard difficulty were on a standoff against the westerners.

I thought it was odd that Park Jong-shik would engage in a childish argument with them and measure the size of their egos.

However, now that I went over there, I saw Park Jong-shik and the members of the strike division one-sidedly suppressing the other side.

They weren't having arguments.

It doesn't look like there were even physical struggles.

There was a substantial difference in their strength.

The strike division members next to Park Jong-shik were composed of almost all of the challengers from the Hard difficulty.

Except the few that were sitting around in First and Second Floors, the rest were strong enough to be placed in the strike division just based on the fact that they survived.

Such people were organized into groups of three or ten and arranged in a formation to surround the westerners.

Behind them were other members of the strike division from other difficulties who were holding their ground.

Also, they all came here because they thought there could be a battle here.

On top of this, the westerners were not completely unified as one.

Because the situation was not in their favor, most of westerners were watching, maintaining a distance.

Also, the look on people's faces were all different.

I don't think all that many would step up if a battle broke out.

Given the situation, it seems Park Jong-shik decided to surround them and yell at them instead of trying to negotiate with them.

The thug-like ones were in power here. So, I think this might be actually more effective.

While Park Jong-shik was yelling at and suppressing the thugs, the bald white man who appeared to be their leader started to talk about their challengers of his server to show off their power. I think that must be how the argument started.

After that, Park Jong-shik struck back with his belittling attitude.

I understand the situation now.

However, is there a reason to look down on them so much?

“Big Bro.”

“Ohhhh! Our Ho-jae is here! Good, Ho-jae. Tell us what floor... Kek.”

With his arm around my shoulder, Park Jong-shik started to yap away loudly so much that it made my ear hurt. I jabbed him in his waist with my elbow so nobody would notice.

“Big Bro. Please. This is embarrassing. What are you doing? If anyone else saw this, they will think you are the thug here.”

Park Jong-shik held his waist where I jabbed him. I told him quietly at his ear, and he turned around along with me, his arm still around my shoulder.

“Big Bro, did you deliver them all of the message?”

“Of course.”

He was cringing. It seemed his side was hurting. He explained in whispers.

“I explained it all, and they even said that they understood. They were not being cooperative. So, we drew our weapons and threatened them to get with the program.”

It looks like he really threatened them.

“In that case, you did everything you were here to do. Why were you having such childish arguments?”

“I thought it would be good to squash their pride a little.”

Um...

Having heard that it was necessary, I momentarily paused.

Park Jong-shik was an honest man.

He was not the kind to cause a problem and then justify it afterwards. He would have apologized instead if he caused a problem without a proper justification.

“Please explain.”

The westerners said they were from Australia.

Park Jong-shik explained to me what his impressions were when he met the people who came up as the Australian's representatives.

“From how I saw them, it seems they are just street thugs. They threaten the people around because they are just a little stronger and think they are great by watching others shrivel in fear. On top of this, they are trapped inside a world where there are no laws or police, so I bet they had been committing evil acts like there was no tomorrow.”

I agree with that opinion.

“When it comes to facing such bastards, you need to completely kill their spirit and step firmly on them. We need to plummet their status to the ground all the way. Only then will the other people be able to start seeing these thugs as something pathetic and obstacles that they could overcome. Only then, the other people will be able to think about resisting them.”

You really were treating them as if they were street thugs...

I think my head is throbbing with headaches.

Like many challengers in Korean Tutorial server, these people also had real powers, not ordinary powers, but the kind that could be easily justified supernatural.

It was not like I could think of anything to say back to Park Jong-shik.

Park Jong-shik also said that the people on the back started to brighten up as he pressed down on the thugs and expressed their satisfactions quietly.

Because he noticed it, Park Jong-shik said he worked more diligently in crushing the thugs.

“Our guys thought it was fun to watch too.”

I understood how Park Jong-shik was feeling.

I could even accept that it was not wrong.

Still.

“Why did you have to drag me into this argument so deeply? You embarrassed the hell out of me.”

Park Jong-shik laughed it off and apologized. I gave him a dirty look and turned around.

As he said, it looked like the bald head and the other thugs were completely suppressed.

For some reason, I was disappointed.

It would be awkward to scold them and lecture them later if they are already like this.

I think they are more anxious now instead of when Park Jong-shik was still excited and raising his voice.

There was one person who was still burning with animosity toward us. The man was glaring at us.

He was the black man who was at the Sixth Floor of the Hell difficulty.

He was seething with anger, huffing and puffing through the nose. He looked like a volcano that was about to erupt.

Now that I think about it, this guy is the biggest victim of the circumstances here.

I felt a little sorry for the man. Meanwhile, I was glad to see another challenger from the Hell Difficulty, so I decided to greet the man at least.

“From the Sixth Floor of the Hell Difficulty? Are you...”

Now that I think about it, the Korean pronunciation for the “Are you” sounds similar to the N-word that should not be said.

Well, it probably won't matter. It will translate.

...Will it?

The man's face was completely crumpled. It was surprising.

Why does he look way more infuriated now?

Ah...

Because I was thinking just now, I didn't continue my words after saying 'Are you.' Hence, it was not translated.

[TL: This situation is too forced by the author. There is no way the translator would not have translated the words. The pronunciation is similar (Nae-ga), but not precisely matching enough to cause such a problem in the translator which is a magical skill.]

"Die, you son of a bitch!"

The man charged at me.

The translation is pretty good.

The man threw a fist at me. I caught it, twisted it around his back and struck him in his waist.

The black man yelped and instantly quieted down.

I released his wrist that I was holding. He fell to the floor and started to shake.

Oh my...

I had been practicing Aura Blade a lot lately. Perhaps because of that, I instinctively wrapped my fist with aura and struck him with it.

Of all places, I struck him right on the waist... Ah... I think his internals might have been busted.

“Are you all right?”

He did not look all right.

“Big Bro. Please give a potion to this friend here. It’s my fault, so we should give him a potion at least.”

Park Jong-shik nodded in agreement. I moved my gaze away and looked at the bald man.

“Your name?”

“...David.”

The man looked very anxious.

The black man that he was counting on was knocked out in one strike. It seemed David was pretty shocked.

“You heard that all crimes are forbidden for the next six days while the tournament takes place, right? You also heard about the cautionary rules during the tournament matches as well, right?”

“I’ve heard.”

Why is this rascal’s reply so short?

He had been quietly responding, but something about the man’s attitude was not to my liking.

“Well then, answer me again. Tell me that you guys won’t perpetrate crime, and you guys will actively cooperate with preventing crime and prosecuting criminals.”

These guys are not like the bearded man I met earlier. Instead of stopping crimes, I think these bastards are more likely to actively lead committing crimes.

I think that will do to straighten them out.

David... the bald head glanced at the man next to him before he answered.

The man had long curly hair although he was a man. It was unique.

The curly haired man lightly nodded, and David also said they understood.

Oh, look at this.

There was a leader who turned out to be someone else in all this?

I think I'll have to remember that guy with full-blown curly hair.

* * *

All Tutorial challengers from Korea, Japan and Australia were gathered at the main plaza.

With all of them there, Park Jung-ah informed them that all criminal acts were forbidden for the next six days. She also explained the cautionary rules during the free time, tournament matches and spectating.

As for me, I was chatting away with Kim Min-hyuk, standing next to the platform where Park Jung-ah was standing.

"I can understand why Japan is included since it is a neighboring country, but why Australia? What's the connection?"

Of course, we didn't know.

Instead of thinking deeply about it, I brought out a candy stick from the inventory.

"I thought you usually ate meat jerkies for snacks? Not just snacks, I thought you literally only ate meat jerkies and water?"

"You have any idea how long ago that was? Nowadays, I've been

eating all sorts of things. Ah, I'm not eating this candy is not because I want to eat it."

"Then why?"

"I told you that I think the manager might have put a spell on me, right? It's that."

"Is there a magic that makes you want to eat candy?"

"Apparently so."

It was around that time. Someone in the plaza started to mouth off.

"What bullshit. They are just showing off their dicks..."

There were bastards like these once in a while.

I pinpointed my Overwhelm skill at the individual and shut him up.

Each country showed clearly different responses to Park Jung-ah's speech and guidelines.

The people from Korean server seemed to be just listening.

It was not like it had been only a few days where the Order of Vigilance stepped in and acted so overprotectively like this.

Some from Korean server found it amusing that the Order was going to such lengths even with foreigners mixed in the tournament.

As for the people from the Japanese server, they usually possessed one of the two reactions.

Unlike the initial violent atmosphere at the plaza, they were relieved to hear the speech which expressed that crimes are forbidden and that we were requesting cooperation to bring about a safe atmosphere through the tournament. Some were naïve like that.

There were others who became anxious instead, after seeing the Order.

The problematic responses were mostly from the Australian server's people.

It seemed the thugs held the most power to tried to voice their opinions.

So, they continued to attempt to speak against the contents of the speech, and I had to continue to use the Overwhelm skill in order to allow Park Jung-ah to speak uninterrupted.

Anyway, it looks like they don't have a unified organization that oversees the entire server like we do.

It looks like the people from Japanese server are all divided into groups the size of small parties.

Still, they had the bearded man who was stepping up, and he seemed to have some support by the people, but it was not like he was representing the entire server. It was more like the parties or groups each elected a representative and came to discuss with the bearded man.

It seems like they never experienced the day of the great harmony properly either.

I should learn more about this later.

As for the Australian server, they have quite a number of large groups.

The problem was that their main groups seemed to be of the shady kinds.

It seemed the group where the bald head and the black man belonged to was the largest group there.

It was not like they had the most number of people, but they had the highest levels.

“Hey, about the people from Japan. Why are so many of them carrying Japanese swords? Isn’t that supposed to be difficult for beginners to handle?”

“It is difficult to handle.”

They are ridiculously hard.

When I was picking my starting weapon, I tried holding the Japanese sword once and crossed it out from my list of potential weapons.

After that, I found a shorter weapon that seemed easier to handle.

On top of this, the Japanese swords that the people wielded were quite long.

They were not the kind that beginners could wield and swing.

Let’s assume someone who just entered the Hard Difficulty only had one of these swords.

I’m sure that would double that person’s chance of dying on the first stage.

“By the way, did they tell you why so many of them have those swords?”

“I think it is not that they picked those swords as the starting weapon. Perhaps there are some who did. I think most people purchased the swords as a fashion statement. When actual combat starts, they might put away the sword and bring out the actual weapons they really use.”

“Fashion statement? I am not sure? I don’t think that could be? You know how expensive it is to purchase a weapon.”

“Look at them. People who are wielding Japanese swords all have them on their waist instead of placing them inside the inventory. I am saying that might be a trend right now.”

We chattered about this unusual topic and spent the time. Before long, Park Jung-ah's speech was nearing its end.

“...You must not unilaterally decide the bounds of rules. I'll say this once again before finishing this. All criminal activities during the six days through the tournament are forbidden. As long as this rule is earnestly followed by everyone, there won't be any problems.”

Although it is a rule that even we might have a hard time following, that is.

Chapter 115

The Tournament (10)

[You have passed the first preliminary match of the individual round.]

[Would you like to move to the spectator seat?]

Like the last time, the first preliminary match was defeating seven of mountain goblins from Hell Difficulty.

I had no trouble clearing it. I went to sit at the spectator seats.

It was not like I had anything to do before the second preliminary match started.

I sat at the seat and watched the other participants mingling with the goblins, but Park Jong-shik came to me.

“Hey. Have you finished the first preliminary match?”

“Of course. What about you, Big Bro?”

“I finished it.”

Before Kim Min-hyuk left, he said one of us, myself and Park Jong-shik that is, should not participate in the individual tournament and be on watch duty.

Also, as if it was the obvious thing to do, both of us did not listen.

Kim Min-hyuk probably anticipated as much too.

He probably said it just for the sake of it.

Besides me and Park Jong-shik, there are other members of the Order who are posted all over the stadium as watchdogs.

No matter what happens, I just need to finish my match and come and resolve the problem.

“I hope everything will go along smoothly without problems.”

“I am not sure.”

Park Jong-shik muttered while sitting next to me.

I don't think it won't go so smoothly without problems.

We may have set the rules for the people to follow, but there are plenty of bastards who would desire to perpetrate evil while staying around the borderline of the limits.

Such bastards had been trapped in the Tutorial stages and waiting rooms all this time, and now, they got to be in a place with many people. I don't think they would stay quiet.

I'm certain someone will cause problems.

The key point would be how many of such incidents would happen.

Also, to reduce the number of incidents, the critical factor would be how we handle the very first incident.

“Ho-jae. Are you not going to participate in the group matches?”

“That's right. While I'll be participating in the individual and faction matches, I decided not to enter the group matches.”

“Ku... I wish I could enter the faction matches.”

“Big Bro, you get to enter the individual and group matches.”

The faction matches were a new type of match that was added for the

second tournament.

The second tournament is held over total of six days.

The individual matches were held for the first and second days. The group matches were held during third and fourth days.

As the finale, the faction matches were held during the fifth day. The sixth day consisted of free activity time.

Individual matches literally involved each individual participating in the matches alone against another participant. The group matches involved parties of 13 or fewer people. The faction matches were literally allowing entire members of factions to participate together.

Here, the factions meant the servers.

I brought out the rule book and checked the rules about faction matches.

[Tournament: Rule book (2)]

[Factions Matches]

- There is no limit on the number of participants.
- Anyone from the participating factions can enter.
- Challengers from a faction can be recruited into a different faction.
- The faction with fewest number of people will win the first match by default and move to the final match directly.

These are incredible rules.

These mean that it does not matter if there are one hundred or two hundred members in a faction.

The title of the matches was becoming of its directions.

On top of that, there is even a rule there which states that we could even recruit someone from another faction.

Before the tournament, the Order of Vigilance already had obtained information about the faction matches and analyzed it.

First, with faction matches, it becomes possible to form a group that includes an entire server.

It is meaningful in the way that it joins an entire server's challengers into one and encourages them to unite their opinions.

Also, recruiting other challengers from other factions is possible. This way, the challengers from a mainstream faction will have the new opportunity of deciding whether to join another faction. Also, by forming a team with another faction, it allows an opportunity for cross-server interactions.

I thought the rules for faction matches were quite something.

"Still, if possible, I would like to win rewards from all three kinds of matches. During the last tournament, I didn't get to win any in the end."

That's true.

They took all of the rewards from the last tournament.

"Still, there is the reward from winning the overall tournament as a faction. Please be satisfied with that and the group matches' winning reward."

"Huh? That's not right, no? I intend to win the individual matches as well?"

"Yes, yes. I'm sure you will. If I suddenly develop diarrhea and forfeit the individual matches that is."

Park Jong-shik was burning with a fighting spirit, saying he will pay me back for the last tournament.

It seemed he obtained a new super move.

Or perhaps he refined an old technique.

The overall tournament win was given to the server that produced the most number of winners throughout the matches. There were rewards given to the entire server for being the winning server.

According to what we found from managers, the reward was a special medicine that allowed the challenger to raise the stat of a desired attribute by five points, which was incredible.

Except at the very beginning, the only way for challengers to raise their stats was leveling up. Considering that it becomes progressively harder to level up as one's level increases, it was a great reward.

As an additional note, for the duration of the tournament, the challengers who join other servers for the faction matches are considered as a part of the other servers that they joined.

Looking at the overall tournament win's rules remind me of the sports day tournaments during elementary school.

There were rewards for each kind of matches. Also, there was overall reward for the team that won the entire tournament.

Well, back in the elementary school days, all we got for a reward were applause and the sense of accomplishment of winning.

"I think everyone is enjoying this."

"It seems so."

The first preliminary match was just defeating the seven goblins, but many challengers were passionately and giving it their all in the matches.

There were rewards for points if the challengers won the second preliminary match or every time they won a match during the main matches. So, even if they were not aiming for winning the overall individual matches, many people participated in the individual match.

However, because the goblins were from the Hell Difficulty, there weren't many people who could win easily.

Even rankers at high floors, depending on their specialization, were having difficulty winning by themselves.

Also, there was a man who was doing the quite the opposite and staying in the arena even though he could win.

It was Lee Hyung-jin.

He didn't attack the goblins at all. Instead, he only focused on evading.

He was almost completely surrounded by the seven goblins. Minimizing his movements, he was barely evading the goblins' attacks.

I think he is doing that because he will not have anything in particular to do after winning the first preliminary match. He must be at it for the sake of training.

It looks like he intends to continue until the time limit is up.

He sure is diligent at it.

After he heard about the 17th Floor, I thought he might have been forsaken and give up.

However, looking at him like this, a most of my worries are gone.

I should go talk to him later.

“Big Bro, about that kid.”

“Lee Hyung-jin?”

“Yes. If you end up fighting against him in the tournament matches, be tough with him and teach him a lot of things.”

Lee Hyung-jin was one of the top challengers, even among all three servers combined.

He probably won't lose. He probably will continue to go up.

If he ever runs into me in the main matches, I should tell him not to surrender so quickly.

When it comes to learning, one learns faster while getting hit.

Park Jong-shik was supporting my chin on my palm and looking down at the arena. He said,

“By the way, overall, the people are pretty weak.”

He was talking about the challengers from Japan and Australia.

“Now that you mentioned it, that's true. Their overall skills are less refined than I thought.”

Before the tournament begun, there were talks in the community. People said the overall height of the skills among everyone else were probably on the high side.

I thought so too.

The Korean server had many advantages. Thanks to these, I thought the average growth overall would be high.

This was true.

The problem was that the differences with other servers were too great.

A lot of the people from Japan and Australia were failing in the first preliminary matches.

I think the greatest advantage in the Korean server is the cooperation between the high floor rankers and newbies on the lower floors.

The low floors are relatively easy to clear. So, the low floor challengers have many opportunities to obtain information when meeting the managers.

So, the high floor rankers gave information for free to the newbies.

Also, the high floor rankers obtained more and more points as they rose up through the floors, giving them more allowances for other things with points. Using the points, they actively supported the newbies with equipment and potions.

Like that, newbies were able to progress through early stages without lacking anything in particular. So, during their meetings with managers, they asked for information that the high floor rankers needed instead of about the lower floors.

So, the high floor challengers can obtain the information needed for beating higher floors easily through this arrangement.

I think this interdependent relationship reduced the fatality rate among the newbies and improved the conquest speed of the high floor rankers.

Also, to add efficiency and trust in this relationship, the Order of Vigilance have been the bridge between challengers.

During party play, there weren't many disputes or accidents among the challengers. It was obvious that this contributed to higher overall levels for everyone in the Korean server.

Still, the difference between servers was far larger than I initially expected.

I think upper matches will be filled mostly by the people from the

Korean server.

“You know. They say Korean people are good at games. Could something like that have an effect?”

“Um... I am not sure. As a former professional gamer, I would like to agree on that.”

Compared to other countries, in Korea, many youth play video games starting at a young age. I think that might have influence on this.

The Tutorial system has a lot of similarities with game elements.

Those that are used to games will adapt to the Tutorial faster.

“Well, I’m sure there are various reasons. Perhaps we just happen to have lots of talented people entering the Tutorial in the Korean server.”

I brought out caramel popcorn from the inventory.

Kiri Kiri’s magic’s effect is still lingering with me.

The number of people finishing the first preliminary matches and being moved to the spectator’s seat was growing.

The situation was moving along so peacefully that I could eat popcorns at ease.

“Hey, look over there. Are those guys trying to flirt?”

I looked at where Park Jong-shik was pointing at. At the spectator seat, a few of the Korean challengers were hitting it off with a few Japanese women.

Park Jong-shik was staring at them.

“What is it? Are you envious?”

“Yeah, I am envious. I am eating popcorn with a dude, but they are playing around with foreigners.”

It seemed Park Jong-shik was envious. Unlike him, I was happy to see them like that.

The situation is good.

Despite the fact that we were in a special environment called Tutorial, the Korean server’s situation was maintained at a bright level.

Also, it seemed the Japanese server was just as good.

The people from Australia are not doing so bad either.

The mood is different and varies between the individuals and groups.

The water was slushed with mud because bastards from thugs like organizations are holding the main power, but it seemed the others who are not related to them seemed to be doing fine for now.

As for the problematic bastards... Even at a glance, they seemed like they were going insane from being watched by the members of the Order who were all around the arena.

Are their bodies itching because they have to sit quietly?

“I think I’ll have to strike them down.”

“I think so too.”

Neither Park Jong-shik nor I had to mind the method.

As for the bastards that deserved a good beating, Kim Min-hyuk was going to bring them on his own.

I just needed to focus on giving them a taste of death.

[The second preliminary matches will begin for the individual rounds.]

[Would you like to participate?]

“Participate.”

The first preliminary matches were held through the morning. After a brief break, the second preliminary matches began.

For this one, each challenger had to fight another random challenger. After achieving victory against three matches, the challenger could participate in the main matches.

A challenger could continue trying to get three wins in the second preliminary matches even after losing once, so this reduced the likelihood of anyone getting disqualified so soon because of having bad luck and running into someone incredibly strong.

Of course, if anyone was extremely unluckily, then it was possible for that person to run into multiple powerful challengers.

[The match will begin after 30 seconds.]

[Current number of wins: 0]

A challenger was summoned on the opposite end of the arena to where I was standing.

He was a Korean.

“Dear Heavenly Father, how come I always have rotten luck? I had been praying diligently too.”

“Hey, how could you say such things when I’m right here? That hurts.”

It was Kim Gyoung-jin, a Hard Difficulty challenger.

[TL: Author said Kim Gyoung-jin is formerly known as Lee Jin-suk in past chapters. He said he changed the name because there was another character who had a name very similar to Lee Jin-suk and caused confusion.]

He was one of the people from the early days of the Tutorial.

Unlike others from the Hard Difficulty, he was not related to the Order of Vigilance. However, he had an obsessive presence on the community boards, so he did not feel unfamiliar.

Actually, we have occasionally chatted through the community since the early days.

He was not afraid of me. He was easygoing enough so that he was comfortable around me.

“Of all people, how come I have to face against the Great King of Hell?”

Who is the Great King of Hell? Who.

[TL: Although the translation doesn't sound all that cynical or sarcastic, the Great King of Hell thing is supposed to be unpleasant for Lee Ho-jae to hear at least.]

“Let's hurry. I want to lose fast and challenge again.”

It seemed Kim Gyoung-jin already lost the will to fight.

[The match will begin.]

I charged forward as soon as the message appeared.

It seemed like Kim Gyoung-jin was sure that he was going to lose, but I am not sure.

If he was really intending to lose right away, then he would have declared surrender right away.

It is obvious that I have a higher chance of winning, but that does not mean I can win carelessly.

No matter how it is, he is a Hard Difficulty challenger. Also, among all challengers here, he is counted among the strongest.

I was charging forward. He threw two daggers in succession directly at me.

I caught the first dagger and swung it to strike away the second dagger.

I approached him and swung the dagger at him.

It was at that moment. He suddenly disappeared.

[Battle Focus]

I raised my senses to look around.

Kim Gyoung-jin was standing behind me.

He was at where the dagger that I struck away was at.

I quickly turned around.

“Hup!”

He threw the dagger at me again.

This time, the dagger was covered in black energy wobbling around the surface.

It's a skill.

I don't know what kind of power it has, so it would be better for me to dodge it instead of blocking it.

I lowered my body and dodged the dagger.

At that time, the dagger that I was holding shook intensely.

I instinctively let go of the dagger and tried to get away from it.

After that, Kim Gyoung-jin appeared in front of the dagger that I dropped.

[Iron Wall]

He grabbed the dagger that I released right away. He promptly tried to stab my heart with it.

Fortunately, I used the Iron Wall.

Kaang!

The dagger was blocked by my arm.

I could counter right away, but I decided to gain some distance first.

I am dumbfounded.

It is not like you are the Yellow Flash of the Leaf Village. How come you are using the dagger as the medium for teleportation?

[PR: Pretty sure you everyone knows who the Yellow Flash of the Leaf Village is]

“Wow... That really was ridiculous. Is that really the reaction time of someone who was caught off guard?”

Kim Gyoung-jin placed his hands on his waists and sighed over and over.

“I showed you this much of my secret techniques. Won’t it be polite for you to fall for it a little?”

“Polite? Do dogs have horns? That’s a power skill, isn’t it?”

He nodded.

Now, gradually, people with power skills were appearing.

First there was Park Jong-shik, and now there was Kim Gyoung-jin.

Including myself, there were three.

Kim Gyoung-jin pointed at his arm and asked,

“That is a power skill too, isn’t it? You blocked my dagger with bare arm when it even had a skill applied to it when I swung it. That surprised me.”

It isn't a power skill.

Chapter 116

The Tournament (11)

That's not a power skill.

I was hesitant about telling him this. In the end, I decided not to tell him.

During the skirmish just now, he used his trump card, yet he was still unable to deal damage to me. However, it seemed he was satisfied with how it played out. He looked proud.

I didn't want to hurt his pride.

It was not like I was a weirdo who drew twisted pleasure from harassing others.

I should just let him think whatever he wants.

“Kuhum. Hm.”

Kim Gyoung-jin cleaned his throat and said in a quiet voice,

“Hey... The thing is... How about you play along for a bit?”

I wondered what he was talking about. I just stared at his face for a moment. He casually glanced toward the spectators to point at them.

Ah, I understood it.

It seemed he wanted to have a match that appear to be intense and evenly matched.

One unique thing about Kim Gyoung-jin was that he was obsessed

with the community's perception of him and the people around him.

He was a ranker at the high floor who continued his path of rising to the floors above. Plus, his source of growth was being praised by the people in the community and idolized.

That's right. Kim Gyoung-jin is an attention addict.

If he had a cool duel against me in the tournament, that would naturally improve his reputation in the community.

Kim Gyoung-jin will encourage the public opinion towards that direction as well.

It won't be bad for me either.

To start with, it would be hard for me to run into anyone as strong as him in the preliminary matches.

While I'm at it, it would be more fun to play with an opponent who has some skills.

Kim Gyoung-jin was one of the few who were not afraid of me and close to me.

Also, back in the early days of Tutorial, when nobody believed me in the community, he supported me.

It is late now, but I should cooperate as a way of expressing my gratitude.

I nodded, and Kim Gyoung-jin's face brightened.

How should I play this out?

If I just go easy on him, then it won't be fun.

I should fight normally, but place a restraint on some things. That would work better.

How about an arm and a leg?

No. If I don't use one of my legs, then that would kill my mobility.

That would stagnate my way of handling the battle. It won't result in cool spectacle that Kim Gyoung-jin wants to produce.

Let's just not use either of my arms.

"In that case, here I come again."

At that instant, Kim Gyoung-jin disappeared.

He must be behind me.

He must have moved behind me, to where the dagger with black energy flew towards me.

Instead of turning my gaze to the back right away, I focused mana to my leg and struck the floor.

Kuuuuung

With the sound, the arena's floor developed a huge crack.

Usually, striking a floor results in a crack near the strike point or just ends up having the foot getting stuck at the floor.

However, because I applied mana to cover a wide area below my foot, this happened.

It was not like I knew this would happen.

I tried it out because I wondered what would happen. It worked.

Actually, the move didn't really have much significance to the battle.

I did it because I thought it would look cool for people to see from the

distance.

After that, Kim Gyoung-jin was charging at me. I threw a reverse roundhouse kick at him.

He immediately slowed, lowered his body and dodged it.

Is it a skill?

I could hear the people from the spectator seats roaring in excitement.

Right after I struck the floor with my foot and shattered the arena's floor, I threw a kick at Kim Gyoung-jin's head. I'm sure it looked dangerous.

The effect is incredibly dramatic.

Kuuuuu... I'm even minding the special effects for the production. It is a top-notch Ho-jae service.

As soon as Kim Gyoung-jin dodged the kick. He readied his dagger and charged into close range.

He calmly dodged the kick which came at him like a surprise attack. Instead of shriveling at its overwhelming power, he charged in instead.

I was satisfied with his skills and mental fortitude.

As I stepped back, I swung my leg at him while aiming for just below his knees.

Kim Gyoung-jin responded to this with little room to spare. He successfully dodged it by gaining distance.

Kim Gyoung-jin and I exchanged attacks.

He dodged my kicks, while I dodged his dagger.

We each repeated the cycles of attacks and evasions.

When the pattern seemed to be getting a little boring, I jumped up high and tried a drop kick.

Of course, it was a move with a large windup motion. Kim Gyoung-jin dodged it with ease. Once again, I brutally struck the floor.

The arena floor was destroyed once again.

Now, the cracked crater reached the outer bounds of the arena.

Watching this, the people exploded with shouting.

This is fun.

I did say Kim Gyoung-jin is an attention addict, but actually, I love being showered by the spectators' attention while being on the stage.

It seemed Kim Gyoung-jin was thinking it was about time we should end this. He spread two daggers to the air and threw another at me.

I dodged it and charged in toward him.

As soon as he disappeared, I tried to predict where he went.

Using my skill, I moved to one of the daggers that were spread to the air.

I came right at him without delay, and he disappeared again.

There were two daggers thrown to the air.

Also, he cannot move to a dagger that he just used.

Keeping those two limitations in mind, I predicted Kim Gyoung-jin's next destination.

[Blink]

As soon as I used the Blink to move, I saw Kim Gyoung-jin right in front of my eyes. I threw a flying dropkick at him immediately.

“Queak.”

How he croaked was unbecoming of the cool duel. With that, he was thrown off the arena.

He had been fighting so well. Did I ruin his cool image at the end?

However, Kim Gyoung-jin had a proud look on his face. He gave me a thumb up and was moved to the spectator seats.

[You achieved your first victory in the second preliminary matches.]

[Current number of wins: 1]

It was fun.

It was a new experience to fight under the gazes from the people. Kim Gyoung-jin's main method of attack were based on teleportation skill, quick body movements, and close range projectiles. It was also fun to fight him using just my legs.

The battle was not brutal, but it was about as fun as playing a game on a phone for a short while.

It would be nice if the next opponent was also someone who was pretty strong.

[Would you like to start your second duel?]

“Yes.”

[Please wait until the opponent is decided.]

With that message, I was sent to the spectator seats.

The second duel didn't start right away.

It seemed that everyone was already in middle of their own duels, so there wasn't anyone who could participate.

I was sitting and waiting for a moment, and a new message appeared.

[You were matched with an opponent.]

It is like queueing in to find a match on an online game.

[The duel will start 30 seconds later.]

With the message, I was moved to the arena.

It was the same place that I was at the last time. However, the floor that was ruined and shattered was completely repaired.

The next opponent was also a Korean.

Again, the opponent was someone I knew.

It was Lee Yu-jung. I once even formed a party with her during the first tournament's group matches.

"H... Hello..."

It seemed she seriously panicked.

I think she is still afraid of me.

I thought we have become quite close, but perhaps I was mistaken.

Maybe it is just that she was frightened after seeing the exaggerated duel between me and Kim Gyoung-jin.

I felt awkward after greeting her face to face like this.

What should I talk about for the next 30 seconds?

“Jung-ah didn’t participate, did she?”

“That’s right. She had things to do, so...”

We talked a little about Park Jung-ah. After awkwardly asking how each other were doing, 30 seconds had passed.

Just before the start message appeared, Lee Yu-jung said,

“I... I’ll just surrender. I think it would be better to aim for a second chance...”

“Yes. Please do.”

[The match will start.]

“I surrender.”

With that, she disappeared.

[You have won your second match in your second preliminary matches.]

[Number of wins: 2]

[Would you like to start your third duel?]

“Yes.”

[Please wait until your opponent is decided.]

I was moved to the spectator seats again.

Ugh. That was disappointing.

The next one better not fizzle out like this.

During the first day, only the first and second preliminary matches were done.

In other words, the second preliminary matches were the last events for the day.

If I get my third win because the next opponent just gives up right away, then that means I won't have anything else to do.

“Was that your second?”

“Yes.”

Park Jong-shik was sitting next to me. He asked.

He was pouting in dissatisfaction.

“What about you, Big Bro?”

“I got my three wins already.”

“Already?”

“I kept on getting small fries.”

While I waited for the matching, I watched other people with Park Jong-shik and struck a conversation.

“That guy sure is good.”

“Who? Ah, Lee Jun-suk. He is good. If he entered the Tutorial during the first round, then he would have been rated higher than now. His abilities are being underestimated both in the community and in the Order of Vigilance. His floor level is not very high in comparison to the top floor challengers. Also, he is not someone from the first round of the Tutorial.”

Actually, Lee Jun-suk was highly evaluated by the community and the Order. Park Jong-shik was saying that he was still underestimated in

comparison to his true abilities.

“I wish I could be matched up against him.”

“That would be fun.”

The waiting is pretty long.

I wondered why it was taking so long. I looked around, and I realized why.

There were quite a few people at the spectator seats who were watching me.

It seemed they were all waiting so they could avoid being matched up against me.

Ugh.

[Kim Myung-min, 24th Floor: 14th arena, second row, first arena. I think there will be a problem there.]

One of the members of the Order who was watching the arenas sent us a message.

I'm sure the message was sent to everyone, including Park Jong-shik and other Order members around him.

I looked for the arena in the message.

There were several dozens of arenas where duels were taking place, so it would have been hard for us to identify the exact arena with the problem if we didn't get the message.

In fact, although Park Jong-shik and I were watching the matches, we didn't notice what was happening in the 14th arena.

The two challengers on the 14th arena appeared to be two men who were both warriors.

The duel was one sided.

One man was extremely eager and was beating the crap out of the other one.

I sharpened my senses and observed what was happening.

“I surren... Khuuuk! Kuk.”

Stopping someone from saying the words was easier than expected.

When struck on the pit of the stomach by a punch like that, words that were about to come out would go right back inside.

“I heard they are both from Australia.”

It seemed Park Jong-shik received new information.

The attacker had black hair, so I thought he must be a Korean or Japanese, but the message said he was Australian.

As for the one being beaten, he had blonde hair. Even from this distance, I could tell he was a westerner.

The black-haired man continued to attack.

It was not that he was dealing blows nonstop. When the other man looked like he was just about to declare surrender, the black-haired man interrupted it by dealing another crushing blow.

Like that, he struck the blonde man on the face or the stomach. He was repeating the process so the blonde man could not declare surrender.

In midst of all this, the black-haired man was not even using his sword properly. It seemed there was an extreme disparity in strength between the two.

The black-haired man threw a low kick at the blonde man and he fell.

The blonde man swung a mace at him, but he dodged it with ease. He then countered with his sword.

Blood gushed up above the arena. The blonde man's arm was cut off.

His painful, blood boiling scream echoed through the arena.

Looking at the man, the black-haired man said in loud voice as if he was trying to make sure everyone heard what he said.

“Oh, no. I am so sorry. I was not trying to cut off your arm. Your attack was so sharp that I countered it without realizing it. See? It would have been a lot better if you surrendered immediately when the duel was decided. Don't you think so?”

There was no patronization in his tone. His voice didn't sound like he was belittling either.

The look on his face looked sincere and regretful, as if it was an unfortunate accident during the duel.

After that, he walked close to the blonde man and whispered,

“This is why you should have not gone too far thinking you could fight me. You dumbass. You have been acting like a retard. Who do you think will protect you here?”

Although he was saying such things, the look on his face was full of regret and apology.

If anyone saw this from a distance, they would have assumed that he was apologizing and consoling the man.

What superb acting skill that man has.

He is probably flexing his actor muscles because of the warning by the Order.

If he is acting like this despite being aware of us, then I wonder how

he would have acted if we were not here?

It is obvious.

The blonde man shook his body as he quietly muttered,

“I... surrender...”

Park Jong-shik confirmed that the blonde man disappeared from the arena. He said,

“What did he say at the end?”

It seemed he didn't catch the whispers by the black-haired man from this distance.

“Isn't it obvious? He taunted the blonde man.”

“I got it. I'll go handle this. You wait for your matching.”

Park Jong-shik got up from the seat.

There probably is no need for me to go too.

Thinking like that, I waited at the seat. However, a message appeared.

[You were matched up with your opponent.]

[The duel will start after 30 seconds.]

The opponent I saw as soon as I moved to the arena was the black-haired Australian.

I am incredibly lucky.

“What's your name?”

“My name? Just call me Lucas. Why?”

“Lucas. You are now a subject for a punishment because of the violence you perpetrated just now. I wanted to tell you that.”

“What?”

Lucas opened his eyes big and retorted.

“Hey, you must be saying that from only seeing what happened at the very end. That was just an accident during the duel. You guys said you won’t interfere with something that was an accident.”

At the end? I had been watching since the middle.

“Ask that guy Ivan later. We had been fighting, so I got worked up, but that was not intentional. We were on equal footings in terms of skills, so I had to fight my best. That’s how it happened.”

It seemed the blonde man’s name was Ivan.

“That victim named Ivan already lost the will to fight well before the duel finally ended. He didn’t have any strength left to fight either.”

“No! He just needed to say he surrender, but he couldn’t. I merely didn’t notice quickly that he was exhausted. You are going to punish me for that? With what evidence? Are you insane? Do you have any evidence that I did it intentionally? You need to be flexible. Without evidence, you can’t punish everyone just because you are suspicious!”

You didn’t notice, huh...

He is saying it was an action taken based on a subjective judgement.

I think it is something we hear a lot in court. Things like,

I thought that was not the case.

I didn’t know. It was unintentional.

As long as he denies it, it is he thinks any accusation will be nullified.

Sure, being flexible is good.

When it is hard to make a judgement, then everyone would prefer to go easy on the suspect.

When that bastard starts to make a case for himself in front of everyone, it would become difficult to prove that he is guilty.

As he said, there is no proof.

Judging from how he was running his mouth, it seemed he was confident about shutting up the victim as well.

No matter what, it is a fact that this man is a foreigner.

If people start to suspect that we punished an innocent man, the people from foreign servers might be less cooperative with the Order of Vigilance.

It would be a headache to handle the problems and noises that could result from this.

However, did you know that...

“We don’t give a damn about those, you little shit.”

[The match will begin.]

Chapter 117

The Tournament (12)

“We don’t give a damn about those, you little shit.”

“What?”

“For each and every case, securing evidence, checking and measuring the situations prior and at the time of crimes, consequences of the punishments or the gazes of the people around us or whatever... If we are to juggle all those at the same time, then how are we supposed to beat the crap out of bastards like you? Especially inside the Tutorial?”

[The match will begin.]

The message showed up.

I took slow, heavy steps forward. Lucas, the slimy, snobby man panicked. He waved his hand around.

“Hey. Don’t overreact! It’s just a misunderstanding! This is crazy... You should investigate it clearly before handing out punishment! If you are going to go straight to it like this... Just what authority do you have?!”

Why are you looking for authorities here? Do you think I’m the police?

I was dumbfounded. I dashed toward Lucas.

As soon as the distance closed in, I swung my fist right at his face.

Surprisingly, Lucas responded to my movement.

Even though it was a split second, he managed to raise both of his

arms to assume the guarding position.

As I thought, this guy knew a few things.

He is probably one of the stronger challengers.

Of course, it is not like he could stop my attack just because he knows a few things.

Ppaaaaak!

I struck him hard on the side of his face. Lucas faltered and staggered back from the impact.

I bet your skull shook.

The duel is already decided.

Lucas' head and back are twisted to the side.

His lower body was still holding out motionlessly, so he was managing to stay up, but that was all.

I kicked the inside of his thigh, and he promptly started to roll on the floor.

How disappointing.

Like that, he was lying on the floor and struggling. It took a bit of time until the man finally got a grip and screamed at me.

“Uuuuuuk... That was clearly intentional and excessive attack? What you did of all things should put you on the list for the punishment. You lunatic basta... Uuuuaaaaaak!”

Lucas started to yap away about some things. Meanwhile, I placed my foot above his ankle and pressed hard. Along with a cracking sound, his ankle bone was crushed.

As a bonus, that guy's noisy mouth started to pour out screams instead of annoying words.

Unlike how skilled he is, this guy can't take many hits, can he?

Just what's his skill level on pain resistance?

"So, what does that have to do with anything, you bastard? Did we ever ask you guys to be all buddies with us? We asked you to be polite kids who properly follow the rules. Did we ask you all to become pacifists along with us? We are here just to give hell to bastards like you. We told you so during the morning. If you feel wronged, then you should not have done evil in the first place."

I happened to be bored because the tournament was no fun for me so far. Now, you are only making this annoying for me.

I moved the foot I used earlier to his knee and pressed hard again.

Again, along with the sound of bones being crushed, screams could be heard.

Lucas held his legs with his arms and shook his body in pain. I crouched down next to the man and sat down. I fashioned a sharp point of mana at the tip of my finger.

Lucas was not able to snap out of it due to pain. When I was bringing the finger toward his head, he shouted loudly,

"Uuuuuuuuuuuuak! Stop! I... I surrender. I surrender! Surrender!"

He shouted in desperate voice. Immediately, a message appeared in front of my eyes.

[You have achieved three wins in the second preliminary matches.]

[Current number of wins: 3]

[Congratulations. You have passed the second preliminary matches.]

While I was reading the message, Lucas, who was screaming in pain on the floor, disappeared from the arena.

[Would you like to move to the spectator seats?]

I had no need to be at the arena anymore, so I moved to the seats.

I returned to my seat, but Park Jong-shik was not around.

I lifted my head and looked around, and tried to look for him.

There was a spot in the spectator seats area with lots of people gathered.

They were the Australians... In particular, the thugs like bastards were gathered there.

Park Jong-shik was there with the Order of Vigilance.

Also, Lucas was a small distance from where the Australians and the Order members were having a standoff. He was struggling in pain, grasping his leg.

It seemed one of the Order members knew where Lucas was sitting.

If that was not the case, there is no way they could have swooped in so quickly there.

Anyway, I think this is going to cause a stir.

It seemed that other Australians were trying to protect their comrade. The Order members were trying to get to Lucas, but they were not allowing them to pass. They formed a barricade with their bodies.

From how it looks from the distance, I think they are arguing with the Order, questioning our authority on the matter.

I didn't bother to focus my hearing to hear details of their arguments.

It didn't matter. It was obvious what was going to happen next anyway.

The Order members warned again and again to the people who were getting in the way.

I'm sure the Order members were warning them that they won't be spilling blood if they stepped aside willingly.

The warning was ignored as if they thought that was the obviously right thing to do.

Instead of stepping aside, the Australians tried to push the Order members away.

Because of where the situation was headed, the Order members each exchanged a look. They all drew their weapons at the same time and promptly charged in.

The Australians seemed like they never expected to be attacked. They were not able to put up any resistance before being swept away.

A carnage of blood and scream continued for a moment. The Order members cleared the wall that was blocking their path. They were able to secure Lucas.

Lucas was still screaming in pain. The Order members ended his life. As if they were trying to say that their business was done, they swiftly retreated.

The process and result were all very obvious.

In the modern day world, criminals are usually handled by imprisonment and rehabilitation.

However, due to the special characteristic of the Tutorial's environment, it was impossible to isolate the criminals from the victims and the rest.

We were in an environment without any knowledge on rehabilitating

the criminals or experts for it. To stop reoccurrence of criminal activities by the criminals, the Order of Vigilance chose the following option.

They made it so that it was impossible for the criminals to ever commit crimes ever again.

Inside the Tutorial, we had waiting rooms where all wounds and abnormalities were recovered. Hence, there was only one way to stop the criminals from committing more crimes later.

When the very first day of the great harmony concluded, which was full of chaos, people thought the problems that the Representative Federation perpetrated were completely over.

However, although the members of the Federation received bucket loads of beatings throughout the day, they all survived and went back to the waiting rooms and stages.

After the day of the great harmony ended, they were quiet for a few rounds.

However, as the time went by, the Order's surveillance started to loosen.

Back in those days, we didn't have any information about the day of the great harmony. They thought the day of the great harmony may not happen again.

Also, they were infuriated about being attacked by the people that they once oppressed and stepped on. So, the members of the Representative Federations retaliated.

Like that, they started engaging in criminal activities again.

Through a manager, the information about the second day of the great harmony being held was communicated to us. Afterwards, when people learned about this, countless messages came flying to the Order of Vigilance.

They were all messages with records of what people personally suffered or witnessed.

The seriousness and prevalence of the crimes were far beyond what the Order expected. The Order was shocked.

Also, the Order kicked themselves over the fact that the same crimes were perpetrated.

The Order acknowledged that their measures were not harsh enough. They came to a conclusion together that they must not repeat the same mistake.

When the second day of the great harmony happened, the Order immediately hunted down the leader of the Representative Federation and other criminals. Then the Order discussed the punishment.

Along with fervent support of countless victims, they came to a unanimous decision about the punishment for the criminals.

During this day, even the people who were not victims also argued for executions of all criminals.

During that day, the green field where the day of the great harmony was held was like the execution site or witch trial site from the medieval era.

Everyone was intoxicated by the madness that day. The problems related to the Representative Federation were pulled off from the ground along with all of their roots.

Like that, the problems were resolved, although we occasionally have gotten new problems since.

This time, it was the same.

We resolved the immediate problem by executing Lucas, but new problems happened.

Until the incident, the huge arena was lively. Now, the atmosphere

was frozen.

Due to a sudden commotion, people were mumbling at each other. They looked anxious.

The preliminary matches were nearing the end.

People were eating snacks with people around themselves and making new friends, establishing relationships and comradery. Such were common until a moment ago. Now, the atmosphere had sunk to a heavy mood.

Everyone's face was saturated in anxiety and fear.

It is a huge contrast to the mood earlier because it was so lively before this.

Compared to the militant attitude that the Order displayed in the beginning, the Order had been quiet until now. After seeing what transpired, Japanese and Australian people were shocked. Meanwhile, people from the Korean server just figured as much after seeing what happened.

The Korean people didn't exactly have pleasant looks on their faces, but...

Is it because they have seen and experienced these a few times before?

I found it regretful that the atmosphere was quickly changing into this sunken mood.

It was full of festiveness before this.

Still, we could not afford to waive the execution.

It was at that moment. I was sitting at my seat, and someone came to me.

It was the bearded uncle from the Japanese server.

[TL: From this point, I will translate “Ah-jur-shi” to uncle, even if they are not biologically related.]

Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk didn't even show their noses to the scene. They said they were busy. As for Park Jong-shik, he was still on the rear side of the spectator seats.

It looks like I'll have to meet him.

“I think we will have to talk for a bit. Can you please explain what happened just now?”

I was uncomfortable that I had to step up and carry out the conversation again. Still, I stayed calm and explained the commotion that transpired a moment ago.

“Was this the punishment that you guys meant?”

I nodded. The bearded uncle asked again,

“Why did you guys have to take such an extreme measure? On top of this, your group also attacked others who were not the one that committed the crime?”

Um...

“If I must explain, it was to prioritize the protection of the victim.”

As a public relation type of response, the Order of Vigilance explained the decision this way.

For the sake of victims, the criminals are punished with the most severe method.

In fact, this was the Order's primary intent.

“Still, that is too extreme.”

The bearded uncle pointed at the Australian people who were still

knocked out because they got beat up by the people from the Order.

“You understand why I feel anxious about this, right?”

I nodded.

After seeing the Order taking an extreme measure, even among the Korean people, there were many who looked anxious.

They are probably worried about these mad dogs aiming their fangs at someone other than the criminals and oppressing the people with their power.

“You won’t need to worry. Well, it would be hard for you to believe even if told you this, but still...”

“If, by any chance... what I’m concerned about does happen, we won’t just sit quietly and take it. Remember that well.”

That’s obvious.

I told him to do so.

The look on the man’s eyes were stern like a protective statue in front of a village. The concerned look on his face refused to leave him.

“If you would like to hear a more detailed response, it would be best if you talked to someone else. I’m not in charge of that, so...”

“...I got it. In that case, I should go calm the people first, so I’ll get going.”

* * *

Not long after the commotion, the second preliminary matches were over.

I had to stay at the arena building long after the matches were over.

After I confirmed the very last person left the arena, I was finally able to leave.

I looked at the inside of the building one last time. I felt like I became a manager for the arena building.

Like that, I started to walk to the residential building.

With the arena building at the center, there were three different residential buildings. We decided to assign each server one building.

“Haaaaaaaaammmmmm. I wonder when Jung-ah is going to come.”

I asked Kim Min-hyuk who was walking right beside me.

He was able to finally show his face after the matches were over for the day.

Of course, I’m sure he was busy.

“I’m not sure. She looked super busy. I think she might need to stay up whole night and work today.”

Allocating the Order members assignments, assigning the residential building rooms, and recording the people’s movements in real time... I’m sure she is incredibly busy doing all that.

It was not like she could organize them with a computer. She had to write it all on paper.

In middle of all this, there was not enough manpower to handle the work. Just a few had to do it all by themselves. I could understand why Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk could not leave their posts easily.

“By the way, what’s up with the sword and the sheath?”

Kim Min-hyuk was pointing at the sword and the sheath on my waist.

“Are you following the trend from the Japanese people? You find it cool?”

“It’s not like that.”

Honestly, I think it is cool.

“Lately, human characters appeared on stages. I thought that it would be more useful to have a sword placed on my waist when dealing with people instead of having it inside the inventory where it is not visible.”

People naturally change their attitudes when they see the sword on the waist.

It was a convincing excuse.

“Ah, and look at this.”

I drew the sword from the sheath.

After that, I changed it to a shield form.

“Hul... What is this?”

The sheath was also the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

Apparently, even a sheath was considered a blunt weapon. I was able to form various sheaths with it.

“Ah, this is the thing. The thing that came out of the mystery box you got from the last tournament...”

I explained the type of forms that the Transmutable Thousand Arms could change into. I continued my explanation proudly.

“You got a mystery box too. Have you opened it?”

He brought out a spear and wielded it.

“Of course I have.”

The spear looked like an ordinary kind.

However,

“Here. If I inject just a little mana... Here, like this.”

Wielding the spear, he injected mana into it. Along with resonating sound, the spear tip was wrapped in mana.

No, that’s no ordinary mana.

“Aura?”

Even with a little bit of mana injected into the spear, the spear tip had a completed aura wrapped on it.

Of course, I could make that aura myself. However, to the people who could not, the spear was incredibly valuable.

Having an aura on the weapon meant more than just amplifying the weapon’s cutting power.

Looking at Kim Min-hyuk’s spear and then my Transmutable Thousand Arms, I felt left out.

Isn’t his spear better than mine?

I am sure Kiri Kiri said the Transmutable Thousand Arms is a great weapon.

The thought was coming up. Kim Min-hyuk said,

“Give it to me. I wanna try too.”

I changed a Transmutable Thousand Arms to sphere shape and handed it to him. Kim Min-hyuk closed his eyes and focused.

After a moment, he formed a weapon. It was a spear.

The problem was that... Its tip was exuding flames.

What is that?

“Wow, something like this is in it too? What should I call this? Flame spear? Isn’t this totally a cheat item? If it has a function like this, then you should have told me about this first.”

No. I didn’t know either.

Kim Min-hyuk tried changing the Transmutable Thousand Arms to different forms.

This time, again, it was another spear.

However, this time, the tip of the spear made pazizizick sound. I could tell that electricity was flowing through.

It seemed Kim Min-hyuk was having fun. He tried changing the form again.

The next form that he made was... Something that appeared to be a hand cannon.

Chapter 118

The Tournament (13)

“This... really looks like a hand cannon?”

Staring at Transmutable Thousand Arms, Kim Min-hyuk said that.

“Does it have cannon shells?”

“No, I don’t have anything like that.”

This couldn’t just be a blunt weapon that was shaped like a hand cannon. It seemed like the shells needed to be purchased separately.

I had never even dreamed that Transmutable Thousand Arms could form this kind of weapon.

I had unconsciously limited the possibilities of weapons to just non-firearm weapons.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms’ description mentioned stuff about dragons and what not. So, I thought Transmutable Thousand Arms was something from a fantasy world, affirming my train of thought even more.

“I think this will be difficult to use? You don’t have any shells for it. Even if you did, I think you will have to assemble this lower portion somehow before using this. You probably will have to purchase separate parts for it. If you ask the manager later about this...”

Kim Min-hyuk observed the hand cannon from various angles as he mumbled. However, I felt someone approaching from the back.

Someone naturally grabbed onto my hand. I also grabbed the fingers that held my hand as I turned to look.

It was Park Jung-ah.

Before we headed to the residential buildings, we told her about our location through the messenger. It seems she came to greet us.

“You two came?”

“Yes.”

Although we didn’t say much to each other yet, just looking at her made me smile for some reason. I asked if she had been very busy. She simply said she was alright.

I felt an awkward gaze from the side. I turned to look, and it was Kim Min-hyuk, who was left alone with the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

“You two... why don’t you guys go get a room... Ugh...”

He is at it again.

Instead of consoling Kim Min-hyuk’s spoiled mood, I decided to not respond to it at all.

Park Jung-ah decided to do the same.

“That must be the Transmutable Thousand Arms? Can I take a look too?”

“Uh, yes, of course.”

Park Jung-ah was of the gunner class.

She is probably better at handling these kinds of forms since she mainly deals with firearms.

She got the Transmutable Thousand Arms from Kim Min-hyuk and fiddled with it here and there.

Clank- Clank-

“So that’s how it is assembled. Its frame is formed in a way that a support pops out when you pull this. Tighten this to fix the barrel and... Inject mana through this handle and pull the trigger. That will fire the weapon. It seems this weapon requires mana from the user to be usable. Judging from that, I think it must be pretty powerful? Also, this barcode like insignia is the serial number for the shell needed. I do not recognize it, but if you show this to the manager, she will help you purchase the right kind.”

Oh, what is this? She is so cool.

Even though this was her first time seeing the weapon, she masterfully figured out how to use it. She even gave me a variety of advice. Watching her, I thought she looked so cool.

I found her extremely attractive showing her expertise in this kind of thing.

Perhaps I just have a beer goggles.

“Still, I don’t think I’ll be using this weapon a lot. It is definitely a powerful, long-range method of attack, but it is not like I am having difficulties in clearing stages right now. Moreover, I think my growth is more important. It is not like I’m developing skills related to this.”

“Is that so?”

“Depending on situations, I might use it a few times, but I probably won’t use it very often.”

“Um... How about this then?”

Park Jung-ah thought hard about this for a moment and then formed a handgun with the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

It even has a handgun form...

Actually, it even has a hand cannon, so why not.

“Um... It would be useful for self-defense, but... As I said earlier, my

growth is more important, so, well... Still, I think I'll find this handgun to be useful occasionally."

Although I told her that, it seemed Park Jung-ah was not satisfied with my response.

She continued to deliberate about this as she formed various weapons with the Transmutable Thousand Arms, for over almost 10 minutes.

I should not have talked to her about the firearm types as if they were more or less useless.

I was careless.

I didn't think she would be so focused on finding a form that would be useful for me. I didn't think she would try this hard.

"Hey, how long are you guys going to be at it? Let's go back."

"That's right, Jung-ah. The handgun form that you showed me will definitely be helpful. That will be enough for me."

"Ah, please wait. Just a bit."

However, she didn't listen as if she was trying to tell us not to interrupt her.

Oh my, unexpectedly, she sure can be mighty stubborn.

No, this is not unexpected. I knew very well that she was stubborn.

I have seen her stubbornness many times as she managed the Order of Vigilance.

However, I didn't know she would be so persistent on something so trivial like this.

It looked like she was hell-bent on finding a useful form for me. She was still deliberating and fiddling with the Transmutable Thousand

Arms. Kim Min-hyuk sighed.

I just gave up and sat on a chair that I brought out from the inventory.

I brought out chairs for Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk. However, Park Jung-ah didn't even bother sitting down. She continued her pondering.

"Now that I'm seeing you like this, I see that you have a factory assembly worker-like side."

Um...

I couldn't talk back at what Kim Min-hyuk said.

Still, I thought this was a good sign.

When I met Park Jung-ah for the first time, I thought she was a cold robot devoid of emotion.

I thought that side of her was remarkable, but I found it appalling as well.

However, recently, that side had been toned down.

Her face became more expressive as well. She now had a smoother impression.

I could see that her attitude toward dealing with people had changed a lot along with her predispositions.

Now, there were even posts on the community saying people thought Park Jung-ah became more human-like lately, along with comments noting that she was really unlike a human being before.

Certainly, she had been obsessive before because of what happened in the past and had been pushing everyone around her to be extremely vigilant along with her. Compared to those days, she has become a lot more relaxed.

She looked better, and it was also easier to be next to her.

I think the stubbornness she was demonstrating now is a part of this change.

If she was like before, she would not have bothered spending time on something like this.

She would not have insisted on this when there was someone waiting either.

She would not have made a big fuss about trying to find a form that would be useful for me either.

Also, I wondered if this was her personality before entering the Tutorial.

As I thought about that, I realized that I liked her stubbornness as well.

So, with a smile on my face, I could watch her going at it.

As I watched, it felt like watching a child putting up a serious face while playing with Legos. I thought she was adorable.

Of course, that was just my impression. As for Kim Min-hyuk, he saw the look on my face and was disgusted by it.

“I got it! How about this?”

What she proudly showed me was something that looked like a kabob skewer. It was about the length of my forearm.

“What is that? Barbeque kabob?”

Kim Min-hyuk joked around. Park Jung-ah gave him a light glare. She then handed me the kabob skewer.

“Here, near the handle, there is a part that’s slightly protruding. Inject

mana there... like this.”

At that moment, the stick made pazizizic sound, and electric sparks flew off the tip of the kabab.

“What do you think?”

“I see it is some kind of electric shock instrument. I think it would be useful for self-defense. However, do you think this rascal would need this kind of self-defense weapon?”

From the side, Kim Min-hyuk gave his opinion about the form. However, I could not agree with him.

“This is the best!”

“Right? With this, you don’t need to worry about how to enhance your electric resistance skill! On top of that, by adjusting the mana, you can adjust its power.”

“This is perfect! It is what I needed the most. Thank you so much!”

“...Instead of self-defense, I never thought it would be for self-harm.”

* * *

I heard busy noise from the side, so I woke up. I opened my eyes, and it was Park Jung-ah. She was sitting at the edge of the bed and fiddling with a dagger.

Our eyes met and Park Jung-ah smiled with the dagger on her hand.

You frightened me, seriously.

I didn’t let her know how frightened I was. I pretended like I was fine and asked,

“What are you doing instead of sleeping?”

“Please catch the rest of the sleep. I’ll go to sleep after checking this out a little while longer. Ah, can you please let me borrow one of these until the tournament ends? I would like to find other forms until the tournament ends.”

It seemed she woke up in middle of the night and had been exploring other forms of the Transmutable Thousand Arms since.

“Why not. I would only be grateful. Still, don’t go staying up whole night playing with that. Didn’t you say you have a lot of work to do tomorrow?”

“Yes, but I’ll try it out just for a while longer and then go to sleep.”

* * *

It was the second day of the tournament. The individual matches’ main rounds were held this day.

It was not like the second preliminary matches where the opponents were selected at random. This time, the matches were in accordance to a match-up chart.

[PR: Think about a tournament bracket system.]

There were only four arenas with matches at any time during the main matches. So, the matches went on for the entire day although the number of participants had been reduced significantly through the preliminaries.

My matches were during early in the morning. I won both matches with ease. Since then, I had been just watching the other matches from a spectator seat.

My next one won’t happen until the evening.

The mood at the spectator seats was relatively mediocre and light-hearted.

There was that incident yesterday, but it had been a day after all.

Perhaps that's why?

Although it was just one day, it was not like any other day in the Tutorial where people were either isolated in waiting rooms or inside stages. The challengers got to spend the day with the people they wanted to spend time with. I am sure that it was meaningful for them.

The matches were mostly peaceful.

I'm sure even the duels between honorable knights during medieval times were not this peaceful.

People were wielding weapons and attacking each other. However, everyone avoided fatal areas. Also, when people noticed their opponents were hurt pretty badly, they stopped fighting and asked if the opponents were all right.

They didn't need to go that far.

"From their perspective, it is practically obvious why they are being careful."

It was as Kim Min-hyuk said.

From all the way at the spectator seats, only select few could hear what the participants were saying to each other.

Also, even those who could only do so by focusing on just one arena from all matches, and there were so many matches happening simultaneously during the preliminaries yesterday.

So, most people were not aware of the details behind why Lucas was executed yesterday.

"Still, won't it be fine to tell people that we were certain Lucas was intentionally torturing his opponent?"

"It does not change the fact that we have no evidence. You and a few of the members of the Order heard what that bastard said. That's all. It would be easier to just let it be like this. There is no need for us to

explain our actions every time either. Actually, we shouldn't."

Kim Min-hyuk explained, and I decided to just let it be. I told him I understood.

"Oh, it looks like Lee Hyung-jin's match is about to begin."

"Where?"

Kim Min-hyuk pointed at an arena. There really was Lee Hyung-jin there.

It looked like the match was about to begin.

His opponent was... the Australian Hell Difficulty challenger.

Wow. This is a jackpot match.

They said that black guy was at the Sixth Floor in Hell Difficulty.

Lee Hyung-jin was still at the Fourth Floor.

"I think this will be fun."

I wonder how strong the Sixth Floor's challenger is?

If he just got there, then he won't be very different from when he just cleared the Fifth Floor. If he was past the midpoint, then he is probably at a step higher than someone who is at a floor below the Fifth Floor.

Also, how will Lee Hyung-jin do against a challenger who is at a higher floor than his own?

Even if he loses, if it helps him discover his weaknesses and their possible improvements, those alone are big gains.

After waiting for a moment, the match begun. Lee Hyung-jin and the black guy started to move.

It seemed Kim Min-hyuk and I were not the only ones focusing on this match. Shouting exploded from the spectator seats.

It seemed there were quite a lot of people who were waiting for this match after seeing the match-up order on the chart.

I didn't see the chart, so I didn't know about this.

"Who do you think will win?"

"How should I know?"

I haphazardly ignored his question and focused on watching the match.

However, I didn't focus on it for long.

The match went on for 10 minutes. Passing that, it got to 30 minutes and then towards one hour. Nobody from the spectator seats were paying attention to the match anymore.

"This is too much."

"I know."

It was too much.

Their duel was excessively cautious.

It was overwhelmingly unentertaining.

If the spectators were customers who paid, I'm sure people would have thrown water bottles at the arena by now.

Lee Hyung-jin and the black man only gazed up at each other and waited for the other side to make a mistake.

Like that, they just waited.

Occasionally, they glared at each other as if they were in a staring contest.

After that, they just waited again.

Occasionally, from outside of effective range, one side tried out an attack that might barely or might not reach the opponent.

After that, they just waited again.

Like that, the duel lasted for almost for an hour.

I don't think it would be this bad even if Mayweather fought himself.

"If it is like this, can't we just say Lee Hyung-jin is the winner by technicality? After all, he is from a lower floor."

I am not sure. I wish that was the case too.

I couldn't be sure if I could agree with him.

"From how I see it, it is not dragging along because Lee Hyung-jin is trying to hold his ground against an opponent who is stronger than him. It is just that their styles are too similar."

Both of them were focused on speed and evasion.

Naturally, they both prefer evading attacks and throwing counters. So, neither side tried a real first attack against the other.

They just continued a battle of fighting spirit instead.

"Well... Um... Actually, it would be hard to survive in the Hell Difficulty unless the challenger has this kind of style. It could not be helped."

"You are not like this though?"

"It would be cruel to compare them to me. Now, I think this match

had turned into a battle of their pride where the side who runs out of patience and attack first loses. In fact, the one who attack first is very likely to be at a great disadvantage. I don't think this will end until lunch time."

I wanted to watch the match to the very end for Lee Hyung-jin's sake. However, I am at my limit.

I took my eyes off from the arena. I opened my inventory and brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

"What are you doing?"

"What do you think I'll be doing?"

I formed the electric skewer with the Transmutable Thousand Arms. I brought the tip to my arm. A crackle of electricity burst into the air, and my skin got burned.

I didn't let it bother me. I repeated poking my arm with it and releasing it from the arm.

Every time the kabab touched my skin, my arm shook lightly from the electric shock.

Blood leaked out from the wound, so I burned it by bringing the skewer's tip to the wound area. Along with loud noise, a noxious puke-inducing smelling smoke oozed from my skin.

It formed a hardened scab from blood. I confirmed that it won't cause more bleeding. So, I poked the same area with the kabab.

It seemed others saw me going at this. People started to stir around me. I could hear someone screaming.

What the... I'm the one in pain here. Why are you screaming instead?

"Ah, you lunatic. The foreigners are scared because of you. You had not been at this in a while. Why are you doing this again? Actually, of course you are at it. It is because Park Jung-ah showed you that form.

Ugh, seriously.”

Kim Min-hyuk complained as if he had a say in the matter. It was not like he ever helped me to raise my resistance skills. I ignored the man.

Before this tournament ends, I’m really going to try earning the blitz resistance skill.

Chapter 119

The Tournament (14)

I put the Transmutable Thousand Arms into the inventory and brought out a potion.

“Are you all done? Finally?”

“Yes. It is going to be my match soon.”

“...Still, you ended it before your match. I’m very proud of you for showing restraint.”

Proud of me?

I only did the sensible.

It is obvious that I should maintain a good condition before the battle.

Of course, there probably isn’t anyone in this place who could be a threat to me. Still, I need make the most minimal of preparations.

One’s mindset is important.

“By the way... Why is it so quiet around us?”

“...You couldn’t possibly be asking me because you are oblivious to it, right?”

“Aren’t I am asking because I don’t know?”

“...You had been hurting yourself with the electric shock instrument. How many bastards do you think would like to watch the matches on the arenas sitting next to someone like you?”

Ah, everyone moved their seats to avoid me.

“Despite all that, I didn’t run off, so be thankful for my presence.”

“All right. I’ll be thankful. Do you have any soda left?”

Kim Min-hyuk crumpled his face in light of my insincere gratitude.

“Ugh... Because of you, people around us started to move. Our guys had to record all of the seat switches. Do you have any idea how much work that was for them?”

“Ah, is that so? They should have just told me about that. If it was that cumbersome, I would have just gone to a corner and done it there.”

“Was not doing it at all ever an option? Well... still, it ended up helping us, so...”

“It helped?”

“Yes. Glare at that side over there.”

I glared at the direction that Kim Min-hyuk pointed.

It was where the Australian gangs were gathered.

When I glared at them... There was a response.

I could see a few of them, whose eyes momentarily meet with mine, flinching noticeably.

“Since lunch time, their movements looked a little suspicious. Thanks to you, I think they choked up in fear. You did end up helping.”

“Um... I get that I did look odd, but was it something to be so scared about?”

“Hurting yourself?”

“Yes.”

“...Of course it looks scary. What you did was not something like cutting one's skin with a utility knife. People got to imagine the pain and shock from watching what you were doing. While they were imagining them, they saw the look on your face... You were hurting yourself, but you looked satisfied. Sometimes you seemed to be pondering deeply about something. Of course you gave them chills down their spines.”

Is that so...

Honestly, I cannot agree that I look scary.

Is it because I accepted self-harm as just a daily routine in the life inside the Tutorial while being isolated by myself?

Perhaps it is due to my personality?

“Maybe this is the reason why. Ms. Lee Yuu-jung still seemed to be afraid of me.”

I thought we had become quite close, yet...

“Ms. Lee Yuu-jung is also a member of the Order.”

Because she is a member of the Order?[1]

That answer really bothers me.

Ever since the Order of Vigilance was established, I tried not to be at the front as much as possible.

When the second day of the great harmony happened, the Order had already had gathered enough strength of their own to hunt down and beat the crap out of the criminals.

So, I didn't bother to step in.

Kim Min-hyuk agreed with my idea because he thought that it would avoid making people feel anxious.

Also, I was stuck at the Sixth Floor during that time. So, I had no mind left to think about anything else back then.

Even after that, there wasn't any incident that required me to step in.

However, I did take on the role of keeping watch over the members of the Order.

When the members were divided, and when the Order's power was split, I stepped in and struck down the opposing side.

I demonstrated a show of my force in front of members who looked like they might cause a schism in the Order. I scared them that way.

Ah, now that I think about it, the method I chose for scaring them was hurting myself.

Anyway, the fact that people around me were afraid of me was not something to be happy about.

Although time had passed and then some, this image was preserved relatively well, so I didn't like it even more.

"Do you think that way too?"

It was the question I wanted to ask from the get-go. I tossed out the question at him.

Kim Min-hyuk didn't answer right away.

He was not able to answer right away.

I thought about this time to time.

Kim Min-hyuk was well-versed in human relations.

Of all people I could think of, I am sure he could realize that what I want is someone I could be at ease and be open, not someone who would flatter me and idolize me.

I was an existence who could be of great help to Kim Min-hyuk and also a great threat to him.

We were comfortable with each other. However, I sometimes wondered if it was not because we are close. I sometimes wondered if it was because Kim Min-hyuk formed this friendship because he needed me.

Of course, how many friendships would be not based on needs?

To me, I worried that perhaps Kim Min-hyuk was more like a skilled tamer than a brave friend.

“Rascal. We have known each other for almost a year now. I have watched you more closely than anyone through that one year. At first, even I was surprised. Still, I got used to it as I saw you do it. Now, I’m used to it.”

It is not a bad answer.

“Is that so?”

“What is it? Are you anxious about it?”

I kept quiet and just nodded meekly.

“I know you are focused on growth, but it is not like I don’t care at all about other things.”

“You are concerned about when you leave Tutorial, when you are back in the real world, aren’t you?”

As I thought, Kim Min-hyuk is very skilled at grasping other people’s thoughts.

I nodded again.

Lately, I had minds to spare, minds to spare to worry about little things.

[PR: I'm assuming he had mental capacity to spare. Not sure how to word it.]

This allowance became a gap in my fortitude.

I started to reflect on negative sides of myself. Also, I started to worry about the future that had not even happened yet.

I'm treated as a monster even inside the Tutorial. I wonder how I would be treated outside?

Also, will I really be able to adjust to the life outside?

Maybe I would be better off staying here, living inside the Tutorial?

I used to have the goals of going back to the real world, eradicating monsters and saving my family and friends. Now, even those goals are becoming fainter.

I think I'd be better off if I lived in the Tutorial forever.

I want to spend my entire life fighting, grinding, breaking and growing stronger and stronger.

Like that, I now prefer the life of repeating the cycle of growing, winning and growing again.

In fact, I was like that even before entering the Tutorial.

That was why I chose to be a professional gamer. When I could not win or grow anymore, I abandoned the profession and became a loser.

It would be nice if I could live my life like this inside the Tutorial, but the Tutorial has a limit.

The 100th Floor.

It has been over a year since I entered the Tutorial. Now, I'm almost at the 20th Floor.

Even if it takes a very long time, I'm sure I can clear the Tutorial in five more years.

No, it won't even take that long.

I am well aware of my growth rate.

Even if there is another stage that requires the party play, it won't take me long like it had taken me at the Sixth Floor when I was stuck.

In that case, just because I don't want to go outside, would I be able to keep quiet and live at the Tutorial's residential area? All by myself?

That would be also impossible.

I don't like stagnation.

In the end, I'll be leaving the Tutorial.

I slowly explained my worries.

It was difficult for me to explain this in a way that would be easy for another person to understand. It was hard to summarize in a clear manner.

So, starting from the beginning, I just talked about each thing that came to mind.

Kim Min-hyuk heard my worries. He said he heard a similar kind of concern from a soldier in the army who thought about staying in the army forever.

I think this is a little different though.

“When I was little. Um... I guess it wasn’t when I was little. When I was a junior in highschool, of the books I read, there was a children’s book about a rabbit and a lion.”

“Usually, people don’t go reading a children’s book at that age, right?”

“...Anyway. The children’s book was a story about a rabbit and a lion who became friends. One day, they start to doubt each other. The rabbit thought that the lion must be thinking it is nothing more than just a snack and is kept alive and befriended it out on a whim. Meanwhile, the lion thought the rabbit is befriending it despite the fear for the sake of survival and in order to leech off the prestige and powerful status of the lion.”

That’s an interesting story.

“And then? How does the story end?”

“The rabbit gets eaten by the lion.”

Unlike what I thought, the story had a realistic conclusion for a children’s book.

“However, to the very end, it is never made clear if the rabbit and the lion truly thought of each other as friends. Unlike you, they never confided in each other about their inner turmoil. From how I remember, the author said the ending is open to reader interpretation. Also...”

Kim Min-hyuk took a inhaled and continued.

“You’re going through a similar crisis as the lion. You are worried that not just me, but other people and friends and family outside might be afraid of you. Also, you are worried that they might treat you superficially while hiding their anxiety inside, even if they befriend you.”

I nodded in agreement.

“Honestly, I cannot be certain about the people outside. It is not like I

know your family or friends. Still, I can be certain about the people inside the Tutorial. You will be able to get closer to not just me, Jung-ah, and Big Bro Jong-shik who are already close to you, but also with other challengers. I don't know how long it would take though."

"Do you think so..."

"Yes. Once the rules inside the Tutorial are well established, you won't have to step in to strike fear in people anymore. Also, you are mistaken about one thing. We are all also super humans. You are not the only one worrying about being alienated. You have seen things on the community occasionally too, right? Some people say they are worried that they might become subject of amusement or even get dragged to laboratories for experiments. We might all end up experiencing such things. When that happens, the relationship between you and the other challengers would be not like the lion and the rabbit. It would be more like between an ultra-strong lion and an ordinary lion."

A new wall will be formed that will isolate me from the people in the real world, and that wall will be the fence that will bring those around me closer to me?

Is that what you are saying?

Hearing this wasn't really making me feel any better.

"When everyone leaves the Tutorial as superhumans, they would come together under the same banner. When everyone is isolated by the same wall and discriminated against, your power won't be seen as the threat of a ferocious beast. Instead, it will be a sturdy roof for them. Of course, that's if you wish to be one."

Kim Min-hyuk was giving me an imperfect solution. It was a halfway solution. However, he didn't forget to include what he would like me to do in the future.

On top of that, he did it by connecting this to the solution he proposed.

This rascal is the same as always.

“Also I... Um. I guess I don’t have anything to say other than that you should just wait. I don’t think I could convince you on this just with words. We will all get to realize this over a long time.”

“I see. I guess so. Thanks.”

* * *

[The match will begin after 30 seconds.]

I had to wait far too long until the match begun.

My opponent was Asian.

The face was not familiar to me. I think he is Japanese.

He made it to the main matches, and even to the third round of the main matches. So, he is probably quite skilled.

I am not expecting much. Just be on par with Kim Kyoung-jin. That’s all I’m asking for.

Um, how should I do this match?

Should I fight this one without using my arms again?

No, I tried that last time. This time, I’m going to try not using my right leg.

Usually, when my leg is injured, I supplement my mobility with Blink and Talaria's Wings, but if I don’t even use my skills, then the battle will become incredibly difficult.

I need to maintain balance with just one leg and move around. My stance will be unstable and my movements will become sluggish.

I guess that would be all right. I’ll go with a handicap on my right leg.

After deciding my own handicap, I got ready for the battle.

[The match will begin.]

“I surrender!”

With that, the opponent promptly disappeared from the arena.

“What?”

[You achieved your third victory in the main matches.]

My heart beating of disappointment, I was moved to the spectator seats.

It could not be helped. Well...

Let's just wait until the next match.

* * *

“I surrender.”

[You achieved your fourth victory in the main matches.]

Oh my...

I think I'll have to wait until the semi-finals or the finals to have a proper match.

Kim Min-hyuk said my relationship with other challengers would be like between lions.

However, I cannot agree to that easily.

As Kim Min-hyuk said, these people were already super-humans.

Also, they will become even stronger.

These people will really become lions.

I agree on that part.

However, I am...

By the time they become lions, I don't think I'll stay a lion.

Maybe I will be something like a Tyrannosaurus Rex?

Chapter 120

The Tournament (15)

[The match will begin in 180 seconds.]

My sense of boredom and disappointment didn't last for long. I felt better as soon as I entered the arena again.

As I thought, this is the best for me.

People kept on automatically surrendering, so I was able to get to the semi-final without having to swing my fist even once.

Now, I was at the semi-final. I finally met an opponent who looked like he might not surrender.

“By any chance, you are not going to just surrender, are you?”

“I wasn't intending to.”

My opponent for the semi-final was the bearded uncle from the Japanese server.

He said he won't surrender right away.

I am so thankful. Is there any way at all to let him know how grateful I am?

I don't think there is.

Unlike the previous matches, the semi-final had a longer standby time.

Also, there were no other matches happening at the same time.

In other words, in this huge building, the only match being held at the moment was just this one between me and the bearded uncle.

“I’m standing on the stage with so many people watching. I cannot disappoint them and just declare surrender right away. I have heard about you, so I already know that you are overwhelmingly powerful. Still, I’ll do my best. I’ll show you the pride of the Japanese!”

Pride my ass.

Anyway, I welcome your attitude for wanting to do your best.

Because the semi-final was held by itself without other simultaneously occurring matches at the same time, there were magic spells displaying the match on large screens and also the sound amplification magic for the spectators.

Even the spectators who were watching from a far distance could clearly hear what we were talking about, and they could also observe our movements in detail from the screens.

That’s for sure. On a stage like this, it would be embarrassing to surrender right away.

Ah, now that I think about it, I asked him if he was not going to surrender right away. I think that might have been taken as a provocation since all of the Japanese people from the server were listening.

The bearded uncle took a few steps to come closer. He bowed.

At the heat of the moment, I bowed in response.

Was that a greeting before the duel?

This is not bad?

Like how they ask the people to do a simple greeting before the duel in a Taekwondo gym, I think it would be not a bad idea to make it a rule for everyone to do before matches.

It is a gesture that is meant to convey respect for the opponent, including basic courtesy and sportsmanship.

Although most people won't give a damn about such inside, and this would be just a formality that does not mean much, but a meaningless formality has use as a meaningless formality.

I should bring this up later.

While I was thinking about this, the bearded uncle drew the katana from his waist.

His movements looked quite experienced.

As I thought, could he be well-versed in swordsmanship?

"Uncle, before you entered the Tutorial, did you handle swords for living?"

He could have been a swordsman, but he could also have been simply a member of the Japanese syndicate who happened to have used the katana a few times. So, I made the question vague.

"The only knives I have ever held before entering the Tutorial were kitchen knives."

Still, his movement looked pretty skilled?

Did he learn it from other challengers?

However, the environment inside the Tutorial is not fit for learning something from another challenger over the course of a long time.

We are constantly separated from each other. We have to say farewells to each other all the time.

Also, no matter how hard I look at it, there weren't anyone in the Japanese server who were as skilled as the bearded uncle.

When I told him what I was wondering about, it seemed the bearded uncle look embarrassed.

It was only a moment ago when he looked very tough and determined.

“Um. I’ll tell you honestly. I saw the movements in anime. I used to love watching anime before entering the Tutorial.”

Pardon?

“Are you saying you are mimicking the swordsmanship movements from anime? Still, your moves look pretty good?”

“I have been practicing and improving the movements, and they gradually became more natural over time.”

Oh... I never even thought about this possibility.

He was mimicking anime characters.

Unlike how he looks like, he has a flower garden in full bloom inside his head.

“I really panicked when I first ended up inside the Tutorial. I was drunk, so I don’t remember how I entered it.”

That’s just like how it happened to me.

“I was dragged into this world. I was despaired about my situation for a long time. However, what could I do? I was already trapped in this place. So, instead of staying in despair, I made a new goal for myself. That was mimicking anime characters I had been fond of. It was going to be absolutely impossible in the real world. However, in the Tutorial, as I make progress through the floors, I really could become super humans like anime characters, right? So, I am trying to achieve my childhood dream.”

I think some people would be like him too.

Now that I'm thinking about it, I think I can understand him.

When I was a kid, I wanted to shoot the Kamehameha wave like they do in Dragonball.

Back then, I actually tried out mimicking the move's pose by myself in a room.

Maybe I'll really be able to do the move by the time I get past the 100th Floor and go back to the reality.

That uncle adapted to the life inside the Tutorial with those thoughts.

His motivation was a unique. Still, he focused on growth, which allowed him to get to where he was now.

It was childish and unbecoming of his age, but still, it is romantic in a way.

On top of this, he was able to tell his story in the open, in front of so many people. That makes it even more so.

[The match will begin.]

“Are you not going to draw any weapon?”

I just nodded.

Honestly, it would be cheating if I used a weapon.

I'm a fair person.

“Well then, here I come.”

Where could you go, old man?

I suppressed my urge to swing tasteless retorts at him. Instead, I focused on the bearded uncle charging at me.

He came within close range and quickly swung his sword. He started to attack me.

Ah, now that I'm seeing him swinging the sword, I can see countless flaws.

It is certain now. He never was properly trained in swordsmanship.

It was not like I had been trained properly either, but I at least had learned the basics from Idy and the Knight from the 16th Floor.

I noticed that his swordsmanship had many gaps from where I stood.

His moves looked cool to watch. However, there were so many wasteful movements in between.

Even at a glance, he had so many gaps that could be exploited. His moves were not efficient.

In other words, they were not very practical.

They were just cool-looking movements that were haphazardly joined together.

Still, as I said earlier, they looked cool.

It must be the bearded uncle who made the katana trendy in Japanese server.

Still, despite all these problems, the bearded uncle's sword was quite powerful.

He was a superhuman after all. He could break boulders with his bare hands and jump to two or three stories high with the strengths of his legs.

His swordsmanship may be lacking, but he was swinging the sword with intensity, fierceness and confidence. I could not just dismiss them and take them lightly.

Of course, it was not like his moves were threats to me anyway.

As if he was trying to stab me with a spear, he tried to stab my left shoulder with a big movement. I dodged it.

After that, I lightly struck his chest with my fist.

The moment I made contact, I felt something breaking.

I think he broke a rib bone.

After finishing the punch, I drew a bit of distance.

I am planning to make sure the bearded uncle saves his face and pride just like what I did for Kim Gyoung-shik.

The bearded uncle was the face of the people from the Japanese server. There is no need to hurt their mentality by crushing him overwhelmingly.

He is also the only Japanese to make it to the semi-final.

Moreover, the bearded uncle had been quite cooperative with us.

To the spectators, it would appear that the bearded uncle is pressuring me on like a madman and I'm dodging them narrowly and throwing counters. They are probably thinking I finally managed to land a counter and then drew distance.

However, I'm sure the bearded uncle realized the difference in our caliber from the exchange of attacks earlier.

As I thought, the difference in our strengths is significant.

It is not a simple matter of him being less skilled in comparison to me.

Of the four challengers who made it to the semi-finals, he is the one who is most behind.

Well, he had some luck in the match-up orders.

The bearded uncle stood there still for a moment. He kept silence.

He had his mouth open. It seemed he wanted to say something. However, perhaps he thought it would be inappropriate to say it on the stage, so he closed his mouth.

Should I wait for a bit?

A brief moment passed. Other people probably thought it was just a silent battle of fighting spirit through the gazes between two high-level warriors. The bearded uncle said,

“The difference in skills is greater than I thought.”

I was going to be considerate and make the duel look like a close one, yet he said it out loud.

Tsk.

The bearded uncle pressed his chest hard to check his condition. He then took a stance.

“Even if it is just once, can you show me your full strength?”

“It will be dangerous.”

“I’ll accept the possibility of ending up with some injuries.”

Instead of going easy on him on the fight, I think it would work better for saving his face if we ended the battle with clean and substantial moves.

“Alright. I’ll show you my full strength.”

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory and formed a long sword.

I wrapped the sword in Aura Blade and pointed it toward him.

The bearded uncle also swung his katana in a cool, large motion. He then pointed forward and took a stance.

“Nakajima Shinpae.”

What’s this uncle doing?

Did he just tell me his name?

Oh my... That was so cheesy; I’m getting goose bumps.

“Lee Ho-jae.”

However, if you are a man, then you have no choice but to respond to that childishness!

I am also childish!

His name was more complicated than I thought. It was too much of a bother for me to memorize. Also, I don’t think I’ll need to remember his name in the future. It was that kind of name. When the bearded uncle took a step, at that timing, I also swung my sword and used a skill.

[Blink]

I swung my sword precisely when the Blink was activated. The sword threw off the bearded uncle’s katana to the air.

The katana’s edge cut almost half way into the bearded uncle’s wrist. The tip of the katana made a lengthy cut across his chest.

I thought I adjusted down my strength, but I’m still clumsy at doing so.

The bearded uncle’s blood dropped to the floor.

“Uncle. Are you all right?”

He just nodded and took a few steps back.

“...What’s the name?”

I already told you my name earlier.

Why are you asking for the name again?

I stood there with confused look. The bearded uncle supplemented his question.

“I’m asking about the name of the technique that you just used.”

...I don’t make such things.

It seemed this uncle was one of those people; the people who name every technique and shout the name whenever they are used... Those kinds.

This reminds me of a female college student who I met at the First Floor waiting room.

I don’t remember her name or her face. Still, she shouted strange names or spells every time she swung her sword. I remember being surprised by her behavior.

So, this uncle is one of those types.

I pondered about this for a moment.

I had no choice but to ponder on it.

Naming the movements or skills and being restricted to this format... Should I tell him how much of negative impact such things would have on real battles?

Instead, should I just play along with this childish uncle who is serious

about this?

I concluded my pondering. I said,

“Blink Slash.”

“It is a magnificent technique. It was a great duel. I surrender.”

The bearded uncle’s attitude was like that of a fated rival character in anime who would definitely come back for a rematch in the second season. Like that, he made his dramatic exit.

[You achieved your victory in the semi-final.]

As soon as I received the message, I was moved to the spectator seats.

As soon as I moved to the spectator seats, I was welcomed by belittling voice of Kim Min-hyuk.

“Hey, Blink Boy Lee Ho-jae.”

“Do you have a death wish?”

Aaaaaaaaaaak!

Now that I actually gave my attack a name, it is so embarrassing.

“Min-hyuk, do not make fun of Ho-jae. It was actually pretty cool. Blink. Slash. Kuuuuuu...”

I had no idea when he showed up too. Park Jong-shik was sitting behind us. He joined in of making fun of me. Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik faced each other and put up very serious, sincere faces.

“Park Jong-shik.”

“Kim Min-hyuk.”

“Ku... I thought I was watching a hot-blooded youth anime, Ho-jae.”

“I thought it was a scene straight out of a western movie. Puhahahaha.”

Damn it all. I think Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik are going to make fun of me with this for a long time.

It is not like I only have a few blemishes in my history. Couldn't they just leave this one be?

“What is it? Why are you not saying anything? Try acting a bit more embarrassed, Ho-jae.”

Park Jong-shik repeated the scene and made fun of me for almost over 10 minutes. However, I didn't react to it, and it seemed Park Jong-shik was disappointed. He complained.

Meanwhile, there was a match going on at the arena. It was between two other challengers who made it to the semi-final.

It was between Lee Jun-suk from Korean server and the black man who was the Hell Difficulty challenger from the Australian server.

During his battle against Lee Hyung-jin, the black man dragged on the battle for over one hour. In the end of this drawn out battle, the black man achieved victory.

After that, he achieved victory after victory. He made it to the semi-final without any trouble.

The match was a battle between the Hell Difficulty's Sixth Floor challenger and a rising star of the Hard Difficulty. It was a matchup that awaited with great expectations. However, the battle was one sided.

Lee Jun-suk was just toying with the opponent.

“If he can do that much, doesn't that mean Lee Jun-suk is stronger than Big Bro Jong-shik?”

Kim Min-hyuk asked, and Park Jong-shik flinched in fury.

“No way! He’s 10 years too early to beat me!”

Even I think Lee Jun-suk is at least on par with Park Jong-shik.

During the day of the great harmony, I gave Lee Jun-suk a gift; it was an item which supplemented his mana circuit skill.

Back then, he was not this strong.

He grew incredibly fast.

Lee Jun-suk had spread a wide blitz field around him.

However, this alone was enough to keep the black man from approaching near him.

When he charged in while braving the danger of blitz attacks, Lee Jun-suk drew distance again and launched electric harpoons to tie up the black man’s legs. Lee Jun-suk tried to continuously inflict damage on his opponent.

The black man could not afford to stay outside of his own attack range either. Although he could not attack, the black man was defenseless against Lee Jun-suk’s ranged skills.

In the end, the black man couldn’t do anything. He was like a mouse being chased by a cat. He was just desperately running around the arena.

“Ho-jae... About that rascal...”

It was unusual for Park Jong-shik to say this.

“Were you going to ask me to step on him?”

“Yep.”

Lee Jun-suk was an important challenger to Park Jong-shik, especially among the Hard Difficulty challengers.

It could even be said that Lee Jun-suk was a direct successor to Park Jong-shik.

Park Jong-shik was asking me to step on Lee Jun-suk, but he was not saying I should squash the man's potential.

Park Jong-shik was merely saying that I should have Lee Jun-suk experience the taste of overwhelming defeat. It was for the sake of Lee Jun-suk's growth and to keep his confidence in check.

I think this is necessary.

I can see clearly that Lee Jun-suk being drunk in his own power and running wild.

Such overconfidence will lead to death.

I need to apply brakes on him for his own sake.

"Will his mental fortitude be able to withstand that?"

"It will be all right. He is not the kind who would dig himself a hole on the ground forever because he was smashed and shattered once. He has some grit."

That sounds good.

As long as Park Jong-shik keeps Lee Jun-suk under his wings, our pal Lee Jun-suk will continue to reach higher places.

Park Jong-shik glanced at Kim Min-hyuk.

"Well, if Big Bro Jong-shik wants this, then I have no objections. To start with, Big Bro is in charge of this matter anyway. It is not something I should interfere."

Park Jong-shik looked at me next.

“It would be alright if I was a bit hard on him, right?”

“It would be good if you obliterated him once.”

This is really great.

Really, really really great.

Of all challengers here, I'll be fighting against one who is counted as one of the best.

He is saying I don't need to adjust down my strength, and that I can be tough on him.

I was satisfied with the conditions. I was smiling before I realized.

It was at that moment that Lee Jun-suk had firmed his tide of victory. He was looking around the spectator seats. I was not sure if it was pure coincidence or if he knew where we were. Lee Jun-suk's and my eyes met.

There was confident smile hanging on Lee Jun-suk's face. Looking at the man's smile, I was satisfied and swelling with anticipation for the coming battle.

Today, I think I'll be relieving some of my stress.

Chapter 121

The Tournament (16)

[The finals for the individual matches will begin soon.]

“It looks like it is finally going to start.”

I nodded to Kim Min-hyuk’s words. I got up and stretched my body.

Unlike the main matches and semi-final matches, which took place through the evening, the final match took place after the supertime.

Because of this, it was hard for me to wait.

I wanted to go get in the action right away, but it was to be held after the dinner time.

[Would you like to move to the arena?]

“I’ll be back.”

I was about to get on the stage, but Kim Min-hyuk grabbed me from the back. He whispered,

“Hey, I know what Big Bro Jong-shik said earlier, but you need keep it under reasonable extent. You must not destroy him too brutally.”

“I got it.”

Depending on how he does.

“Teleport.”

[Please wait.]

Is it going to start when Lee Jun-suk also enters the arena?

As soon as I moved to the arena, even at a glance, I could see everyone's excitement and anticipation for the match.

Almost all seats were completely full.

Actually, during the tournaments through yesterday and today, people were more focused on walking around to meet people or have conversations than watching the matches.

It was obvious. After all, they had been trapped in confining spaces for dozens of days.

However, it seemed they all saw the message about the final match being held. Even the people who were playing outside the building came inside to see the match.

Thanks to all these people, I think the Order will be having an incredibly hard time since they love to check people's movements.

I can understand why Park Jung-ah couldn't even show the tip of her nose outside throughout yesterday and today when the tournament was being held.

However, if that's the case, why is Kim Min-hyuk sitting around there?

If he has nothing to do, he should go help Jung-ah a little.

[The match will begin in 180 seconds.]

Lee Jun-suk appeared on the arena.

He appears to be full of confidence.

Actually, I can see why he would be.

His blitz skills' performances were overwhelming in destructive power and speed. Against them, long-range fighters were not able to put up

much fight.

Also, close range fighters were not even able to get close to him because they were blocked by his blitz field.

He could achieve flawless victories yawning if he just used the right skills at the right times.

He got up all the way here with such easy victories. I can see why he thinks he stands a chance against me.

“We meet at last.”

“I see.”

“I wanted to meet you at the final match, but if I knew I had to wait this long, I think it would had been better if we ran into each other during the preliminaries instead.”

His attitude is completely different from how it was when I met him last time during the day of the great harmony.

He is like a different person.

“Why? Were you bored?”

“Yes.”

Lee Jun-suk relaxed his shoulder in an exaggerated motion and said,

“Honestly, it was not just a little disappointing. My body itched because I was forced to move my body to deal with small fry. It was no different from torture. Wasn’t it like that for you too, Big Bro?”

It’s a little different for me.

My body doesn’t even itch from doing that.

“I’m not sure.”

“Looks like I’ll finally be able to demonstrate my real skills. Do you have any idea how much I had been waiting for this since yesterday? Ugh. I wish the people could just be rated based on their abilities by the system and the system could automatically disqualify anyone who are weak. It was just a waste of time.”

It looks like you still have a very long way to go.

From him rambling about ranking people based on abilities, I could tell that he is still lacking in experience.

We are in a world where the opponents are wielding weapons and skills are used without any prior indications.

A step or two difference in abilities are meaningless in this place.

In this world, it does not matter who. As long as a blade is pierced through the neck, anyone could die just the same.

Could it be that he is thinking this place is like a game?

The main people of the Korean server, the Order of Vigilance included, were following the mood in the community and intentionally treating the world inside the Tutorial like being inside a video game.

NPC, player, class, profession, rooting, farming... They borrowed terms from video games and encouraged such impressions.

They just wanted to help the newbies adjust to the environment more easily.

However, if a ranker like Lee Jun-suk is living in the Tutorial believing it is a video game, then that was a problem.

At the rate of growth that he has, I’m sure he has never had any serious danger since the early days.

It is not like I cannot understand that.

[The match will begin in 30 seconds.]

Lee Jun-suk continued to loudly babble on.

He bashed the opponents he met so far, saying that they were pathetically weak. He complained that the tournament was boring. Indirectly, he was boasting just how strong he was in comparison.

As I thought and as Park Jong-shik said, Lee Jun-suk was drunk on his own power.

I think it would be best to make him shut up.

What he was saying was being broadcasted to the entire audience in the arena building.

It seemed he was not even thinking about this. Perhaps he just didn't care if others who were weaker than him heard it. Anyway...

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory and formed a longsword.

That alone made Lee Jun-suk stop talking.

I think it would be definitely a good idea to crush him here once.

He is not just drunk on his own growth and power.

He is giving too much weight and value to strength.

He is thinking that those who are strong should be obviously respected and those who are weak should be patronized and trivialized.

He is asserting his views onto the people.

It was not my job to correct his way of thinking.

That was Park Jong-shik's job.

My job was, before Park Jong-shik lulls the man after this, firmly stepping on him once.

“Big Bro Jong-shik said this.”

Slowly, I spoke.

I was speaking slowly, but clearly.

When I was a professional gamer, I remember going up against new players who were on the stage for the first time.

I relaxed my right hand that was holding the long sword.

I completely relaxed my arm.

With the tip of the fingers, I grabbed the handle of the sword and swung it forward and backwards.

I swung it like a bag of groceries.

The new players were usually the same when it came to their conditions during their stage debut.

Extreme excitement and nervousness.

Once they stepped on the stage, all the practice and advice from the coaching staffs went down the drain.

They moved like stupid robots following the scenarios that they became accustomed to.

They never came prepared with a gamble.

It was a debut stage. No player ever brought a move that bet it all on luck. No coach advised people to do that either.

So, it was so simple to fight newbies like that.

First, draw the opponent's attention.

“Of all Hard Difficulty challengers, you are...”

I picked a line that would make Lee Jun-suk react to.

It seemed like Lee Jun-suk found satisfaction in constantly comparing himself to others and putting himself above others.

In that case, Korean server's Hard Difficulty, the place that he belongs and where all of his competitors are, would be the one that would matter the most to him.

A newbie player whose vision had narrowed due to excitement and nervousness falls for an unexpected attempt at drawing attention.

They are taught not to fall for this, but they don't remember. What they do know regarding this won't come to their minds either.

They just focus on that trivial attempt at drawing their attention.

[The match will begin.]

If I succeeded in drawing his attention, then...

Cheese rush.

After I said “you are,” at an odd timing, the message appeared to signal the start of the match.

It is obvious.

I had been counting the remaining time mentally as I said those words.

Lee Jun-suk is so focused on what I'm going to say next. His response is slow.

The longsword was swinging from my fingers like a swing set. The

sword was tossed toward Lee Jun-suk's face in a fluid motion.

It was flying through the air like how a longsword should.

The swinging motion of the long sword, the line I recited just before and up to the start of the match, and the match time counting were all executed perfectly.

It was a small accomplishment, but I felt pretty good about this. It was like brewing tea perfectly by timing it to perfection.

It was a surprise attack, but the longsword was flying toward him slowly. There was no way that Lee Jun-suk would not be able to stop it.

He was a breath too slow. No, he was half a breath slower, but he will stop it.

So, what I should do next is charging forward.

I charged in like an arrow that was just launched from the bow and grabbed the handle of the longsword midair.

Lee Jun-suk just brought out a spear from the inventory to block the long sword. I swung my sword at him.

Kang!

Our weapons clashed.

Although I didn't put much strength into the strike, his spear was pushed way down.

As this case demonstrated, one's stance is important.

With his spear lowered, Lee Jun-suk's face was defenselessly exposed. I headbutted him.

This is the end.

It was the end when the cheese rush succeeded.

Newbie players never expect that the opponent would use extreme tactics from the start.

Although they obviously could use such, the newbie players are convinced that their opponents would never use them.

It is the power of the prejudiced thinking.

They probably won't, right? A veteran at the top won't go for an all-in tactic at the start of the game against some newbie, right? The newbies think like this.

Lee Jun-suk is thinking the same.

He was thinking that I would never do this.

Would I suddenly drop the conversation and throw a surprise attack as soon as the start message comes up?

Newbies who are stabbed in their weak point like this try hard afterwards to put out the fire.

After that, with the game's lead handed to the opponents, they are dragged around by the collar and lose.

After the headbutt, Lee Jun-suk's head rapidly bobbed backwards.

This rascal is closing his eyes.

He is focused on long-range attacks. Is he lacking in close-range experience because of this?

I placed my hand at his chest. I put weight on my hand and pushed him to the back of the arena.

Lee Jun-suk took a step back and held on so he won't fall. However, he just ended up moving to the perfect position for me to attack.

He was still defenseless. I kicked his knee.

I didn't hear any bone-cracking noise, but I am sure that I dislocated his knee.

Lee Jun-suk fell down, but it seemed he still used a skill. A lightning sphere was formed midair.

Lee Jun-suk didn't even recover his sight yet. There is no way I would get hit.

I dodged his blind attacks and positioned myself behind Lee Jun-suk.

He was still defenseless. I struck his back with the handle of the long sword.

Enduring the pain, he reactively turned around and tried to use the same skill again.

Of course, I could watch him do all that slowly. When he turned around, at the right timing, I kicked him right in the pit of the stomach.

He rolled and rolled towards the edge of the arena.

I think that should do it.

“Jun-suk.”

“Kuhek. Kek.”

He sounded like a typical individual who just got struck at the pit of the stomach.

“You lost, right?”

“Kek. Uuhek.”

He was still almost but not quite throwing up, so there was no

response.

It meant he didn't receive enough of a beating.

I should give him a stronger beating and then ask again.

* * *

Lee Jun-suk diligently resisted.

Unlike the beginning, where I just shook him while grabbing him by the collar, I gave him chances to counter attack. This was why he could.

However, his range attacks were blocked by the Talaria's Wings. As for the blitz field which usually prevented the opponent from approaching, I ignored it and charged in. Lee Jun-suk didn't have any way of fighting me.

Despite this, Lee Jun-suk tried all sorts of methods to turn the tide of the match. However, in the end, they were all for naught.

“...I lost. I surrender.”

In the end, he lay on the ground with all of his arms and legs fully stretched out and declared surrender.

[Congratulations. You won the individual part of the tournament.]

[As the reward, you acquired 7800 points.]

[God of Adventure is overjoyed.]

[God of Slowness is watching you.]

[God of Duel is intrigued to watch you.]

[God of Death is disappointed.]

[God of Goodwill is feeling bad about someone.]

[You acquired a mysterious medicine. Please check your inventory.]

The congratulatory message was brief. However, my view was filled with messages about the gods' responses.

Unlike when I won the tournament last time, the God of Duel, God of Death and God of Goodwill were all present.

Who is God of Goodwill feeling bad about this time?

I wonder why that god is always feeling bad about someone?

I checked all of the messages and looked at Lee Jun-suk.

Unlike the usual, the loser was not sent to the spectator seats. Instead, he remained at the arena.

It's probably because the loser is also getting rewards for being the runner-up.

"Jun-suk, you still have a long way to go, right?"

"...Yes."

His voice was lacking sincerity.

Still, the attitude is not bad considering that it's his first beating in a while.

At the very end, I gave him opportunities to put up proper resistance using all of his strength. Despite that, he lost. Is that why his tone of voice sounds despondent?

"Jun-suk, if this was a real battle, then you would have died when you got headbutted in the beginning. Also, that was something that anyone could have done. I didn't even use any skill. I didn't use much more strength in particular either. I could have done that much even

when I just cleared the First Floor. Actually, the end result would have been similar if you fought the version of me from that time.”

Ah, of course, the version of me from that time would not have beaten the crap out of someone without an ounce of hesitation like this. Anyway...

I lowered my back and used my sleeve to wipe off the blood from his face. I continued.

“The battle is not decided by the power of skills alone, especially against opponents like you who completely let go of their minds and are completely careless. You see that, right?”

Lee Jun-suk nodded as if he just chewed on something unpleasant.

The sides of his cheeks were swelled up, so he actually did look like he was chewing on something.

“Jun-suk, you still have a long way to go. Try harder and be more careful. You can’t afford to die so easily and pointlessly, right?”

“Okay...”

I think that should do it.

Park Jong-shik will console him and talk to him about the rest.

I thought I lulled him pretty well. I looked at the spectator seats.

I am not expecting praises, but I think they will tell me that I did pretty well.

However, the look on Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik’s faces were not very good.

* * *

[TL: This section is in Park Jung-ah’s perspective.]

It seemed our visitor was feeling a little anxious about the situation. The visitor was shaking a little. To calm the visitor, I asked Lee Yuu-jung to get us some tea.

Lee Yuu-jung was sitting next to me. She brought out the utensils for the tea and started to boil water.

I was thinking perhaps we should bring out some snacks and fruits as well, but a message came.

“Please wait for a bit.”

I asked for understanding from the visitor and then checked the message.

It was from Kim Min-hyuk.

He was asking how the conversation went with the person who came to report crimes.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Yes, we are going to start talking about it now. There aren't any problems at the arena, right?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Nothing big. Your boyfriend is beating Lee Jun-suk to pulp, and that is a problem, but...]

There was a pretty serious problem.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Can you stop them?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: How are we supposed to stop someone who is on the arena? Also, it seems he must be thinking that he is going easy on Lee Jun-suk's discipline. It is just that, that Ho-jae rascal's standard is too tough, so...]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Just how bad is it?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: The spectators left the seats, saying they could not bear to watch it anymore. That bad.]

It was a serious problem.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Were there any movements from anyone? Complaints from the Japanese people perhaps?]

If the people from the Japanese server saw this and judged that it was excessively cruel, then it would become a serious problem.

It is an act that the Order of Vigilance forbid, yet the Order committed the act.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Fortunately, there hasn't been any. That lunatic... Ho-jae bastard is beating the crap out of the kid, but instead, they were saying advisory stuff like focus, watch the steps, skill distribution order is wrong, and the movement is too big. So, instead of thinking that he was attacking with malicious intent, they think he is just insane. Lee Jun-suk is not surrendering and foolishly hanging on too. It would be easier if he just surrendered quickly, but that guy's head is not right either.]

It worked out well. It was not a big problem.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Ah, also, Lee Hyung-jin said he wants to help you guys.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Lee Hyung-jin, one of the Hell Difficulty challengers? Why all of the sudden? I remember him being not all that interested in the Order's business?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Ho-jae won't be participating in the group round. So, it looks like he was going to give lessons to Lee Hyung-jin whenever he finds the time. I think Lee Hyung-jin is scared of this and trying to make a run to your side.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: I see. Please tell him no.]

Chapter 122

The Tournament (17)

[TL: This is a continuation of Park Jung-ah's perspective.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Yes. Please tell him no.]

I sent him the reply and closed the messenger.

After that, I looked at the guest. He was still looking anxious.

His gaze ran met mine. He flinched.

I'm used to this kind of response, but it still hurts to see this.

Even before I entered the Tutorial, I've heard from people that my eyes look a little fierce. However, it was not this bad back then.

It is not like I shoot some kind of laser beam from my eyes. Why are they so surprised?

Does deadly aura get piled up every time I kill people?

Only until recently, I didn't care if people were scared of me or if they cursed about me behind my back.

I actually liked that, thinking that such an impression of me would help me.

However, lately...

They were useless thoughts.

I should just focus on what's happening in front of me.

“I’m sorry. I had to send a message real quick. Well then, may I hear the rest?”

“Yes, yes.”

The visitor was a Korean.

He was no ordinary Korean.

He was summoned to the tournament as a part of the Australian server.

His name was Jung Chan.

29 years old. He introduced himself as a student who went to Australia for his studies.

However, when I asked further, he said he also obtained the Australian citizenship.

I could not figure out if he was summoned as a part of the Australian server because of the citizenship or if because he was simply residing at the country.

I will have to inquire the manager after the tournament ends to learn about this.

Also, Jung Chan provided us with an interesting information.

It was information about the gangs that were dominating the Australian server.

“So, that is... Where was I... So...”

The man stuttered.

“You said that the atmosphere in the Australian server was different during the last tournament. That’s how far you were.”

According to him, the uneasy atmosphere in the Australian server was growing during the first tournament.

It had not been long.

Other than that particular gang group, there are many other groups. Also, even that gang is internally divided into several groups. There is no large faction that encompasses the entire server. I don't find that surprising considering that the first tournament only happened a while ago.

"I think the first problem happened during the second day of the tournament."

They had the group matches during the second day of the first tournament.

"When it begun, it was some of the challengers from the Hard Difficulty who sparked the issue. They attacked other challengers they met at the tournament. The attacks were one-sided and carried out as a group."

It was plausible.

The people in Hard Difficulties who spent rounds after rounds at the lower floors would have had an easier time organizing themselves than people from other difficulties.

"They blocked people's mouth in middle of the matches. They kept attacking to interfere with others when they tried to surrender. Like that, they struck down the other challengers. During the second day, even after the tournament was over, they continued their violence and attacked many challengers."

Like that, with their power and through violence, they spread terror and committed acts of viciousness.

Also, as soon as the third day came, people all returned to waiting rooms to take shelter from the gang's violence.

Meanwhile, at the place of the tournament, only the perpetrators remained to stay for another day.

We don't know what they discussed there.

After that, time passed like that, and the second tournament was held.

He said that the Australian people greatly feared that the gangs will perpetrate acts of violence again, especially because this tournament was going to last longer than the past tournament.

Also, he said that some of the gangs left taunting notes on the community, saying that other challengers should look forward to the tournament.

However, when the tournament started, they ran into the Order of Vigilance. Instead of fighting the Order, the gang choose to hold their breath and stay quiet.

Jung Chan stuttered his way through the conversation. After he finished telling his story, I sent him back. Before I realized, it was already evening.

The story had so much unnecessary details, so more time had passed than I realized.

The details were mostly about the violence committed by the gang and the suffering of the victims.

The details spoiled my mood.

“Ugh.”

My insides were a ruckus.

I memorized the details of appearances of the gang's main figures.

I was thinking about their faces, but also other faces were being superimposed on them.

Also, I saw another face superimposed on Jung Chan's face.

My hand was shaking a little. I brought out the sphere shaped Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory.

I placed it on top of my hand and let it roll in the palm of my hands. I felt like my insides were feeling a little better.

I changed its form into a ring shape.

It was no ordinary ring. It had a needle spike the length of a forearm attached to its front.

It was a kind of a weapon. After all, this was Transmutable Thousand Arms.

Still, it is a ring.

I put the ring on my finger. I closed my eyes for a moment and calmed my breathing.

"Are you alright?"

Lee Yuu-jung brought me tea and asked.

"Yes, I'm all right. Thank you for the tea, Big Sis."

I put up a peaceful face and responded to her.

However, she grabbed my hand and looked at me with moist eyes, like how she always was.

I wonder how long this trauma will follow me around.

It's been a year, which is a long time. I think it is about time for it to disappear, yet...

I lifted the tea cup and took a sip from it.

The tea cup shook a lot because of the ring I had on my finger.

The ring is too heavy.

I put down the tea cup and opened the message window.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: I finished my conversation with him.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Please start with a brief summary.]

As he requested, I started with an explanation.

I suppressed my emotions as much as possible. I tried to describe it as objectively as possible.

I am not sure if I did well.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I vote that we wait.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: I second that. However, what if they do not show themselves until the tournament ends?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: If that happens, then we should go and hunt them down.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: I also second that. Please ask other captains about their opinions.]

* * *

[TL: The perspective is now back to Lee Ho-jae's view.]

[Tournament, Day 3, 11:30]

“Ugh. Huk. Huk.”

Lee Hyoung-jin was gasping for air while sitting at a spectator seat. I clicked my tongue at him.

You totally lack endurance.

“Is it hard?”

“Ugh... Phuuuu... No.”

Oh, is that so?

“It is not hard. I think I’m going to die, Big Bro.”

Oh, is that so?

“Can you describe your current condition in detail?”

“Ugh... That is... I just... can’t breathe very well. I feel like my vision is spinning. I feel dizzy. The color of the ceiling is shifting. Uuuuaaaa. I feel like there is a mosquito that’s circling around at the tip of my nose. My ears. I cannot hear anything through my ears sometimes. I hear the high pitch noise sometimes too. My inside hurts as well. Big Bro. I feel like I’m experiencing motion sickness, and then it feels like I’m being pressed down all of the sudden. Also, I cannot feel very well through the tips of my fingers. I think it is just cold too... Also... From the back of my neck...”

Outside the arena building, he finished a special training that went on only for three hours. However, Lee Hyung-jin was already completely exhausted.

It could not be helped, so I carried him on my shoulders and brought him into the arena building.

Lee Hyung-jin finally regained his consciousness after 10 minutes of lying on the seats.

He needs to develop faint resistance.

“You only trained for three hours, and look at you. You are already exhausted. I see you had not been training when you were by yourself usually.”

“I... I did train! Big Bro, and how could you call that training!”

It seemed he felt wronged. He shouted in a loud voice. He closed his eyes again and gasped for air. His breathing was rough.

When one is trying to catch breath, it is not a good idea to talk so much like that.

That will make the head spin due to a lack of oxygen.

“Anyway, I really think you lack persistence. You only know to treat your body carefully. Um... How should I say this. Ah, right. You are too weak against pain. You need to be able to endure difficulties. Only then, you will be able to accomplish anything.”

“Pardon?”

“I think you will need to raise pain, paralysis and faint resistances first. From now on, continue to buy poison potions and diligently train with them. Ah, first, I’ll help you until the tournament ends. I have a skill called Poison Energy, you see? If I use this, then you won’t need to waste points buying poison potions.”

“B... Big Bro... Please let me live.”

“It’s all right. You won’t die. No, actually, you could die if you were exposed to Poison Energy skill for a long time, but I can adjust it so you won’t die. I’m an expert at this, you know? Just trust your Big Bro.”

Lee Hyung-jin’s face was full of sweat. Now, new drops started to form on his face. They were flowing down his face like a waterfall.

You, are you crying now? Crying?

I could not stand to watch this. I turned my face away from him.

Still, I had no intention of allowing him to skip the special training.

“Would you stop torturing the kid? Although I’m just watching, even I can feel the pain.”

I want to say I will stop this.

However, one day, Lee Hyung-jin will be challenging the 17th Floor. Thinking about this, I want to give him a harder training and grinding.

Also, Lee Hyung-jin was quite motivated.

He was complaining that he was so exhausted and on the verge of death. However, he saw the training to its end. As we saw at the individual tournament’s preliminary matches, he tried all sorts of things to focus on his growth.

However, it was just that his body was not able to catch up to the harshness of the training I gave him.

Still, the training I made for him is going to become his blood and flesh. No matter how much he suffers during the training, I have no choice but to make him go through it even if it is going to bring tears to my eyes.

Well, it is not like I’m a pervert who enjoy making another person suffer. Would I force someone into grinding when he doesn’t want to?

“By the way, aren’t you going to go do your work?”

I changed the topic from about Lee Hyung-jin.

This was a question that has been in my mind since yesterday.

Jung-ah never showed herself throughout the day, saying she was busy. However, this rascal was sucking honey while sitting around at the spectator seat.

“I’m working. Through the messenger.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

I really think this rascal is just goofing off and loafing around.

However, I have no way to confirm my suspicion.

I moved my gaze away from Kim Min-hyuk for a moment and looked down below into the arena.

The first place my gaze headed was the match where the Korean server's Hell Difficulty challengers formed a party and entered.

Initially, Lee Hyung-jin was included in that party. However, he left the party momentarily for the special training.

With Lee Hyung-jin out, I thought the rest of the Hell Difficulty challengers would give up on the match, but it seemed they decided to try anyway.

They were not able to do so well.

After all, they were all from the First Floor.

Also, there weren't many of them.

There were fewer of us Hell Difficulty challengers in the Korean server now.

Now, there were just six of us, including myself and Lee Hyung-jin.

I know I have to do something for them too.

Kim Min-hyuk said that perhaps I shouldn't give them advice so soon.

He was concerned about people challenging traps with misplaced courage blown into them by encouragement, and that could only lead to more deaths instead.

Although it may look like he was being irresponsible, he was not wrong.

How am I going to get them to pass through the First Floor?

I feel so frustrated.

Other matches had consisted of Hard Difficulty challengers from the Korean server who formed their own groups.

Most of the people from the Hard Difficulty formed parties with people they like and entered the group matches.

Also, they were all overwhelming the opposing sides.

The difference is significant.

There was the difference in heights between Korean and foreign servers, but even within the Korean server, the power of the groups from the Hard Difficulty was overwhelming.

They were from the higher difficulty, so it could be said that this was an obvious outcome. However, even with that under the consideration, the gap was too big.

Since the early days of the Tutorial, the Hard Difficulty challengers had a exclusive club-like atmosphere amongst themselves. I think this had a big influence.

The challengers of the Hard Difficulty have been training and clearing stages together since the lower floors. So, their mastery level in party battle itself is different.

They show great synergy too.

However, it was not like the formation of such an atmosphere among the challengers never posed problems.

Because the Hard Difficulty challengers were sticking with one

another too much, they had a tendency to alienate and patronize challengers from other difficulties.

In fact, something similar to the ideology of being superior, chosen people had rose among them, and we went through a tough time because of this.

It would had developed into a huge problem if it was not for the fact that Park Jong-shik was the leader of these people from the Hard Difficulty and the fact that I was standing above them.

In the world inside the Tutorial, the standard of anyone's worth was based on strength. Considering this, it is difficult to retort against their ideology.

In fact, all of the challengers in the leadership roles in Japanese or Australian servers are from Hard Difficulties.

The Korean server is the only one with high participation rate from Easy and Normal difficulties.

It's all because of the Order of the Vigilance.

Well, anyway, from the looks of things in the tournament's group matches, I think Korean server's victory is a certainty.

* * *

[TL: This section is in Kim Gyoung-jin's perspective.]

[Tournament, Day 3, 11:10]

“Ahah. I am no good at these.”

“No, you can do it, Gyoung-jin. I, your Big Sis, believe in you.”

“Believe in? Do dogs have horns?”

I'm serious.

I hate stepping up and facing people like this.

I tried to voice my dissent. However, all I got in return was belittling laughter.

“Kim Gyoung-jin, you are the biggest attention addict in the community. What did you just say that you hate?”

The group was snickering around. I sent them a ‘fuck you’ to them all. I went to the friend who was standing on the far back.

“Anyway, I didn’t know you would come too, Jun-suk. What happened?”

“I was also... got beat up a lot yesterday. Should I say it is for revenge?”

“Oh, that makes some sense. It sure does.”

For some reason, the group was finding this amusing as well. Having heard Lee Jun-suk’s answer, they started to snicker and laugh again.

What a bunch of crazy bastards. Have you guys been drinking?

“Now that I think about it, other than Jun-suk and direct subordinates of Jong-shik, everyone is here?”

I know. They are all here.

Big Bro Jong-shik’s direct subordinates, in other words the Order’s Strike Division, are not here. All of the other Hard Difficulty’s rankers are here.

Every single one of them.

Ah, this feels strange.

“Hey, hey. Let’s get going. The patrol will be here soon.”

The Order's patrol will come by here soon.

I told the group that we should get going now to avoid the patrol.

The group again found it entertaining. They said it was exciting and nervous. They snickered around.

Ugh, you crazy bastards.

Leading the group, I walked through the narrow street.

Before long, we were able to arrive at the building that we had an appointment at.

It was a rough looking wooden door. I beat on it.

“Say the password.”

Password? What the hell is he yapping around for.

I forced the locked door open and entered.

As soon as I opened the door, a dagger came up on my face. However, I leisurely twisted the wrist of the hand that held the dagger. I neutralized the opponent and entered the building.

Inside the building, there was a small hall with just a table.

There was the uncle from the Japanese server named Nakajima whatnot.

It seemed he was displeased with something. His arms were crossed and his mouth was firmly closed quietly.

Also, this other guy from the Australian server is... who was he?

“Welcome. If you entered more politely, then we would have given you a warmer welcome. You said your name is Kim, right? Mr. Kim.”

[TL: There is a Korean/English translation related comment by Kim Gyoung-jin here that would make no sense since this is translated to English now. It is irrelevant to the story, so it was omitted.]

I thought about if I should tell him to call me Kim Gyoung-jin, but I decided to let him just call me Kim.

“That... what is it.”

“David.”

Lee Jun-suk, who was standing next to me, whispered the name quietly in my ear.

“David, as promised, we got here without being tailed.”

“I see. Thank you for keeping the promise. Have a seat here.”

Ugh, man. I really hate this.

I glanced at my group, but they were all pushing me to go take the seat.

In the end, I am taking the role of both the head and the mouth.

I sat at the seat and said to David,

“I’ll get straight to the point.”

“Oh, wait. Please wait for a little longer. We still have one more guest who has not arrived yet.”

“You have another one coming? I didn’t hear about this?”

“He just joined recently. I am not saying you guys will not be enough, but we should make sure of our preparations.”

Having heard the man, I decided to sit quietly and wait.

The Japanese man, who was sitting on the opposite end, was also quiet as well. So, David also quietly closed his mouth, and like that, an uncomfortable silence lasted for a while.

Several minutes passed and another person entered the building.

He was most unexpected.

“Big Bro Chan-yong?”

He was known to be nearing his goal of clearing the entire Tutorial. He was the challenger who was at the highest floor.

It was Lee Chan-yong.

Chapter 123

The Tournament (18)

[TL: Dear readers of LightNovelBastion,

I would like to make a correction in TTH chapter 54. In the raw version of that chapter's conversation, it is not clear if Kim Min-huk was ever married to Park Jung-ah. Meanwhile, I translated the chapter 54 assuming they were married. My misinterpretation happened due to the ambiguity in the Korean sentences (author was missing the subject of the discussion). Even some of the Korean readers in Munkpia thought they were married. As the story progressed and more character/relationship developments happened, the idea of them being married looked odd. Also, as some readers in Lightnovelbastion pointed out, from the practical standpoint, it is unlikely for Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jung-ah to get married since they can rarely meet (I'm pretty sure they live in different difficulties.). I corrected the chapter 54's English translation so now this matter of who married who is left to ambiguity. Chapter 123 shows Kim Min-hyuk is to be married to a girl who is not Park Jung-ah, so the marriage and divorce mentioned at the Chapter 54 is probably about Kim Min-hyuk and this girl. Please read this chapter to find out who the girl is.

I apologize for this misinterpretation.

Sincerely, TL]

[Tournament, Day 5, 05:05]

“This is a little unexpected.”

“What is?”

The group rounds were over. Now, the event for the fifth day started.

We gathered together for breakfast and meeting. At the place, I looked at the list of people who would be participating in the faction matches. I could not help but to be surprised by the list.

“About the reward for the faction matches; the reward is given to every member of the faction that achieves the most number of wins, right? So, I thought a lot of the people from Japanese and Australian servers would want to join the Korean server for the faction matches. Also, I thought the tournament would conclude without too many problems because of that.”

Korean forces won the group rounds yesterday as well.

It was Park Jong-shik's party that won the group rounds.

Also, the runner-up group and the others who made it to some of the lower standings were mostly Korean groups.

The Korean server was showing more dominance in the group matches instead of during the individual matches.

Because of the significant difference in caliber, many of the Japanese and Australian spectators didn't even bother entering the arena building during the fourth day. Instead, they just spent the time outside.

Like that, the Korean faction took over the individual and group matches. So, Korea was the overall victor for the tournament.

In other words, anyone who joined Korea for the faction matches could get the reward for the overall win for free.

It was not like Korea was going to lose something if a foreigner got the overall win reward for free. Actually, they could even add a few conditions to this and make a business out of it.

So, I thought this would give Kim Min-hyuk some headaches. However, instead, when I checked the list, I saw that not a single foreigner joined Korea for the faction match.

“It’s probably because there is still some mistrust. It might have been different if there was no problem through the tournament, but there were. There was a big problem even inside the tournament arena, and there were several problems outside too.”

For the past five days, on daily basis, there were violent incidents.

Most of them were caused by the people who ended up in fighting in their excitement.

In such cases, the Order didn’t go further than moderating the exchange of apologies between people. However, for serious crimes such as murder, rape and gang assault, most of the perpetrators were executed unless agreements between the people were reached quickly.

Could it be that people are hesitant to join the Korean faction because of them?

“Also, this is the first time for the people to be given the opportunity to join another faction. Maybe people are hesitant because the consequences for making such a choice is not yet known. Also, there probably are people who wish to make the change but do not know who to come and talk to about it. Moreover... On our faction’s list of participants...”

What the? Why are you looking at me?

Kim Min-hyuk blurred the end of his sentence and glanced at me. I was dumbfounded.

Are you blaming me?

“Now, now... Let’s cut the chit-chat. Let’s get things organized first. Ho-jae and Jung-ah will be handling the arena. I’ll be handling the spectator seats. Min-hyuk will be handling the outside. Right?”

“Yes. Let’s assign things like that. Everyone, please check the list before the match starts. Let’s conclude the meeting here.”

Park Jung-ah ended the meeting, and Park Jong-shik’s face

brightened.

“Well then, let’s go eat, finally.”

Well said.

Let’s stop talking about complicated stuff and just eat.

Everyone started to bring out food from their inventories. However, Kim Min-hyuk tossed out the following.

It was done casually as if he was merely expressing that he was going to the bathroom for a bit.

“I’m getting married.”

Everyone didn’t even bother to react. They just continued to enjoy their meals.

Even I had to take a moment to think about the meaning behind what he just said before realizing what he meant.

“...What?”

This is so out of the blue.

Kim Min-hyuk had been constantly complaining about the life inside the Tutorial, saying we are living in a world where anyone could die the next day, and that this place is hell for couples and a heaven for singles. Now, what did the man just say?

“I said I’m getting married.”

“With who?”

“You met her before during the day of the great harmony. Her name is Jung Min-jung...”

He gave me a brief description of who she was, specifically noting she

her status as the bride.

He said I met her before, but honestly, she was not the kind of person who would be memorable.

I was diligently racking my brain, but Park Jung-ah joined in from the side.

“She is one of the people who decided to stay at the 30th Floor, right?”

“Oh, right. You remember her.”

“Yes, Recently, she started helping out with our work in the Order.”

From hearing what Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jung-ah said, it seemed this woman named Jung Min-jung also had given up on clearing the Tutorial and instead decided to live at the 30th Floor.

Well, that’s why they could get married and stuff.

Um... It must be nice.

“By the way, why is Big Bro Jong-shik not showing any reaction?”

“I already heard about this once before.”

I wondered why the one who would cause the biggest ruckus about this was staying quiet, but now I see why.

“Hey, but how come are you telling me this now? If you told us sooner, then we could have done a simple marriage ceremony here.”

“Marriage ceremony? What for? Is there a need to draw global attention by doing that here? There probably are more people who would not think kindly of it. Min-jung and I are getting married because we decided to settle down at the 30th Floor. As for the ceremony, we are just going to share a meal with a few people we know at the 30th Floor.”

Still, that is a little disappointing.

“There are countless people out there who are fighting brutal battles to move up through the floors. It would be wrong to show people that we are going to settle down here comfortably as if we were gloating. Also, we have a lot of work to do as well, so we didn’t let people know right away. I’ll formally introduce her to you around lunch time tomorrow.”

It seemed he was feeling guilty about being able to live comfortably at the 30th Floor.

I don’t think you need to worry so much about that.

It is no easy task to get to the 30th Floor to begin with anyway. Also, no matter what others say, when it comes to a wedding ceremony, it would be best to do it properly.

That rascal thinks way too much. It’s a problem.

* * *

I had a bit of time left after the meal.

I didn’t exactly have anything to do for the time being. I thought I should call Lee Hyung-jin and train him, so I opened the message window. At that moment, Park Jung-ah called me.

“What is it?”

“Please close your eyes for a moment and give me your hand.”

“Huh?... Why?”

“Ah, please hurry.”

It was out of the blue, but I did as she asked for now.

“Please give me your right hand.”

...As she requested, I gave her my right hand.

Although I had my eyes closed, I could feel Park Jung-ah moving around busily.

I waited for a bit, and I could feel something cold on my fingers.

I opened my eyes, and there was a strange looking weapon placed in my fingers.

“It is a ring.”

Did all rings in the world melt away and disappear?

“Instead of calling it a ring, it looks more like a knuckle cru...”

“It’s a ring.”

“...All right. Let’s call it a ring.”

Still, no matter how I look at it, it is not a ring.

First of all, it has four holes instead of one.

I think it would be weird to even call it a knuckle crusher.

It has a large needle at the center.

It is not a knuckle... Anyway, this is not a ring. It is a weapon.

If you absolutely want to call this a ring, then that’s fine too, but...

Why did she put this on me all of the sudden?

“That’s Transmutable Thousand Arms.”

“Transmutable Thousand Arms? Oh, it had a form like this too.”

“Yes...”

With that, Park Jung-ah fell to silence.

This is a completely different form. It is not like anything we tried so far.

I never even imagined that such would be possible.

Is my imagination a bit behind other people's?

While I was thinking this, Park Jung-ah mumbled in a quiet voice,

“I... I would... like to have one... If you could provide one... for me...”

“Huh? Give you one?”

“Yes...”

This is unexpected, but I can understand it.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms is such a great weapon, and I happen to have two of them.

Still...

“I see. No.”

These are mine.

From the side, Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik were staring at me and trying to say something at me with their faces. However, well...

These are mine.

[TL: Just in case it was not made apparent enough, please note Park Jung-ah was not asking Lee Ho-jae for the Transmutable Thousand Arms. She

was most likely hoping for a ring.]

* * *

[Would you like to enter the arena?]

The faction matches were to be held in two steps. The first match was between Korea and Australia.

The Japanese server went up to the final match by default because they had the fewest number of people participating.

I responded to the message, and I was moved to the arena.

In the Korean side's formation, the first ones I noticed were Park Jung-ah and other challengers who were not related to the Order of Vigilance.

Most of the challengers who were members of the Order did not participate in the faction match.

The official story was that they decided to stay out of this one because they had been taking wins from everything so far. However, the real reason was for them to be assigned on the spectator seats and outside of the arena building as the Order of Vigilance's forces.

The total number of participants in the Korean faction was only a little over twenty people.

The participation rate is lower than I expected.

There were all sorts of people participating in the Australian's side.

Wow...

First, everyone from the gang-like groups participated.

It seemed they all participated regardless of individual abilities.

There were about sixty of them.

There are too many of them. This far exceeds the number projected by the Order.

On top of this, there are Japanese server's rankers in the mix.

Even the bearded uncle is there.

There are over twenty of the people from the Japanese server.

Lastly, there were rankers from the Korean server in the Australia's side.

There were Hard Difficulty rankers including Lee Jun-suk and Kim Gyoung-jin. There were other challengers as well, including Lee Chan-yong.

They are all rankers, nineteen of them in total.

I knew of their numbers precisely at least because there was a list.

[The match will begin in 360 seconds.]

The Australian faction was full of confidence.

That guy is grinning more widely with every passing second. It is spoiling my mood.

What was that bald guy's name? I don't remember.

"Hu hu hu. Is that all? What are you guys going to do? You guys should have gathered up more people even if you had to force them. Did you think it would work out fine to left it on volunteer basis? You ended up with this result because of your complacency, you hypocrite dumbasses!"

The bald head shouted loudly.

He sure is excited, really excited.

“It seemed he spread anxiety among the Korean server’s people about something bad happening during the faction match to steer them away from participating.”

“Ah, really? You knew about it?”

“Yes. It is not that I could not stop him. I just left it be. Some people came to tell us about this, but I just told them not to participate.”

I see, so those bastards had been busy.

“Hey, you leftover bastards on the back! It would be wise for you to think carefully even if it is late now. Do you really think your fucking rules or whatever would protect you! In the end, what’s important is power! Once that bastard over there dies here, it will be the end.”

As usual, the bald head from Australia was diligently and loudly running his mouth off.

Is he thinking about killing us all here and maintaining the force he has now to take over everyone else?

It seemed he was thinking that he had gathered enough forces to fight all of us even if everyone on the arena at this very moment decided to forfeit and leave the arena.

As for the Korean challengers who were standing behind me, they ignored the bald head who continued to shout. Instead, they locked their gazes with the bearded uncle from Japanese server.

The bearded uncle nodded with an emotionless face.

“What about the Japanese people?”

“Ignore them for now. They decided to stick to the side who wins.”

In other words, to put it kindly, they are being neutral. To put it

honestly, they are going to play bats in the most obvious manner possible.

[TL: In Korea, there is a children's book about the story of a war between four-legged land crawling animals and the birds. When facing the animosity from the four-legged land crawling animals, the bats claimed they were like other four-legged animals. However, when the bats faced animosity from birds later, they claimed they were like birds with wings.]

Well, it is not exactly for their profit. They are doing this for their own safety, but...

“Look! We even have Korean challengers in our side! Not only that, they are very powerful challengers! It is not too late for you! If you side with us, we will definitely guarantee your freedom, rights and rewards!”

Oh my, you think you are participating in some kind of a speech competition?

Your voice sure sounds energetic.

“I’ll skip asking you about the whole freedom and rights stuff. What’s the reward thing about?”

“He is saying they will have the power over each server, and the authorities will be acknowledged by each other. As for the reward... Well... a few items from the people they killed and having their turns with women. It is probably something like that.”

Um...

I felt awkward to hear such a straight explanation.

“I’m shocked that people actually went over to their side because of such terms.”

“There are rankers who hate being restricted by the rules of the Order. Also... as for their sexual lust that cannot be resolved...”

“Ah, don’t tell me about that in detail.”

Not just the sexual lust, but their desire to rule over people must be powerful.

The challengers had been living relatively dull lives in the Tutorial, other than having to face dangers. Living such lives for a long time, the desire must be so strong that it must be hard for them to resist.

In fact, when the Representative Federation gathered up people, they used a similar method.

Park Jung-ah turned to look at the people in Korea’s side.

“Now, everyone. Please pay attention for a moment.”

They had been listening to the bald head babbling on. Now, they gathered up together.

“I’m sure you all noticed this, but I’m afraid it will be hard for us to guarantee your safety in the arena. If you do not wish to participate, please forfeit right away and return to the spectator seats. We will be all right if you made that choice. Even if you forfeit in the middle of the match, you will receive the reward just the same.”

“Is everything all right outside of the arena building?”

“Yes. The members of the Order who did not participate in the faction match are on standby there.”

“Ah, I see. In that case, I would like to take my leave before the match starts.”

“Yes, I apologize for our inconvenience.”

A few of the challengers returned to the spectator seats right away.

“Inconvenience? You don’t need to say that. Well... Will you be alright if we all went back? It would be difficult for Mr. Lee Ho-jae to

fight all those people by himself. Won't it be better if we helped?"

"It would be difficult, but it will be all right if you didn't stay to help. I have no intention of forcing you to take on the risk that's unnecessary for you."

Difficult? No way.

[The match will begin in 60 seconds.]

Park Jung-ah was still talking to the people on the back. I left Park Jung-ah be. Instead, I stared at the front.

I confirmed the signal from Kim Gyoung-jin.

I brought out a dagger from the inventory and placed it on the ground.

After that, to the front of the dagger, five people were teleported from the Australian side's formation.

Kim Gyoung-jin, Lee Jun-suk and three others whom I didn't know the names of were there.

"Hey, Ho-jae bastard. Your Big Bro is here."

"Although I'm seeing this for the second time, this technique is definitely cheat-like. You can teleport without any restriction as long as you have the medium. On top of that, you can teleport with other people too. It is totally a cheat, a super cheat."

"Aren't you the one to talk? Your very existence itself is a cheat, you rascal."

"All right. All right. You have done good work. Ah, you worked hard too, Jun-suk."

Kim Gyoung-shik gave us the list of the people who defected to Australian's side and the Australian's plans.

Kim Gyoung-shik was never close to the Order since the beginning, so it seemed he was able to melt into the Australian's side with ease.

“Yes.”

This rascal still has that pissed look on his face.

Are you still like this because of getting beat up last time?

“By the way... Can we really win? I think the difference in forces is too great.”

Lee Jun-suk... This rascal also carries a mountain of worries inside him.

The worry and anxiety are written on his face.

“Difference in forces? Bullcrap. I will win even if you guys stayed on their side.”

“You are bluffing. If we stayed at their side, then we would win of course. Even now, I think this is going to be a close one even if we fought like our lives depended on it.”

From the side, Kim Gyoung-jin was boasting.

“In that case, why are you butting into a deadly battle where you could possibly die?”

“Why would I die? If it looks dangerous, then I'll just forfeit and bounce to the spectator seat.”

Spoken like a real Kim Gyoung-jin.

Still, including the three who came with them, they are all Hard Difficulty rankers. They would be of great help in the battle.

Lee Jun-suk can launch ranged attacks. With him as the main attacker, the others only have to protect him. If situation changes, then they

could continue the fight while switching up the positions. They definitely would be helpful to the battle.

“Jung-ah, why don’t you forfeit first and return? Honestly, you won’t be able to help us much.”

“...It hurts to know that I cannot really object to what you said. I will.”

“All right. See you later.”

The battle was about to start soon.

Most of the challengers on our side went back to the spectator seats.

There were just myself, Park Jung-ah, Kim Gyoung-jin, Lee Jun-suk and a few challengers who happened to have a needlessly strong sense of righteousness.

In comparison, as for the Australia’s side, they didn’t look like they were missing the five people who just came over to the Korea’s side. There was no commotion either.

They were still taunting us at the top of their lungs. However, what they were saying was not worth carefully listening to.

I ignored them and formed a long sword with the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

“I’m sure you already know this, but there are people on that side who were forced into this. You must not kill them all. Kill only the ones who are on the list. As for the rest, just neutralize them.”

“I got it.”

“Also... please keep up your fighting spirit. I am sorry I always end up making you handle the difficult matters.”

With that, Park Jung-ah returned to the spectator seats.

[The match will start.]

“I’ll handle the offensive measures. Everyone, please stay defensive for now. You guys too.”

I told them that and then turned around.

“Hey, so, is it really going to be all right if we don’t help you?”

“Ah, I said it will be all right! If you don’t like it, then just forfeit and watch.”

[Perseverance]

[Talaria's Wings]

Perseverance increased my combat abilities based on various conditions. Just like this skill, Talaria's Wings also improved my combat abilities and suppressed enemies.

In addition,

[Overwhelm]

[Soul Steal]

Overwhelm made the opponents shrivel mentally. I also used the Soul Steal, which dealt damage over time the enemies in the effective area.

Unless it is someone of high floor ranker’s caliber, anyone who approached me with hostility would temporarily fall to a state of panic.

“Oh, what is this? Some kind of a boost?”

It is the first time for me to use these skills in front of others.

Kim Gyoung-jin mutters from behind me. I stepped forward.

[Blink]

In an instant, I pierced into the Australian faction's formation. I swung my sword toward the bald head.

It was a full frontal maneuver, but they didn't even notice it. Instead, the bald head was busy yapping away about just how powerful their side was. While in middle of it, he lost his head. It was sent flying.

Meanwhile, the place was full of enemies who still didn't even realize that I approached them. Still, the black man, who was standing right next to the bald head, noticed me.

Did he say he was at the Sixth Floor of the Hell Difficulty?

Looking at him, I raised my sword.

The black man tried to stop my attack by bringing out a huge bastard sword, but it was no use.

I struck down the sword that I raised up.

The sword was layered with Aura Blade. It smoothly made its way down and slashed through the man and his gigantic sword.

The man's body was slashed through diagonally. Blood spewed out like a water fountain.

Let's wait.

One, two...

Finally, screams started to explode from the surrounding.

Their response is too slow.

There were people who took steps back in a hurry. Some plummeted onto the ground on their butt and struggled on the floor. Watching them, I thought that numbers were meaningless no matter how many

there were.

It would not have mattered if there were a hundred or a thousand.

With the Soul Steal, it probably would not have mattered if there were ten thousand.

In the end, this battle is just a fight between me and the extreme few who could respond to my speed.

As for the rest of their forces, which were many, they could not even be small fries or pawns.

People were quickly retreating. Before they could shout forfeit, I used another skill.

[Soul Cry]

It was a crowd control skill that forced enemies to attack me and disabled them from running away.

As for the people who were forced into this, and hence do not truly hold hostilities toward me, I'm okay with them forfeiting.

However, for those who are here to be my enemies willingly, I cannot let them escape.

I was standing in the middle of their formation. However, instead of trying to gang up on me, people were trying to back away as much as possible, even if it was just a step further.

I sighed. They were nothing but a bunch of losers.

I killed the noisy bastard who had been yapping away, and the powerful bastard who was standing next to him. Although these were all I had done so far, nobody was interested in anything but retreating.

Even the skilled ones among the Australian side looked like they were not liking the idea of stepping in first to fight. They were retreating

too.

In the chaos, there were people who were glaring at me. I looked at their eyes.

They were Lee Chan-yong and the rankers of the Korean server's Hard Difficulty.

All right. They are worthy of being my opponents.

Chapter 124

The Tournament (19)

Lee Chan-yong.

He was the challenger at the highest floor in the Korean server.

Until the first tournament happened, people said perhaps he was one of the strongest in the server, along with myself.

People thought it was a certainty for that he would clear 100th Floor soon and return to the reality. So, everyone gathered up the messages they wanted to give to their friends and families outside and entrusted their messages with Lee Chan-yong to deliver.

As for the Order of Vigilance, they went beyond just the messages for the families and friends. They even seriously talked about messages or measures to explain to the government.

However, in the past few months, the public's opinion about him was flipped upside down.

The 89th Floor of the Tutorial's Easy Difficulty...

He was only one floor away from the residential area at the 90th Floor. He was not far from the 100th Floor. However, he was stuck at the 89th Floor.

Until the 89th Floor, the man was unstoppable. However, he ended up stopping here. The reason was simple. The 89th Floor was the floor that truly tested the abilities of the challenger.

Lee Chan-yong's goal was just leaving the Tutorial as fast as he can and being reunited with his family.

He focused only on clearing the stages. He neglected the development of his skills and power.

It is true that people grow naturally in the process of trying hard to clear the stages.

However, Lee Chan-yong had been proceeding with clearing stages only with the perfectly-arranged plans of conquest based on the information gathered from the help of the Order and other sponsors.

He had been spending highest quality items and expendable potions like water as he proceeded through the stages. In the end, he was not able to achieve the growth necessary to face the 89th Floor.

His determination, focus and abilities to think and find conquest strategies were definitely commendable. However, they meant nothing at the 89th Floor.

The stages in Tutorial were always like this.

At one point, it would seem like the Tutorial was telling the challenger should focus on survival. However, all of the sudden, a new stage would test the challenger on something completely irrelevant to survival skills.

The Tutorial would teach the challenger to doubt others, and then it would throw a new stage at the challenger that requires cooperation.

Like this, the requirements for stages are all over the place.

While Lee Chan-yong was stuck at 89th Floor for several rounds, other runners who were behind him got to the 84th Floor before long.

Now, the situation was that these other people were definitely going to catch up to him. As of result, the people's interest completely left Lee Chan-yong.

Like that, he was forgotten, but how would he be feeling?

He is chewing on his loneliness in the waiting room. At the stage, he is

facing a wall that he cannot overcome. His days would have been repetitive of despair and defeat.

I could understand how he must have felt better than anyone.

I have experienced that once at the Sixth Floor.

In the pit of despair, repeating the challenge over and over like a machine...

No, perhaps due to hopelessness, maybe Lee Chan-yong had not even been challenging the stage anymore.

To someone like him, I'm sure an event like the tournament must have been quite thrilling, to the point of making him decide to put everything on the line.

It is very unfortunate.

I understood how he felt, and I sympathized with him. Meanwhile, I was also disappointed in him.

Lee Chan-yong was like a star who shined brighter than anyone.

To protect his family who are outside, he endured the bone-cutting pain of hard work and cleared the stages faster than anyone.

Instead of wallowing in fear about being tossed into a world of unknown, he set a definite goal and charged forward. He was so heroic to watch.

Other challengers who were also concerned about their families and friends all watched Lee Chan-yong and followed his steps.

I was like that too.

There are fifteen enemies.

There are enough to form two or three parties.

They are counted among the top of the Korean server's rankers. Their combination of classes is not bad.

A well-formed party can bring out the power that far exceeds a simple sum of individual members' strengths.

Even against an overwhelming raid monster, a well-formed party can hunt it down without sustaining any casualties. That was the power of such a group.

So, it seemed they must be thinking that they stood a chance. Even now.

I spent a bit of time killing the bald head and the black man from the Australian server. In that time, they assumed formations and successfully surrounded me.

Although I showed power that was beyond their expectations, they were thinking that they could win if they fought against me as a coordinated group.

Looking at them, I felt bitter.

Before the first tournament happened, Kim Min-hyuk made a proposal.

It started with the notion that preventing crimes by show of force has its limits. The proposal ended with Kim Min-hyuk saying maybe I should hide my strength instead.

I thought it was ridiculous.

Still, as he said, I hid my strength to a sufficient extent.

It was not like I had any reason to reveal my full strength through the tournament anyway.

As of result, before the second tournament started, there was more talk from people saying that perhaps the difference between me and the high-level rankers had decreased significantly.

Some were saying that it is not an overwhelming difference like it was during the first tournament. They wondered if maybe the high-level rankers stood some chance now.

They said I could be handled if a party fought against me, and some said a party would even have the upper hand.

As people talked about such in the community, it seemed these people were thinking they stood a chance.

Of course, they were being delusional.

A strange-looking green arrow flew at me.

I wrapped my body with Talaria's Wings. Instead of dodging, I actually charged in toward the direction where the arrow came from.

The magic arrow and I collided, and green smoke spread wide immediately.

It's poison.

I ignored it for now.

As soon as I started my approach, there were people trying to stand in my path to the mage.

They were the so-called tankers who held the front line and protected the ones behind them.

Their role was drawing the enemy's attention and enduring as long as possible without dying.

I swung my sword and cut off the arm of the warrior in front of me.

I was going to slash through the man's entire body in half like earlier. However, the warrior skillfully twisted his body away.

Right after that, another warrior was throwing a his body at me from

the side.

Using my left arm's elbow, I struck his chin to neutralize him. A hook was coming at my ankle, but I avoided it with ease.

Again, I used my sword to cut below the chin of the warrior who had his arm cut. After that, I swung the Talaria's Wings in a large motion.

I shook off other warriors who were trying to stick to me. I layered my sword with mana.

This time, the mana did not stabilize in Aura Blade form. The sword was full of mana. In that state, I swung it across the air.

The mana was launched to the front. The enemies at the rear of their formation immediately cast a barrier to protect themselves. However, due to the shockwave, they all fell down.

A large crack materialized in the enemy's formation. I charged in further.

Every time the Talaria's Wings swept the surroundings, the tips of the wings, the sharp crystals to be exact, cut the enemies' arms and legs.

When the wings struck down, that struck down an opponent with it.

My sword, which was layered with Aura Blade, was swung. Every time it was swung, the barriers and armor tried to stop it, but in vain. The sword swings resulted in fountain-like spread of blood every time.

The enemies' attacks could not deal much damage to me.

Their swords and spears were not able to pierce through my armor or skin. Magic attacks occasionally flew at me, but they were mostly blocked by the Talaria's Wings.

They moved around quickly and tried desperately to constantly change their formations.

Front and back, left and right... They were trying hard not to get done in by my attacks and distract my focus as much as possible.

They were desperately trying to make a gap in my defense. However, their effort only resulted in making gaps in their own formation.

This was not a simple difference in specs and skills.

Of course, my power skills had overwhelming differences in performance and levels. Still, the difference in the ability and mastery were greater.

The difference between us was essentially the difference in experience.

From the Sixth Floor to the 11th Floor...

As I passed through six different stages that required party play, I continued battle after battle.

I destroyed, blew up, bit and beat enemies.

Every day, every hour and minute...

Through those days, during each round, which contained 30 days, I spent all 30 days inside the stages and I never wasted a moment. I focused only on the battles.

During breaks for meals or rest, I spent them by practicing the new things I realized during the battle or new skills I acquired during the battles.

Like that, I even forgot the flow of time. I only had extreme obsession in my head. I sacrificed all my time to do battle. That's how I was able to get through those stages.

There was this difference between me and these people, and the difference was too great.

One after next, the number of the enemies is decreasing.

Also, because of the Soul Steal's effect, every time an enemy died, I regained mana and vitality.

However, the effect felt stronger than the usual.

In fact, I could even feel a sense of pleasure from it.

Moreover...

[God of Death is very happy.]

[God of Death is satisfied with your actions.]

[God of Death is overjoyed by your actions.]

Every time I killed an enemy, the God of Death was showing a strong response.

Even before this, I had killed many enemies while the Soul Steal was active.

However, this was the first time to see such strong reactions from the God of Death.

What could be the difference?

Because this time, these people are real?

Now that I think about it, this is the first time for me to kill real people.

Nobody cared about this, and I never thought about this either, but actually, I had never killed an actual human being before.

Until today that is.

I just committed murder. However, it didn't trigger any emotional response from me in particular.

After all, I had killed all sorts of monsters throughout the Tutorial stages.

In that case, is the difference a matter of the difference between beings I met in the Tutorial and the living people?

Does that mean the others I met inside the Tutorial stages are not really alive?

Is that the difference?

Having thought this far, the pleasure I was feeling at the moment didn't feel all that pleasant anymore.

It was unpleasant now.

The unpleasant mental pleasure continued for a while.

Before my spoiled mood could fall to the bottom,

“P... Please, spare my life, Ho-jae...”

Lee Chan-yong was drenched in blood. He was begging for his life. I felt like the blood in my brain was getting cold.

There weren't any enemies left around me.

The people who were not drawn by the Soul Cry all forfeited and ran to the spectator seats. I killed all enemies.

In the end, why did I leave Lee Chan-yong?

Is it because I saw my past self in him?

Perhaps what I'm seeing is my future self.

If I ever reach the limit of my abilities and cannot progress anymore. I wonder how I would look like?

Am I confident that I won't end up like Lee Chan-yong?

“Ho-jae, I... I was wrong. I didn't do this for greed. I just didn't know what I was getting into. I didn't know. I really didn't. I just wanted to participate in a match called the faction match. I had no intention of going against the Order's will or...”

Perhaps, what he needed was time, time to get a hold of himself?

Understanding and conversation?

In the end, although I came this far with this, I feel regretful. I feel like this is my fault.

“You know well, don't you, Ho-jae... I am usually not interested in this kind of...”

I felt the unpleasant pleasure to the end. I put away the Transmutable Thousand Arms in the inventory.

* * *

The faction matches concluded awkwardly.

While the match was happening, there were battles taking place at the spectator seats and outside of the arena building.

Unlike the Order's past method of hunting down and executing all related individuals, they based their measures on observation and reports. The Order executed only the ones they were absolutely certain of being criminals. As for the rest, they stopped at just giving them warnings.

Compared to the past, the Order's method was a little less harsh. However, the people who watched it all happen had horrified looks on their faces regardless.

Also, their gazes on me were...

As usual, the executions carried out to solve the problems gave birth to new problems.

In the process of minimizing such problems as much as possible, Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk became extremely busy. I didn't want to be in middle of all that. So, I decided to leave the tournament quickly.

Park Jung-ah pleaded with me and asked me to wait until the last day when her work was done. However, when the sixth day of the tournament came and it was possible for me to leave immediately, I returned to the waiting room.

I was disappointed.

If possible, I wanted to be at the tournament with everyone to the last day with a brighter atmosphere.

It would had been nice if only good, pleasant things happened.

No matter how I think about this, I'm saddened by how the tournament went.

There was no information about if there was going to be another tournament. That made me feel even more sad.

I had no idea when I was going to meet them again, yet this is how I parted with them.

Again, I'm having regrets after the fact.

I developed a bad habit.

[Welcome to the waiting room.]

The waiting room was completely empty. I sat on the bed.

It was a world where I was all by myself.

Of course, the conversations were still in full swing in the

communities. In the lower floors of the Hell Difficulty, there were other challengers including Lee Hyung-jin.

However, not a single one of them were directly related to me.

That's how I felt.

The empty waiting room felt strange.

Usually, it was only obvious that I would be in this place. I was away from this place for just a few days due to a special event. That was all.

However, I was not able to come to terms with that easily.

Instead, I was thinking about how this place was god-forsaken solitary confinement, and I should be having fun spending time with the people on the other side.

I felt lonelier than how I felt before the tournament.

It had only been six days with the people. Could it be that my mind became weak because I was feeling the warmth of the people through those days, although it was not much?

Compared to the first tournament, which was only for three days, this tournament was longer only by three additional days. However, that difference felt huge.

It had not been long at all since I came back from the tournament, but I was regretting my decision once again.

The people I met and chattered away with at the tournament...

The people I met and spent a few days with at the 16th Floor, the Holy Knight, Knight, Mercenary, Adventurer, and Mage (although she turned out to be a doppelganger.)...

The monks who I had conversations about the combat methods and philosophies after duels at the 13th Floor...

Idy who was with me through the 12th Floor and taught me the joy of daily life instead of the battle and conquest in Tutorial...

I wanted to have conversations with them.

Anyone of them.

I opened the skill window and read the description about the Dead Summon skill.

I thought deeply about summoning Idy to help my loneliness.

After agonizing over it, I relinquished the thought. Instead, I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory. I quietly started to hurt myself.

Like that, I waited for the stand by time to pass and time to enter the stage to come.



PDF by: traitor/1ZEN



The Tutorial Is Too Hard

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- Part 5 -

**-Author-
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[Light Novel Bastion]

GANDARA 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



Chapter 125

Tutorial 18th Floor (1)

[TL: Instead of “mister,” I decided to use “uncle” from now on.]

[Uncle. Aren't you even curious about what the gods talked about?]

[It's all right if you don't tell me. If you carelessly tell me about them, the gods will hate it. One should receive things gratefully when given.]

[Even if what they talked about are not the good kind of things about you?]

[It's all right. Although I am helping you, there is no need for you to tell me everything at the cost of losing the possibility of getting any help, even if it could pose a danger to me.]

[...]

[...]

[You are saying you won't tell me about what you are doing, right?]

[...Besides this, about the 18th Floor, you should be careful. In a way, it could be even more dangerous than any other floor.]

[Please don't divert the subject.]

* * *

I stopped moving, and my body was completely recovered by the healing effect of the waiting room.

I put away the Transmutable Thousand Arms and checked the time.

I still have some time left.

I should just go eat.

I had a bit of an egg sandwich left. I brought it out and ate it with a soft drink. However, for some odd reason, it tasted bitter.

My insides felt stuffy too.

I was at the waiting room, so it was not like I could feel hunger anyway.

Let's just eat meat jerkies.

It has been a while since I ate it. I brought out the jerkies and picked up the water bottle.

As I chewed on the jerkies, only its saltiness spun around inside my mouth.

I took a sip of water to wash the inside of my mouth and opened the community forums.

Checking the community forums while eating was an old habit.

So, I opened it unconsciously.

My mouth still had the bitter taste of the egg sandwich. I washed my mouth again with water. I closed the community window.

It was a mistake to open it.

It had not been long since what happened yesterday.

People were still talking a lot about it.

Although I had the window open only for a moment, what I saw was...

Again, it is reminding me of my old days as a professional gamer.

I had not thought about it in a long while.

Back in those days, especially when I was not far from retiring, I had heard all sorts of stuff from people over the internet.

Back then, I accumulated so much stress from them.

The community was not like how it was with the internet comments back then. It was not like the community notes cursed and swore at me.

I just noticed the people's surprise, fear and anxiety. From those emotions, I felt another wall between the people and myself.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: What are you up to?]

I got a message from Park Jung-ah.

Did she finish most of the work?

How should respond?

Should I say that I had been digging the ground like a retard?

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: I was not doing anything.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: See? It would have been better if you left after staying with us a little longer.]

I really should have done that.

To console my own disappointment and regret, I chatted with Park Jung-ah for a while.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: A wand that has a pre-installed magic spell?]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Yes. Each magic wand form has a pre-installed basic magic spell.]

What she just told me was enough to make my ear pop open.

She was saying that Transmutable Thousand Arms included a wand form that could use magic.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Tell me the detail of its shape. I'll try it right now.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Yes. Please wait a moment. I wrote it down on the notebook... Where is it...]

I tried changing the Transmutable Thousand Arms to the shape that Park Jung-ah explained. As she said, I really could use magic with it.

Of course, it used substantial amount of mana. Also, it was extremely weak in comparison to what I experienced at the 16th Floor. However, this was enough.

First, I would be able to sense the elemental type better with this. The elemental type is the key to using magic.

I should be able to get a feel for this as I strike myself with this wand's magic!

Also, to begin with, I was trying to learn magic for only one reason.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Now, you won't have to worry about how to get the great magic resistance!]

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Yep! It is perfect! It's the best!]

From the start, I was trying to learn magic so I could use it to hurt

myself. I was trying to raise my magic resistance with it.

For a while, a magic spell of this level should be enough.

The same could be said about various other types of resistances.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: Hm hm! I was going to boast about finding it by telling you about it on the night of the last day of the tournament.]

Hahaha.

That's unbecoming of her. How adorable.

The reason for her higher tension messages is simple.

[TL: I don't know why, but the author literally said "tension" in English.]

It's probably because of me.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Thank you.]

I'm so thankful for her.

After a brief silence, another message from Park Jung-ah arrived.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: In that case, please grant me a wish as a way of giving me your thanks.]

A wish?

Why a wish all of the sudden?

Is there something else you want from me?

No, more importantly, is there something I could give to her?

While having such questions in my head, I was writing a brief message

back, saying ‘Okay, I will.’ However, another message came from Park Jung-ah.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: You definitely need to keep your promise, Big Bro.]

[TL: There is no way to localize this expression, so I'll describe it instead. Literally speaking, she said "Big Brother" to him, the same title that a younger sister calls an older brother by. The Korean term for this is unique and specific for the gender (this is the term used by a younger female to an older male, which is different from the term used when it is a younger male addressing an older male.). However, when said to someone who is not biologically related, someone who she is romantically interested, and when said to someone who is almost 10 years over her age and is borderline being called an old man by younger generation (such as Park Jung-ah to someone of Lee Ho-jae's age) in addition to the first two things, then it carries some flirting or even sexual undertone in taboo way.]

I deleted the message I was about to send. I just stood there.

Considering Park Jung-ah's personality, is such a line even possible from her?

The kid used to stutter and blush when we asked her to use casual, non-honorary tone with me.

She had gotten better, but she still called me like a captain.

When it was awkward to call me by a title, then she just omitted the subject of the sentence and just said what she needed to tell me.

Now, she was calling me Big Bro.

After a brief moment of blank spaces, a message arrived. It gave me a glimpse of the situation at Park Jung-ah's end.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: sklfjdj aalekfj geli valkdsj Ah, I'm sorry. I'm nuts. I'm a little drunk. Ah... theois is... Big Sis Yuu-jung sent that message. I didn't write it.]

I could not help but to smile by myself.

Unfortunately, it was not possible for a person to send the message using someone else's ID.

It looks like she must be really drunk.

Also, next to her, who is drunk, there must be a dating coach sticking by.

During this tournament, we learned from the Japanese server's challengers that there is a booze that even the challengers of the Tutorial can get drunk on.

We were going to gather and drink together after the tournament ended.

In the end, because of work, it didn't work out.

It seemed Park Jung-ah was drinking that with Lee Yuu-jung as a way to relieve the stress from the tournament.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: I got it. I'll grant your wish. I already told you this earlier, but thank you so much, in so many ways. Please tell Lee Yuu-jung that I said thanks.]

Even after that, Park Jung-ah rambled on for a while. I dwindled away at the time reading her messages.

Thanks to her, I was able to enjoy the remainder of the waiting time.

Even as she was sending me messages, she was continuing to drink. She could not get any more drunk. She finally said she was going to sleep. With that, the conversation ended.

After the conversation ended, I started to really prepare for the stage.

The waiting time was to end at 12 at midnight. Just before that, Park Jung-ah sent me a final message. I thought she was asleep.

[Park Jung-ah, 44th Floor: I'm sorry.]

[The 18th round for the Tutorial will begin in a moment.]

[Round 18, Day 0, 00:00]

I headed to the 18th Floor Stage through the bonfire room as soon as I checked the start of the Round 18.

* * *

The stage was a bright beach area.

To be precise, it was a tourist city with cool-looking beach. This was the setting of the 18th Floor stage.

The buildings were mostly made of stones. They were painted white. The people around there were wearing bright and flashy color clothing.

Based on the buildings, people's clothing and the numerous merchandise on the street, it seemed the place's setting was a little more developed than the medieval period on Earth.

One thing unique about this place was that there were tons of people.

It was as if the day was some sort of a holiday. It was not just at the beach. Even the streets of the city were jam-packed with people.

The scenery was too distant from the concept of danger. I was dumbfounded.

I was surprising to see people not hesitating at all to come within my attack range.

I tried to evade the people and get to somewhere that didn't have many people. However, no matter how far I walked, I couldn't find such a place.

Like that, still surprised, I was walking around the city, but finally, a message appeared.

[The 18th Floor's trial will start.]

Description: Welcome to the greatest vacation spot in EeEvan continent.

AoAeo island is famous for its beautiful beach. However, it is even more famous for the Grand Paramal Festival, which is held only once a decade.

You are a seeker who happened to have arrived at the AoAeo island on the day the festival started.

Unfortunately, before you could enjoy the festivity, there is something that you need to do.

Your client asked you to find and eliminate someone who is enjoying the festival at the AoAeo island.

Please complete your mission.

The target is wearing dark purple clothing on the upper body and black clothing on the lower body.

The target's face is ordinary looking.

As for the height and weight... they are not well known.

The description of the target's appearance will definitely help you a lot.

Wish you the best!

[Clear condition]

Find the target within 30 days and kill the target.

After reading the message, what I thought first was “Where’s Waldo?”

I looked for Waldo a lot when I was a kid.

The second thing I thought of was who should I curse at.

As I slowly read the message that described the setting for the stage, curses and swears started to bottle up at my neck.

Oh my... What kind of bullshit message for a mission is this?

The description of the appearance would greatly help me? Do dogs have horns?

The face is ordinary, and if the height and weight are unknown, then it means I have no choice but to find someone with the described clothing.

On top of that, the description for the clothing only mentioned the colors. It didn’t tell me the type of the clothing.

Bikini? T-shirts? Coat? How should I know?

This information is supposed to help me?

Wish me the best?

I want to let out my frustration at someone.

[God of Adventure is feeling wronged.]

Why would you be feeling wronged?

Now that I think about it, after I finished the 17th Floor and when I was just about to leave Kiri Kiri’s field, I think Kiri Kiri was about to tell me something about the 18th Floor.

However, back then, my mentality was shattered after hearing the theme for the 17th Floor, so I didn’t care to listen. I went back straight

to the waiting room.

Damn it. I should have stayed calm and listened to Kiri Kiri.

Lately, because I had not been needing her help to clear stages, I took her advice too lightly.

Damn it... I should just try finding this target anyway.

* * *

Wow. I think I'll go nuts.

There are too many people.

Even the Everland during the Day of the Children would not be this busy with people.

During the 2002 World Cup that was held in Korea, I think the Gwang-wha Gate Main Plaza was this crowded once.

[TL: In Korea, there is a holiday called the Day of the Children. It's an official holiday where people get paid day off from work so they could spend time with their children. As for Everland, please think of places like Disneyland.]

My view is packed with people. If the target was among them, I am not sure if I could pick the target out of the crowd.

The noise caused by so many people was making me dizzy.

There was blazing sunlight, and the air was humid. The discomfort was stabbing the sky itself.

However, for some reason, people were really enjoying themselves. They were chatting away happily.

Some were even playing musical instruments and dancing on the streets.

Also, when people started doing that, other people who had been passing by came into join the dance.

After that, even more people around the area danced along with the rest.

After that, the people behind them also danced.

Like that, every single one in the street danced.

Like that, as everyone started to dance, the street became completely blocked.

I had no way to move around this, so I had to wait until the dance was over.

The dance ended after about 30 minutes. However, I ended up running into another group of dancing people after walking for a little bit.

The dance fiasco was repeated.

Who has been calling this a festival? This is not a festival.

This is Dance Dance Heavy Labor.

Still, people were smiling as if they were enjoying this.

They were singing, drinking something, and dancing.

They appeared to be very excited and happy, but I could not feel the same.

If I could not feel the same about what others were happy about, then that only resulted in frustration.

I was getting exhausted from frustration. Unconsciously, I suddenly grabbed onto the wrist of a woman who was passing by.

I didn't give it much thought at all. I just grabbed the wrist.

If I must find a reason for my action, it was because something moved in front of my eyes when I was giving the world a blank stare. So, I grabbed her wrist.

I would have understood it if she hated having her wrist grabbed all of the sudden by a stranger. However, she smiled widely and asked what it was about.

Now that I had the opportunity anyway, I decided to ask one thing that I was curious about.

"Just when does the Grand Paramal Festival end?"

The woman put up a surprised look on her face for a moment. She then responded as if she understood.

"Ah! You must be a foreigner who does not know much about the Paramal Festival!"

"Yes, well..."

To be precise, she is right. I'm a foreigner to this place.

"The Grand Paramal Festival continues for a month."

Having heard what she said, I saw the ground below my feet sinking. I felt like I was falling to the depth of abyss.

A month?

The condition of clearing the stage was finding and killing the target within 30 days.

I thought this festival would not last long; it would last three days at the most.

However, she told me this will go on for a month.

This is hopeless.

“It looks like you don’t know how to enjoy the Grand Paramal Festival. Why don’t you come with me to where my group is? I’ll tell you how to enjoy the festival. First, try this drink.”

She handed me a bottle of the drink she had on her hand as she explained in exhilarating tone.

The bottle contained blue, luminescent drink.

Everyone in the street was holding one.

Anyway, the drink is not the important issue here.

Huk... What is this? Am I being picked up by a woman?

Along with that, negative keywords such as kidnapping and organ trading came to my mind briefly.

Agony after agony zapped through my head.

Should I just follow her?

Should I just follow her and try enjoying the festival?

It might be fun if I tried.

Also, my mental state is quite dangerous at the moment.

If I relax by mingling with the people, it might get better. I never know.

The stage does not appear to be dangerous in any particular way too.

Finding the target seem to be difficult, but it is not a dangerous task.

Would I ever be able to run into another stage as safe as this one? In

Hell Difficulty?

In the first place, it is not like I can see any clues for clearing the stage.

It won't make much difference if I played around for a few days and resumed the search.

I should just use this opportunity to take a long, one month vacation and challenge it again during the next round. That might be the better plan.

Should I just follow this woman?

Such temptations were floating up in my head.

"I'm sorry. I have work to do."

Still, I refused and parted with the woman.

No matter how lonely I was, no matter how hungry for attention and friendship I was, I thought it would be wrong if I aimlessly loosened up and played around.

This is the inside of a Tutorial stage.

My assumption about safety was just an assumption, not a certainty.

Also, I don't understand what the festival is for. I don't know why everyone is dancing and finding the dance so fun.

I must not loosen up.

I got to the front of the tall building that I was eyeing briefly. By the time I got there, it was already almost the end of the lunch time.

I scaled the building's wall and sat on the top.

It was the tallest building in the area, so I could clearly see the

surroundings from there.

Now, I should calm down and try to find the target from here.

That day, until the sun went down and the night came, I sat there and watched the street. However, I could not find the target.

Chapter 126

Tutorial 18th Floor (2)

Last night, I used the flight ability of the Talaria's Wings to fly above the island and check it.

I realized one very disappointing fact.

This island was quite huge.

From the west end to the east end, it would have taken a whole day to walk across. It was that big.

Also, the island was full of people on the ground.

Day and night, the people didn't go to sleep.

As if they had gone insane, the people played and played, as if they had really gone mad.

[Round 18, Day 2, 07:30]

This is the second day since I entered the 18th Floor stage.

I sat on the rooftop as soon as the morning came and started to check the street.

The view was not so different from the day before.

The people were playing around loudly since the morning.

They were dancing with bright smiles like little children. However, for some odd reason, watching them only frustrated me.

At a glance, the whole thing looks like just a glimpse of a great festival.

However, for some reason, they were very strange.

They were all too kind, like a page out of a fairytale.

Am I overthinking this?

Otherwise, could it be that my personality developed a problem?

I knew I could not say no to such questions. That made me feel even more uneasy.

Of the countless people on the street, I saw a middle-aged man. He caught my eyes.

He was not the target.

He was not anyone unique or special either.

He was just a middle-aged uncle with a fat belly.

To explain why he caught my eyes... He was incredibly horrible at dancing.

It was very obvious that he had no talent for rhythm. The way he stumbled around looked unsightly. However, he was dancing harder than anyone.

Also, other people applauded the man and danced next to him.

What a great picture to watch.

On the street, in the faces of everyone, there was no anxiety, panic or frustration. There were no such gloomy faces.

It is surprising.

Since yesterday, I spent whole days sitting at the rooftop observing the people.

However, of all people who I observed from here so far, there wasn't anyone who was not happy.

They were all kind, enthusiastic and cordiality.

It is truly surprising.

It appeared that they were all born for the purpose of being happy and smiling.

The street was busy, so a lot of people fell over from waves of other people.

However, when people did fall, the others smiled, helped to get back up and consoled them.

After that, the people who just fell and got up were overcome by the good gestures of the others and thanked them.

Other people who were watching this also looked very happy to see their interactions, and conveyed their honest feelings.

Like that, they had conversations and grew close.

The people became friends like that and went somewhere to dance.

Seriously, they were kind-hearted scenes to watch.

The fact that I was finding them strange made me question myself if I was suffering from a shattered personality.

However, I can say this with certainty.

This island is too peaceful. It is unrealistic.

Everyone was innocent and honest.

However, the world and the humans could not be like this.

Something is odd.

Like that, as I watched the people from the roof top, frustration slowly swelled up inside me.

These strangers were all completely empathetic to another and getting along. However, I could not be empathetic to their behaviors, and it felt like this was reaffirming the wall between myself and these other people.

It felt uncomfortable.

[Round 18, Day 2, 11:50]

I had been chewing on meat jerkies for lunch, and I realized a critically important fact.

Because everyone was dancing on the street, I thought this Grand Paramal Festival was a parade-like festival that involved lots of dancing.

I thought it meant everyone was out on the street to enjoy it.

However, when I used mana to look inside a building through windows, I came to realize that I was wrong.

People were playing not just on the street, but also inside buildings.

Not only do I have to observe the street by sitting on the rooftop, I also have to observe the people inside buildings.

This fact alone substantially increased the difficulty of the mission, which was finding the target.

I agonized over what to do from now on. In the end, I had no choice to make a haphazard compromise.

I'll spend a day observing the street while sitting on the roof. I'll spend the next day going inside random buildings.

Next day, I'll go back to observe the street.

I decided to repeat this cycle.

I'll observe the streets on the even numbered days, and I'll observe the insides of buildings on odd numbered days.

I didn't know if this was an efficient method. However, I could not think of a better way.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 2, 06:05]

It was late evening.

I was thinking about bringing out yet another meat jerky. However, instead, I headed to a café that I found during the day.

By sitting at the second-floor terrace of the café, I could have a quick meal while observing the street.

In addition, I could check the people inside the café.

Fortunately, as soon as I entered the café, the waiter led me to the second-floor terrace before I said anything.

There were quite a lot of people at the café.

I learned that there were also a lot of people who were enjoying the festivity by sitting and chatting instead of dancing on the streets.

I sat at the second-floor terrace and checked the menu.

First, I pointed at a picture of bread and ordered it.

The menu didn't have any drinks.

The waiter didn't say anything about drinks. He just left with the menu.

I could just bring out water from the inventory, so it doesn't matter, but still...

As I waited for the bread, I checked the inside of the café.

I didn't see anyone who appeared to be the target.

I was looking down the street beyond the terrace. While I was at it, a waitress brought me the bread.

It was not the same waiter from earlier. This time, it was a waitress.

Along with the bread, she brought a glass of drink.

I told her that I didn't order any drink. She said the drink comes with meals no matter what.

It seemed she noticed that I was finding it surprising. She said,

"It looks like you just arrived at the island today?"

I wonder why she thought that.

I told her that I arrived yesterday.

"Ah, so you are a foreigner. In addition, you don't know anything about this island's festival. You should have come after learning a bit about the AoAeo Island."

The tone of her voice was that of someone who was lecturing a tourist who was lacking in preparations.

This didn't lessen my curiosity though.

“How did you know I was a foreigner?”

The waitress covered her mouth and smiled.

Instead of telling me right away, she was smiling. That annoyed me. However, I sensed no malicious intent in the waitress's face.

“Try this drink. You will know.”

I could sense a mysterious pride and expectations in her face.

Could it be that they are that proud of this drink?

“Just what is that drink?”

“Paramal. This drink's name is Paramal. It is a drink for wishing world peace.”

The waitress left after that.

They said that the name of the festival taking place in this island was called Grand Paramal.

That means this drink is the core of the festivities.

I thought the festival's goals were recklessly indulging in dance or sex. However, it seemed the festival was for advertising this drink that was the specialty of this region.

First, I tried out a bit of the bread that was served.

It was delicious.

It tastes like sweet red beans.

Next is the drink.

It is blue, luminescent drink.

I cast a shadow on it with my hand, and I was able to confirm that the drink was faintly luminescent.

There is a need to seriously think about if I should drink this or not.

It wasn't that I was simply curious if a luminescent drink was harmful to a human body.

The strangeness I felt from everyone in the AoAeo island...

Also, this is the special drink that everyone is enjoying...

I have plenty of reasons to be suspicious of this.

I personally think this drink is a narcotic of some sort.

I have never heard of narcotics that make people happy and positive. However, narcotics that make people enthusiastic and fun loving might be able to bring out similar results.

Perhaps the drink has something magical.

The problem is this.

Do I need to try the drink to resolve my curiosity?

I am confident about poisons.

I have the great poison resistance.

I have resistance against magic as well.

I don't think it would be enough, but I won't have a big problem as long as it is a small amount.

I thought those and tried drinking it by poking it with my tongue first.

It tastes delicious.

It was sweet.

It tastes like molten ice cream.

I tried taking a sip.

It was not poison.

There was no abnormal response from my body for consuming it.

However, for some mysterious reason, it felt like I was feeling a little better.

Other than feeling a little better, the drink didn't have any other effect in particular. Let's check it out some more.

That day, I tried three sips of the Paramal.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 4, 09:00]

I went to the café right on time of its opening.

Compared to the rooftop, I think the terrace is better for observing the street.

“Welcome, Ho. Bread again today?”

It was Hyang, the waitress I met yesterday.

‘Hyang’ was her name.

[TL: ‘Hyang’ sounds like the Korean word for ‘scent’ or ‘fragrance.’]

Strangely, everyone in this island had a single-syllable name.

Also, even the foreigners introduced themselves with a single-syllable

name.

Are these stage names for everyone like masks on a masked banquet?

I found it interesting.

I introduced myself as 'Ho.'

Hyang said that my name was unique. She smiled.

I told her that I found her name to be even more unique.

Hyang explained that my name was rare but a great name.

Is that so?

She said she found it amusing that it was similar to her own name.

I asked what it was. She said that my name sounded like her family member's name.

I spent the whole day sitting at the café and observing the street. However, I was not able to find the target.

I didn't do anything in particular while observing, so I wasted a lot of time. Still, it was not boring.

It was quite fun observing the people and checking out how they enjoyed the festival.

Like the second day, Hyang came to be my conversational partner whenever she could.

That day, I drank almost all of a glass of Paramal.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 5, 03:40]

It was the fifth day. The dance of madness on the street started to quiet down.

The festival continued for a long time. Could it be that people are getting physically exhausted?

Now, instead of spending whole day dancing, people started to hang out with others whom they became close with.

Also, they became close with others, spent time with them, and then became close with some other people.

There were fewer people dancing on the street. However, it was still bizarre to watch.

Today was odd-numbered day. It was the day for me to search insides of buildings.

I checked out buildings that I didn't get to enter during the third day.

No building barred anyone from entering.

In fact, even private residences of island people allowed people in after just ringing the door bells.

I visited Mr. Gong's home. Actually, this was by a mistake.

His home looked more like a workshop.

It was an unexpected visit due to a misunderstanding. However, having heard the bell, Mr. Gong welcomed me.

It was as if an old friend visited him for the first time in 10 years.

I could not let him know that I rang the bell without realizing that this was his private residence.

At the door, I spent a long time talking to Mr. Gong.

I never knew I was such a great conversationalist.

Mr. Gong invited me in. We continued our chatter at the living room.

I wanted to eventually leave and check other buildings. However, Mr. Gong wanted to have a meal with me.

In the end, I was not able to refuse his invitation. I ended up wasting quite a long time here, much more than I thought.

However, we enjoyed the meal.

Mr. Gong's family members were all kind.

The food was delicious as well.

Lately, I didn't have much of an appetite, so I had been eating meat jerkies or simple breads to handle meals.

After the dinner, Mr. Gong's daughter, 'Gang' said she wanted to go out and play with me.

It was unfortunate, but I had no choice but to say no.

I found a casino and a bar.

I decided to search places like these during the night on both odd and even numbered days.

At the bar, they mixed the Paramal with alcoholic beverages to make cocktails.

This day, I drank three glasses of Paramal.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 8, 11:20]

I arrived at the café a little late because I was greeting the people I had become close with.

As soon as I opened the café door and entered, I could hear people greeting me and greeting me with good mornings.

I said hello back to each and everyone individually.

I knew them all. They were also all good people who I was close with.

“Ho, how about coming along with me today again? I’m going to the outdoor swimming place next to the Lion Water Fountain.”

Chun and Chin, the brothers, who were eating their breakfast at a corner of the café, said to me.

Every morning, they took care of breakfast at the café and headed out to the street to play.

I apologized and went past them.

They joked around from behind, so I turned to wave my hand at them.

“Let’s definitely go there together before the festival ends!”

They were recommending the place to me to the end. I told them I got it and sat down.

It was the seat at the window on the terrace. Now, it had become my designated seat.

“Ho! Instead of sitting there by yourself, come here and join me. I’ll treat you for the morning.”

Myoung, who was sitting at a sofa, made the suggestion.

Myoung was a foreigner who came to visit the AoAeo island.

“I’m sorry, Myoung. I like this seat by the window.”

Myoung didn't move to the window seat.

Myoung knew that I had something that I had to do by myself. No, he felt it.

I was thankful for the consideration.

I expressed my gratitude.

It seemed Myoung was overcome by my expression of gratitude. He rubbed his nose and told me honestly that he was feeling that way.

I was surprised by his honest confession, and it also felt great to hear it.

Myoung was happy again because I was feeling happy.

It was a kind of mental resonance.

I sat by the window. I could feel warm satisfaction.

It was not a pretend-sensation.

I felt the emptiness inside me getting filled.

The emotion was possible because of a miracle called Paramal.

In the past few days, I drank Paramal little by little and tried to figure out what kind of effect the drink had.

First, Paramal was not an addictive narcotic.

Next, Paramal was not some substance that influenced one's mental state.

I was not able to confirm yet if it was a type of magical potion.

I have not identified its true nature yet, but I now had a rough idea as

to what kind of effects the Paramal had.

This drink connected people.

It allowed the people to share their emotions and feelings.

Being able to feel others' emotions was closer to a disaster than a blessing.

The idea of being able to look under the mask that people wear is awkward and unpleasant, because the insides of most people were not all that clean.

However, it is different in this island.

The people of AoAeo island were pure, kind and honest.

In addition, they were enthusiastic and energetic.

Sharing emotions while being surrounded by such people swept other people into their emotions.

After drinking the Paramal, it came naturally as one spent the time dancing in middle of the street with hundreds or thousands of people tightly packing the place.

I spent my entire life wondering about the insides of people and learned manners.

A thin wall always existed, even between friends or between parents and children.

Shattering such walls, I was facing innocent strangers. I was being overcome with heartfelt emotions.

Also, my emotions were resonating with them.

This feeling, this emotion was... Its pleasure was truly incredible.

I could feel kind, good emotions from the strangers as they were. I was overcome by emotions. The others, who felt my goodness and innocence, also were also overcome by emotions.

How difficult is it to find one good true friend who you can really trust?

Also, how amazing is it when you find such a friend and spend time with one?

In AoAeo island, everyone I met were friends and families who could show themselves as they really were.

I had no need to be suspicious of others. There was no need for anxiety or drawing lines and putting up manners.

I had no need to be evil.

I had no need to be tough or extreme.

I just needed to indulge in the bliss, put away all worries and enjoy the festivities.

This was the prize of tourism in AoAeo island. Perhaps it was something unique to just the AoAeo island, not found in any other place in this continent or perhaps the world.

Paramal was a drink that could turn me into an angel among other angels.

In other words, it was a drink that led me to the heaven.

“Hello, Ho.”

I saw Hyang who was greeting me. I was glad to see her. I also felt anticipant and excited.

I had something I wanted to ask her today.

“Ho, it seems like you have something you are curious about.”

“Yes, can you give me some time today?”

Of course she had.

There was no way she was going to refuse.

“Of course.”

Hyang smiled and responded. She sat across me.

“I want to ask you about the Paramal.”

“Um... Don't you know well about Paramel now?”

“Yes, but I want to know about it a little more in detail.

Chapter 127

Tutorial 18th Floor (3)

[Round 18, Day 8, 11:25]

“Details about Paramal?”

Hyang didn't pry into the reasons as to why I wanted to ask her about this.

After all, she felt from me that I was very interested in knowing this particular information.

As the Grand Paramal Festival continued on, and as we drank Paramal, the effects of shared emotions among everyone amplified.

Now, we could even have rough ideas on others' thoughts or intents.

During the first day of the festival, I didn't drink any of Paramal. Even after that day, for the first few days, I didn't drink much of Paramal. Despite all that, I was feeling like this.

I am sure that people can see clearly into the minds of the people other than myself.

“What I know are all things that I have heard from other people. I am not certain if they could help you.”

That's a bit unexpected.

Hyang was a native of the AoAeo island. Also, she was the owner of the café which held large quantities of Paramal.

I thought she would be one of the people who knew about Paramal the most.

One thing after the other, she listed the things that she heard about Paramal from other people.

To organize what she told me in the order she explained over time, it was like this:

A long time ago, it was during the time when the human empire continued expansion and explored new places on the continent.

The empire's expedition reached AoAeo island, which was uninhabited at the time.

Also, at the island, the expedition found a temple of an ancient religion.

From inside of the temple, the expedition found the history and the manufacturing method of a mysterious drink.

After that, an alchemist guild was commissioned by the royals, and the guild was able to restore the drink, which could be referred to as the creation of the ancient religion.

Although they only made a small quantity of the drink, it was a success.

This ancient drink was named as Paramal. Using Paramal, the royals tried to spread their ideals that they dreamed of.

Paramal was very difficult to create. So, the supply of Paramal was limited to AoAeo island. Also, the supply only lasted about one month per year.

Lately, the manufacturing rate of Paramal had increased significantly. However, the number of tourists had also increased, so the supply was still lasted to just one month.

[TL: I checked and the stage description that Ho-jae read definitely said the festival is only once every ten years.]

Like that, through the Grand Paramal Festival, the AoAeo island

became the heaven on the human world for a month per year.

So, the people who were sick of the world all gathered to AoAeo island.

After the festival ends, the donation from the tourists and the influential people of the continent are invested into making Paramal for the next year's festival.

I went to the street after hearing the entire story from Hyang.

Her explanation was like a fairytale. However, there were some parts of it that I found suspicious.

First, when those in power learned the effect of Paramal, would they really want to use it to spread idealism and utopia to the world?

Such people would want to use Paramal on other purpose.

It didn't take me long to come up with numerous ways that Paramal could be abused.

It could even be used to breed fanatics for a pseudo-religion.

Military-wise, they could raise berserkers who only desire battle and victory.

Paramal could also be used in torture and interrogation.

Just looking at the effect of Paramal, it was closer to being a strategic weapon rather than the key to the utopian ideals.

What would happen if Paramal was introduced to some random village's water well?

People will feel the animosities they have harbored without any filter. People will get swept away by the hatred and other emotions.

It probably won't even take a week before the village is destroyed.

If anyone wanted to use Paramal for evil and benefit from it, Paramal could be used in so many methods.

Would the ones in power shun away all of these other possibilities and focus only on using Paramal for bringing happiness to the people?

I am very doubtful about this.

People do not think like that.

My second doubt about the story was this.

How was it possible to fill the people with full of positive emotions?

At first, I thought this was a special characteristic of the island.

I thought that the natives of the AoAeo islands, who were the absolute majority of the island, must be so kind and generous that an atmosphere like this was formed.

However, according to Hyang, AoAeo was originally an uninhibited island. Most of the people here were immigrants.

In that case, when the Grand Paramal Festival was held for the first time, how could so many people possess positive emotions?

If that was not the case, the festival could never have developed into what it is today.

A human being treating others with goodness is not just a matter of the heart.

Also, it is not something that could be faked with lies.

Hyang's story had holes.

Just like the truths behind embellished Aesop's allegories, Hyan's story probably has a darker side that's intentionally and carefully hidden.

The dark side must be related to the secret behind Paramal and AoAeo island. At the same time, I also felt that it must be related to the target.

With such thoughts in my chest, I walked out to the street.

Today was the day for me to observe the street while sitting at the café. However, I thought that resolving my suspicions was more important.

I went out to the street, and many people welcomed me and greeted me kindly.

They were the people who I got to know through the past few days. Also, I was close with all of them.

I responded to the warmth that they gave me. I drank Paramal that they handed me as well while chatting with them. So, it created in a bit of delay.

I thought I should have the people be on their way. I thought I should excuse myself now.

The people didn't try to hold me up there anymore.

They all felt that there is something I need to do.

Also, they were sympathetic toward me about that fact that I had something so important to do that I had to tend to it despite being in middle of this festival.

Instead of trying to hold me here, they wished that I would be able to complete my work well and return to the festival sooner.

I thanked their heartfelt kindness.

Even if it was for a little while, I suddenly wanted to chat with them.

In the end, even when the sun was about to go down, I was still

drinking Paramal and talking to the people on the street.

By then, the suspicions I had inside felt ridiculous. I laughed at the mere idea of it.

I wonder why I cannot see the people and the world as beautiful as they really are?

It was not the world that was corrupted and slanted. It was myself.

The holes in Hyang's story are just that she had to tie many stories she had heard from different people.

I thought of it that way.

I forgot about the fact that I had something I had to do besides talking to the people.

During that day, I drank a lot of Paramal.

I don't remember how many glasses I had.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 13, 14:20]

I developed a worry lately.

It was the worry about clearing the 18th Floor Stage.

Last night, I had so much fun at the masquerade dance. While I was there, I realized something.

It was the fact that I was in a Tutorial stage.

I had been forgetful of this.

Once the month passes, the round was going to end.

After that, I was going to be teleported to the waiting room.

I cursed at the fact.

However, I could not change the natural order of this design.

So, I had to make a decision.

How long will I stay in this place?

I wish I could stay in AoAeo island forever. However, I knew I cou.....

Is that really the case?

Why couldn't I stay in AoAeo island forever?

I could.

In fact, I could enjoy the Grand Paramal festival, which was actually held for only a month per year, forever, for the rest of my life.

I just needed to stay at the 18th Floor stage forever. That would solve everything.

From time to time in the middle, I will have to stay all alone for three days of waiting period. However, I could more than handle that.

Why should I escape from this heaven?

“Ho, what are you thinking about so hard?”

Hyang brought me pancakes for lunch. She asked me that.

I pondered about it for a moment and responded to her.

“I am not sure.”

What was I thinking so hard about until a moment ago?

Wasn't it something pretty important?

"Ho, I thought you were thinking about the bet."

"The bet?"

What bet?

What could she be talking about?

Having heard what I said, Hyang opened her eyes widely and said,

"Ho, by any chance, you didn't hear about the bet?"

No. I have not.

It seemed Hyang was finding this amusing. She covered her mouth with her hand and laughed. She then asked me,

"Do you have any idea how many people are targeting you?"

Depending on the situation, this would send the chill down my spine.

If I heard this while being anywhere else, I would have intensified my mana immediately and prepared to fight off attacks.

However, AoAeo was not that kind of place. I wasn't going to do that here.

It's been 14 days since the Paramal festival started. Everyone had good feelings toward each other.

Because of that, I didn't know.

"Who would target me?"

“Uh uh. It looks like you really don’t know about the bet. Do you have any idea how many customers ask me about you?”

“They ask you, Hyang? What is the bet? Why are they doing that?”

“It is a bet on who would seduce you first. Everyday, number of girls who are rejected by you are growing. So, the sum for the bet is growing bigger with it. Soon, it probably will become the largest bet among the women.”

Um... I really didn’t know such bet was happening.

That explains it. I wonder why there were so many girls who were trying to take me to secluded places.

Although it was unintentional, I had been acting like I was not interested in sex.

As of result, I ended up being even more popular. I felt awkward about this.

As the festival went on, people became more and more open.

I could even say that they were becoming disorderly.

Well, it is not a bad thing, so...

I heard from the Ching and Chun brothers that sex while in the state of having shared emotions from drinking Paramal was absolutely astonishing.

Perhaps this is the reason why. They said they had been having sex with women every night.

On top of this, they had been laying with different women every night.

I didn’t really want to do that.

I was already feeling the bliss at every moment. Instead of spending intimate, private time with women, I wanted to spend as much time as possible chatting with as many people as possible.

Maybe it is because of the loneliness I felt before coming here.

“Honestly, I bet a substantial amount of money on it too. So, you need to keep up your strength, even if it is for my sake.”

She said so in a tone that was like a mischievous friend. Hearing what she just said made me wonder about one thing.

Most people I was friends with knew Hyang.

Everyday, they had been sitting at her café and spending long time here. So, it was only obvious.

“Hyang, who did you bet on?”

Hyang smiled big and said,

“Myself.”

That day, I really drank a lot of Paramal.

* * *

Feeling the cold rain drops fell on my face, I woke up.

Unlike the usual, I fell asleep on the roof. So, I didn't have a roof over my head to cover myself from the rain.

I quickly brought out a tent from the inventory and entered.

I always thought this, but the portable tent is very useful.

I dried my hair with a towel and checked the time.

[Round 18, Day 17, 16:20]

Wow, this is crazy.

I went to sleep last night at 11 pm.

After that, I woke up at 4 pm.

If it was not for the rain, I would have slept longer.

I think this is the first time for me to be so lazy since the day I was ever born...

No, this is the first since Kiri Kiri used that strange magic on me.

It had not been long?

I ended up sleeping in so much because I had enjoyed excessive amount of Paramal bomb drinks that were mixed in with strong liquors.

It was so strong that even I, who had the great poison resistance, could not endure it.

Ever since I entered the Tutorial, I had thrown up before from being hit on the stomach or from dizziness. However, it was a first for me to throw up due to excessive drinking.

I broke the bar's record and won in a drinking battle against six others. I remembered what happened yesterday.

Still, it was fun.

I was a mess, but there was fun from being like that.

Everyone at the bar all drank until they lost consciousness, so it was a sight to behold.

I also came up to the roof after losing my half my mind.

If that was not the case, then I would not have fallen asleep at the roof top.

Like that, I went over what happened last night, one thing at a time.

It was fun. I was happy.

As I went up through the memories, I thought about what my experiences on AoAeo.

Each and every one of thing that came up in my head were the kind that warmed my heart. They were happy memories. However, I did not feel comfortable inside.

How should I put it...

It was like the anxiety that came after playing around when I had a test coming up and I should have been studying instead.

To think I was feeling uncomfortable...

I thought it was strange that I was feeling melancholy and awkward instead.

So, I looked for reasons.

I had reasons.

It's been 17 hours since my last drink of Paramal.

I violently vomited what I had inside.

I felt the cold rain.

So, the Paramal's effect had faded.

Thanks to that, I think my head is running a little more objectively.

It is true that the life here was blissful. It is true that I had been struggling with loneliness. However, I must not be so complacent.

I went over and organized the things I had to do, one by one.

I already knew them.

However, I had not been doing them for the past few days despite the fact that I should have been.

I had been putting off and then some. In the end, I forget about them.

If I didn't forget them, I tried hard to bury them by saying that they are not important.

This is the worst.

For the past few days, just what was I doing?

From inside the tent, I watched the pouring rain. I felt anxious. I was worried if something important inside me had been spilled already.

Chapter 128

Tutorial 18th Floor (4)

I just sat there vacantly inside the tent and thought about this.

If I continued like this, then I won't be able to do anything. I'll be only swept up by the festivities and Paramal.

No matter how happy I was about the life in this place, and no matter how much I want to stay here even after this round, I must do what I have to do.

I didn't know if this was out of the hardworking attitude I became accustomed to or if it was due to obsession. However, I was feeling the unpleasantness of putting off what I should do.

Instead of kicking myself over this, let's think about what I can do to resolve it.

It won't matter how firmly I make up my mind. Once I get to the streets, meet people and drink Paramal, then I'll forget all about what I am supposed to do.

I should move while avoiding people as much as possible.

It would be alright if I fly at a high altitude using Talaria's Wings.

Next, I need to decide the time for me to make the move.

The best time would be when there are the least number of people around.

It's already evening, but it would be better if I waited until the night.

The effect of Paramal inside my body will fade even more by then, so

it is a good decision in many ways.

I lay down again as I thought that.

If I am going to wait until the night, then it would not be a good choice to stay awake with my eyes wide open.

My will had weakened a lot.

If I am to continue thinking about useless stuff for hours while being awake, I might end up wanting to come down from the rooftop and drink Paramal.

A while back, there was a time when I wanted to eat sweet treats over and over and then some more as if I was addicted to sugary substances.

The symptom came with extreme lethargy.

Back then, what faded the symptoms away was sleep.

I spent the time by sleeping, and while I was sleeping, I was staying away from the sweets.

Like that, only after spending the time away until the symptoms subsided, I finally felt like I didn't want to eat sweets anymore.

I had to maintain steel-cold focus to find information and identify the target. In order to do that, I had to stay away from Paramal for a while.

So, I decided to go to sleep.

I lay down and closed my eyes. I felt good, just a little.

It has been half a year since I could no longer sleep comfortably inside stages.

I was able to fight off sleepiness easily, so it was convenient. However,

I was not able to sleep even when I wanted due to the insomnia. It was a painful illness.

However, now, after two weeks since I came to AoAeo island, I could close my eyes and sleep anytime I wanted.

Although I stayed away from festival and Paramal for the day because I had something to do, doing this reminded me how great of gifts they were to me. They were like blessings.

After I finish everything I have to do and resolve all of my suspicions, what should I do next?

If I find the target too?

Do I need to kill the target and leave this place?

No, that's not it.

I can answer this question with certainty.

No.

I won't be clearing the stage in this round.

It might be the next round. Perhaps it might be the round after the next.

Anyway, it won't be in this round.

I didn't want to just let go of the bliss I was feeling now.

I will have to leave this place one day. However, that day would be after feeling enough of the happiness and preparing my heart for the leaving it all behind.

When I could shake off all those foolish regrets as well. When I am ready to go on again...

I don't need to hurry.

I am more than happy to be here, so...

Deep inside my heart, I had a feeling that I might end up living in this place forever.

I really might do that.

To me, this world, the AoAeo island is the greatest blessing and happiness I could ever receive.

I might never be able to escape this place.

However, even if that happens, that won't be so bad.

I'll be happy in this place for eternity, so...

As I thought about those, my heart felt lighter.

Instead of hesitation, my desire to quickly find information about the place and go back to the festival grew.

At least for the day, I'll be able to focus on searching for the information and the target.

I felt proud of myself. With that, I fell asleep.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 17, 23:00]

I woke up from my sleep and checked the time. It was 11 pm.

I really slept through the whole day today.

I looked outside the tent. Before I realized, the rain had already stopped.

I went outside, put the tent away into the inventory and stretched my body.

After that, I thought about eating some meat jerkies to quench my hunger. However, I feared that I might want to drink Paramal if I put anything in my mouth, so I decided not to.

I should drink all I want after finishing the work for the day.

Perhaps because it was late at night, the street was relatively empty.

Of course, there were many who were energetically playing around even in this late hour.

I'm sure there are many who are chatting away loudly while drinking Paramal cocktails. Moreover, I'm sure there are a lot of people who are having intimate encounters at the moment.

Anyway, so, there weren't that many people on the street.

I brandished the Talaria's Wings and went up to the sky.

I increased my altitude. I tried my best to not get connected to the people's emotions.

I had not drunk Paramal for a whole day, so its effect had become diluted. However, it was not gone.

As I thought, as I raised the altitude, the effect of Paramal weakened.

Paramal's effect was affected by the distance, view and recognition of presence by others.

Just flying through the dark night sky could reduce its effect to sufficiently low level.

The first destination was AoAeo's government office.

I already had checked its location a few days ago, so I was able to find

it right away without getting lost.

I lowered the altitude and entered the main door of the office.

Perhaps because it was middle of the festival, or perhaps because it was late, the office was empty.

It bothered me that I would be sneaking in here to look for things in secret, but thanks to that, I could look around all I want as I wish.

“Kuuuhuuuuk!”

I was walking through the deserted corridor of the government office. However, out of the blue, I heard someone scream.

I was surprised. I looked at where the scream came from. There was a man. He appeared to be an employee of the place. While sitting on his chair, he was lying on the desk.

“Kuhuk! Hmmm..... Kuhuk!”

It was not that he was dying. He was sleeping like that and snoring.

What a bizarre snoring sound.

For a moment, I watched the man snoring, going kuhuk-kuhuk.

I worried that he might really die sleeping like this. So, I shook his shoulder and woke him up.

“Um... Huh? Ho? Why are you here, Ho... Aaaaaauuuuummmm... What time is it?”

“It’s past 11 pm.”

I knew the man.

I met him a few days ago at the bar.

“Your name is Byoung, right?”

Byoung nodded and yawned.

[TL: It probably is irrelevant, but Byoung sounds like the Korean word for “bottle.”]

“Uuuhaaaaam. I was going to shut my eyes for a bit, but I ended up sleeping until 11 pm. What brings you to the government office? On top of that, you came in such a late hour.”

As he started to have a conversation with me waking up completely, his emotions started to pour into my head.

I could feel his curiosity about me being here at this hour, his gladness in seeing me, and his desire to go have fun at the bar with me who just happened to show up.

They were ordinary emotions. However, for me, I could not be more thankful for such.

They were clean, kind and honest.

I thanked him greatly just for exhibiting such emotions toward me.

Also, I wanted to go to the bar with him.

I bit my lips and fought off the temptation.

No matter how happy I was, I did not want that right now.

I was not saying I wanted to be unhappy.

I just didn’t want to get swept away by it.

I was happy, but it would be the true happiness if I enjoyed it when I wanted.

This was a matter of pride.

I suppressed down my desire to go play with Byoung. Instead, I asked him to find information with me.

“Well, okay.”

I was asking him such a bothersome thing to do in middle of the night. However, he gladly said accompanied me.

I was thankful.

* * *

“This is surprising.”

I read the paper which was packed with numbers as I said that.

In the paper that Byoung found for me, it did not contain the content that I was looking for. However, it contained something that definitely concerned me.

“What is?”

It was about the number of people who resided in AoAeo island.

From what I already heard from Hyang, I knew that everyone who lived in this island were immigrants.

However...

From the report, over nine percent of the foreigners who came to participate in Paramal Festival also settled at the island.

This is too many.

[TL: Although the author literally said 9%, I think he actually meant 90%. Otherwise, what he says below does not make much sense.]

Thanks to this, the population in AoAeo island had been growing exponentially.

Considering the rate of increase... I even wondered if it would be possible to hold the festival properly because there were way too many people.

This year looked like it was already approaching the full capacity.

The streets, restaurants, bars, and everywhere in the island were packed with people.

If the current number of people stayed in the island, and if more foreigners were to be added to the mix next year...

Next year, the number of people gathered here would definitely pose a problem.

It would be enough to cause problems for holding the festival.

“What is it?”

Byoung asked me from the back.

It is probably because of the uncomfortableness I was feeling.

His sense of concern for me was being transmitted to me.

Feeling the sensation, I haphazardly excused it.

Considering the numbers, assuming that there is some kind of plot hiding in the shadows of AoAeo island, it must be this year where it all happens.

It could be that I’m worrying too much. I am hoping that I’m worrying too much. However...

Besides this, I didn’t find any other information that could serve as clues.

Although the following was not a part of the information we dug up, Byoung did tell me an interesting and plausible story.

“Crimes?”

“Yep. Well, it seems they actually did post guards and all that before the festival started.”

“Why? What kind of crimes are there?”

Crimes in AoAeo island?

I have never heard of or seen crimes here.

In fact, for the past 17 days, let alone any serious crime, I have never saw once a customer leaving before paying.

“Theft and kidnapping or other kinds of crimes seem to be or not seem to be occurring. That’s what I’ve heard.”

What could that mean?

“I’m saying they are only on documents. The victims are not reporting them, so we cannot be sure if such crimes actually happened.”

“Where did such suspicions come from?”

Crimes happened although there are no victims?

“It seems that the families of the tourists who participate in the festival occasional make inquiries. I don’t think we can be certain about these, but they probably posted guards since there were inquiries.”

“I have never seen any guards?”

“I’m sure you have not.”

From his brief answer, I could figure out the gist of it.

The guards who drank Paramal in middle of the festival would not believe that crimes and that criminals exist in this heavenly island.

Anyone who drank Paramal would never harbor animosity toward others. Also, anyone who is at the AoAeo island, and those who know about the effect of Paramal, would not refrain from drinking it.

So, the guards who concluded that crimes do not exist in this place will just go and enjoy the festival.

“It’s obvious.”

Crimes in AoAeo island?

That would be so unbecoming of the place.

Reports of crimes without evidence or victims...

“The people back home probably sent those inquiries because the people who came to the island to enjoy the festival spent too much money or ended up settling down here.”

I could only continue to nod after hearing Byoung’s opinion.

Usually, it was only natural to think that way.

* * *

With Byoung, I looked around the government office and gathered data. After that, I resumed my flight to head to a place that had once been the holy temple of the ancient religion.

Before I left, Byoung said that it was late and recommended that I should go to the place and we should head to the bar instead first.[1]

I really wished I could go with him, but sadly, I had to refuse.

Today, I was going to finish all matters that were bothering me. My plan was to relax and play starting tomorrow.

After flying briefly without any difficulty, I was able to arrive at the place marked as the place of holy temple of the ancient religion.

It was a pretty big area.

In the middle of the area, there was a platform that was moderately high.

There were traces of things indicating that there may have been structures above this platform.

With the platform as the center, there were ruins of tall pillars everywhere.

It seemed this place definitely was the place where the holy temple once was.

Although it was late at night, there were quite a few people walking around the area.

There were some people chatting while sitting at the area with snacks and Paramal in their hands. There were people who were dancing and those who were watching.

As usual, it was pleasant to see them.

I wanted to join them.

The place where the holy temple used to be didn't have anything suspicious in particular. So, I was really thinking about joining the people. However, I found someone.

There was a tall man.

The man was wearing a fluffy robe.

The robe was coming down to the knee. Below the knee, I could see that he was wearing a thick pants.

These were the problems.

The man's robe was dark purple. His pants was black.

It was late at night, so it was hard to tell the color. However, I could be sure of the colors after squinting my eyes at him.

That man was the target of the clear condition.

Um...

There are so many people gathered in this plaza, but I noticed the man. Actually, it was not unusual that I thought the man stood out.

He was strange.

His behavior and the expression on his face were both strange.

His face was super stiff. There was a sign of frustration on his face. As for his behavior, it seemed he was not caring about the people around him at all.

Moreover, no emotion was flowing out of the man.

It seemed this target was not sharing emotions with others.

Ah, I get it.

That bastard did not drink the Paramal.

I became curious about the man's identity.

Could he be the one hosting the festival?

Perhaps he is a priest of the ancient religion. Maybe he is one of the alchemists who are said to have restored the Paramal.

It is also possible that he came from the royal house. Perhaps he is not related to Paramal at all.

There were many possibilities. However, I did not have enough facts to make certain of any of the hypotheses.

The target was just sitting in middle of people. With bored face, he was just writing something on his notes.

Um... What should I do?

I pondered about this for a brief moment, and then I came to a conclusion.

I should find out who he is.

Also, I should learn information about what the target is trying to do.

Also, I should not kill him right away.

I should make full preparations so that I could kill him when I make up my mind to clear this stage after getting a full rest in AoAeo island for a few rounds.

After all, although I am not intending on leaving this place right away, I will be leaving eventually. So, I should gather information about the target.

All right, I should do it this way.

After finishing making the decisions, I thought about how to approach the target without being noticed while the man was in middle of many people.

I think it would be hard for me to approach him without being noticed when the place is so busy like this.

It would be easier to make him come to me.

First, I used the Overwhelm and Soul Steal at that target.

I focused the effects on just him so the skills would not affect the other people.

Out of the blue, the effects of the Overwhelm and Soul Steal were felt

by the target, and the target's look on the face had turned dark.

The target suddenly got up and looked around.

I waved my hand and let him know who I was.

Next was using the Soul Cry.

He was recognized as enemy. So, due to the effect of the skill, he won't be able to escape me. He will come to me, the one who used the Soul Cry and is trying simultaneously to avoid the people.

This is perfect.

[Soul Cry]

I slowly stepped back and used the Soul Cry.

As I thought, the target started to walk toward me. He looked as if he was mesmerized.

Things were going as I planned. I was feeling satisfied. However, at that moment, the target put his hand under his clothes and brought out a purple gem stone that was shining brightly in fluorescent color.

“ . !. ! ”

Toward the sky, the target shouted words that were incomprehensible to me.

I had heard this tone and pronunciation before.

It was at the 16th Floor.

Those were Rune words to activate magic.

[PR: Not sure if this can be translated as one word or two words (technically, the separation of the two words is a spelling error and if you combine them it isn't. I'll just leave it for now.)]

At that moment, everyone at the plaza turned their head and looked at me.

They were burning with a powerful animosity toward me.

Chapter 129

Tutorial 18th Floor (5)

As soon as I faced the gazes of everyone at the plaza, there was no way for me to ignore the eeriness of it all.

All those people turned their heads at the same time and looked at me. It reminded me of a scene from a horror movie.

There were things that amplified the eeriness. There were some people who were standing at angles such that it would have not been possible to simply turn their heads to look at me. However, even those people strained their bodies and necks to turn and look at me.

As if they were programmed, or perhaps as if they were puppets on strings, they ignored the discomfort or pain and firmly executed the movement of turning to look at me.

What I felt next was their hostility. They came at me like tidal wave.

Each and every person glaring at me were burning with a vigorous hostility as if they were facing their life's worst enemy.

Also, their emotions were delivered to me directly through the effect of Paramal.

[Talaria's Wings]

[Blink]

I spread my wings and flew up to the sky.

To make it quick, I used all five of my Blink charges.

I did this because at that instant, I came to an immediate conclusion

that I must draw distance from the surface where the people were.

My decision was correct.

An incredible wave of emotions, the kind that could not be handled by one person, came rushing at me.

Animosity and fury.

Frustration, hatred, fear, anxiety and disgust...

All sorts of negative emotions were engulfing me.

With the flight effect of the Talaria's Wings, I floated up far above in the sky. I was at a height where I could not even see the people very well any more. Staying in the air, I thought about things.

It isn't just the people at the plaza that are like this.

Everyone on AoAeo island are all pouring out their negative emotions at me.

The strength of the emotions isn't something that's possible with just the people who are gathered at the plaza, which appears to be around a hundred people.

I'm this far away from everyone, yet the emotions I feel are so vivid. They are giving me headaches.

Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuak –

From the sky, I threw up below me.

My head was pulsating. It was dizzying. As if those symptoms are not enough, now, I felt like my brain was going to melt into mush.

For the past few days, I had become used to the shared emotions through Paramal. Also, I had been feeling happy from it. In my current state, the negative emotions being poured at me were

incredibly fatal.

The negative emotions filled my head. Soon, even I got swept away by the emotions.

The evil intents dyed my emotions swifter than good intentions could replace them.

I was feeling hostility, disgust and unpleasantness toward myself. My arm, full of mana, was flinching in the attempt to attack me.

[Perseverance]

Perseverance was God of Adventure's power skill. It strengthened me in proportion to the number of enemies I faced and their power.

As soon as I used the Perseverance, the effects of the people's negative emotions started to lessen on my mind and body.

I was not completely fine. However, I could avoid committing suicide from being swept away by the emotions.

One thing became clear now.

They were my enemies.

That fact broke my heart. I could not stop tears from welling up.

Kill him. Attack him. Hate him. He is your enemy. He is our enemy.

I threw up again and emptied my insides.

It seemed like the voice was controlling the people.

If I didn't have the Perseverance and Mental Corruption Resistance, and if I did not intentionally try to stay away from the Paramal, I may not have been able to escape the voice's commands.

Damn it.

Again, towards the ground below, I emptied my inside.

Before long, my face became a mess with flowing tears.

Just until yesterday, they were the people who were laughing and chatting with me. They were happy.

Also, as I stayed with them, I was happy as well.

AoAeo island had become a place of rest for my heart.

Before I came to AoAeo island, I was in despair about one thing.

I had been grinding inside Hell to survive. Before I realized, my heart had become hell.

I thought that the place I am at will always be hell, no matter where I was or who I was with, even if I escaped the Tutorial. Such thoughts have always been revolving around inside my head.

It was the people of AeAeo island and the festival that healed me of those cancerous thoughts.

At this place, I thought that I would be able to finally get away from nervousness and obsession that was engraved so deeply in me for so long.

In fact, I had.

Now, the angels from the heavens were cursing me. Their condemnations chained my heart down inside the depths of despair.

I could not handle the fact that they despised me so much.

Facing the cruel reality, I screamed out. However, nothing changed.

The power of the curse only grew stronger with time.

Below my feet, the plaza was full of people.

Everyone from the island was gathering at the plaza.

There was no guarantee that I would be able to endure this headache. It felt like my head was going to shatter.

At this rate, my brain will get fried or I would end up giving up everything after my will is exhausted. Either way, devastation is inevitable if this continues.

I checked my body's condition.

Slowly, I tried to calm my breathing.

Tears continued to pour out, and my sobbing hindered my breathing. However, I forced myself to suppress my crying and breathe in rhythm.

As I thought about the battle, even in this situation, my body was being controlled independently from my emotions. That fact saddened me even more.

I made up my mind after raising my hand to wipe off my tears.

I should descend.

As soon as I descend, I should kill that bastard, end this bullcrap, and free the people.

Once I kill the target, the clear condition would be satisfied. Naturally, I will have to leave the island. The thought zapped through my mind.

Even in this turmoil, I still had lingering regrets.

I was careless.

My obsession to move on and my foolish desire to stay at AoAeo island were combined, and I went ahead with a stupid idea.

As soon as I found the target, I should have attempted a clean

assassination. Otherwise, I should have just confirmed the location of the target and retreated quietly without a trace.

I had chosen the worst possible option.

Everything that was happening down below was my fault.

It happened because of me. So, I must resolve it.

Also, for the sake of those people, I should do this as quickly as possible.

Ugh.

I brought out Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory. I formed one into a shield. I shaped the other into a long sword.

Let's go and end this.

I slowly descended from my altitude.

I will find the target, descend immediately and kill him.

The target was hiding among the people. He was hard to find. I looked for the target as I made my descent. However, negative emotions strongly resonated inside me.

In addition to the emotions I already had been feeling, the sense of pain, despair and fear were added.

I thought that the people must be feeling such emotions from watching me come down from the sky. Thinking about that made me feel terrible once again.

At that moment, I heard a voice echoing in my head.

It was incomprehensible.

After that, my sight suddenly brightened.

Hundreds of thousands of people tightly packed the plaza and the streets, and the people shouted at the same time,

“Fire Arrow!”

It looked as if the ground was coughing out flames toward me.

Several hundred thousands of Fire Arrows were launched toward the sky at once.

The sight was overwhelming. Also, the mana I felt was astounding. I could not help but panic.

There was no way for me to dodge all the Fire Arrows launched toward me.

I descended while covering my body with the shield and Talaria's Wings the best I could.

I tried to avoid as many of the arrows as possible. However, the Fire Arrows tightly packed the space above. I had to block most of them with my body and the wings.

Talaria's Wings and great magic resistance's effects...

Also, thanks to Perseverance, which was currently demonstrating the far greater boost effects for combat abilities than anything before due to facing the most powerful enemies I ever encountered, I was able to avoid becoming a roasted chicken. Instead, I survived and was able to descend to the surface.

Perhaps because I was much closer to the people now, their emotions and suffering felt much more intense.

Their suffering felt as vivid as if they were my own.

No. Actually, it was more intense than my own.

How many of these people know how to use magic?

Probably not many. Most of them were ordinary people.

Despite that, they all shot flames into the sky.

I had no idea how it was done. However, as people used magic, people clearly felt their life energies fade away rapidly.

After that, they sensed that they were dying, and they screamed inside.

Not a single one of them showed this outside. However, everyone, these countless people, were suffering from pain.

With emotionless faces, in silence, they were dying.

I tried not to, but I could not stop myself from shedding tears again.

Just why.

Why, you rotten son of a bitch.

Everyone at AoAeo island was kind and innocent.

To begin with, they came to the island because they heard that they could live happily with everyone without ever having to find fault with others.

These people would have been kind and innocent even without the Paramal.

This place was a heaven built by angels.

AoAeo island was a fully-completed utopia by itself.

It was a perfect place, the kind of place that made me wonder if such a place could exist in another place in this world or even the universe.

However, this place was...

“Fire Ball!”

This time, they poured out spheres of flame.

Several hundred thousand lumps of flame were thrown towards me.

Of course, the people who were near me had no choice but to get crucified in the flames.

Unlike myself, who had resistances to magic, the people who could not protect themselves from the flame were burned to death.

They didn’t even struggle, even as they were being burnt to death.

They didn’t flinch. They didn’t even scream.

They just stared at me with empty faces. They died out as they prepared the next magic.

It seemed the next magic was ready. The mana in the area shook wildly.

Don’t do it. Stop it now.

I used the Soul Steal.

I even used the Soul Cry.

“Stop!”

From mana running out of control, blood exploded out from the people’s eyes, nose and mouth.

It seemed that some were unable to endure it. They lost consciousness and collapsed on the spot.

However, there were some who still managed to complete the magic spell. The area around me was engulfed in flame once again.

In middle this chaos, through the gap between the flames, I saw the purple robe.

I vigorously kicked off the ground to charge forward.

I jumped up high and dashed toward the target.

The people had been just standing around like brainless scarecrows. However, they started to throw their bodies to grab ahold of me.

There was a woman who blocked the path in front of my eyes. I thought that...

I thought she looked familiar.

Although it was a brief meeting, I think I had once cheered and clinked glasses together.

As if she was a broken robot, she stretched her arms all the way up and tried to block my path.

I saw the girl's face, and then I saw that the target was running away behind her.

After that, in the end, I swung my sword.

Facing my sword that was struck down, the despair and sadness of her final moment was felt. While bearing her emotions, I charged forward.

Peoples' limbs and legs scattered across the air in fountains of blood.

The people who were gathered here were not warriors.

Physically, they were close to being regular people.

No, they were regular people.

Every time I swung the sword, which was wrapped across its long length with Aura Blade, three or four people were chopped away to

pieces.

When I pushed forward with my shield, several dozens of people were thrown off.

Many of the people who fell that way died where they collapsed.

I tasted blood in my mouth.

It could be the blood of the people that had rained down on my entire body. It could be that I was bleeding inside my mouth. I don't know.

Either way, I'm sure it is not so different.

Like that, I pierced through the interference of the people and caught up to the target that was trying to run away.

The target rapidly turned around and tried to say something as he faced me. However, I wanted to end this situation as quickly as possible.

So, I swung the sword right away and cut him into two.

The target died like that.

By his death, one change occurred.

The people started to scream.

However, the clear message did not appear.

I confirmed that the hostilities of the screaming people were still aimed at me. I could understand the situation.

There wasn't just one target.

The people were controlled like puppets until a moment ago. Now, they became beasts who lost their minds. They charged into close-up physical struggles against me.

There were hands everywhere. They were trying to grab me from all directions. Feeling their fragile hands, I truly cursed at my current predicament.

That day was the 17th day since the beginning of the AoAeo island's Grand Paramal Festival.

That day, I didn't drink any Paramal.

Chapter 130

Tutorial 18th Floor (6)

[Round 18, Day 19, 16:20]

I checked the face of a man wearing purple robe over his head.

Again, the face was the same as the others.

I pondered about this.

I could not help but wonder.

Could I repeat this?

Could I see their faces again?

That was not the case.

I tightened my grip and snapped the man's neck.

After that, I confirmed the message.

[You cleared the 18th Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your wounds and abnormalities will be recovered.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 7500 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. 2500 points were deducted.]

[An additional reward will be given based on your play record.]

[God of Death would like to give a part of the god's power as a gift. Would you like to accept?]

[You acquired Soul Collect Lv. Max.]

[All gods in White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[God of Slowness is watching you.]

[God of Adventure is rooting for you.]

[God of Duel is silent.]

[God of Death is overjoyed from watching you.]

[God of Life is watching you in a negative way.]

[God of Pain is smiling at you.]

[God of Goodwill is feeling sorry for you.]

It finally ended.

I didn't give a damn about the clear rewards. I just crouched down at the spot and took deep breaths.

Purple clothes on the upper body and black clothing on the lower body.

It turned out that there were more than just one such target who matched the description.

There were total of six.

They had emotionless faces and responses. They were too strange to be called humans. Considering that all of them had same body and face, I wondered if they were clones.

I was not certain.

However, I didn't want to dig around to learn about this in more detail than what I already knew.

I was not interested.

I checked the map that the target was looking at before he died.

It was the map of the AoAeo island.

The map had red lines marking all over the place.

I wondered what they could mean. Soon, I could figure out what the lines meant.

They were the whereabouts and movements of the targets.

During the 3rd, 13th, 23rd and 30th day, the targets gather at one place.

The place of their gathering was the plaza I was at just now.

...It was a great piece information.

If I had known about this secret meeting place deep inside the island sooner, I could have waited until the 30th day and... kill all targets at once.

I cried from my regret and remorse.

I bit my lips. I bit my tongue. I tried to stop crying. However, I moaned along as they bled like my heart.

I could have avoided this tragedy, even if I had not found their secret

meeting place.

It was more than possible.

Since I was planning on staying at this island for a long time, if I just forgot about clear condition and focused on living it up...

If I stopped searching after determining the location of the target...

Instead of provoking the target, if I killed him from a distance using a clean method...

If I didn't act so stupid and reveal myself to the target so carelessly...

The stupid and careless actions I had taken came together and bought about this tragedy.

It was my fault.

Now, I cannot even go back.

I already cleared the stage.

I glanced at the portal that appeared below my feet and then started to walk.

Outside the secret meeting place, there was still a bright sunshine. The light was shining down on me.

It was uncomfortable to walk.

I could not take one step without a corpse getting in my way. The ground was drenched with red blood. The ground was sticky.

Like that, in discomfort, I walked. I found a cup that had some Paramal left.

It was Paramal that someone didn't finish.

I was not surprised.

Paramal was found everywhere in this island. The drink was very common here after all.

I picked up the cup and tried drinking the Paramal that was still left in it.

It was sweet.

It was exactly like as if ice cream was molten.

That was all.

Now, it was no more or less than sweet water.

It did not make me feel better or... connect me to other people.

There weren't any people left for it to connect me to.

However, I could not stop drinking Paramal.

I walked down the street, and every time I saw a glass of Paramal, I drank it.

I hoped that its effect would be revived at the end of its sweetness.

That day, I really drank a lot of Paramal.

I drank so much of it that I threw up several times.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 20, 10:00]

There weren't any Paramal left on the street.

I repeated drinking and throwing up. I drank it restlessly, so it was

only obvious.

However, I continued to search for more Paramal.

I wanted to drink more of it.

What came to my mind was Hyang's café.

There was a large storage room under the café.

It was the storage room for Paramal.

I had a memory of drinking Paramal with Hyang at the storage room, so I went to find it right away.

As soon as I entered Hyang's café, it felt odd.

It just so happened that it was time for me to eat the breakfast at Hyang's café.

As a part of the morning routine that signaled the start of the day, I greeted the people inside the cafe, met Hyang and ate breakfast.

With not a soul inside, the café was quiet. I walked in and headed to the storage room.

I walked through the narrow and dark corridor that lead to the basement storage room. As I walked, I felt that it was familiar.

I already knew well, how Hyang died.

The storage room's door was locked.

I grabbed the lock and tightened my grip. I was able to tear it off with ease.

Inside the storage room were large wooden barrels. They were tightly packed together inside the room.

They all contained Paramal.

I brought out a glass and scooped up Paramal from a barrel.

Now, the beverage had no special effect. However, I think it is a little different for me.

When I drank it, I felt its intense sweetness, enough to make my tongue go numb. Every time I tasted its sweetness, I could remember the sensation I could feel until only recently, although the sensation lasted only while I was drinking it.

Also, I was just fooling myself into thinking so.

Still, I could not stop drinking Paramal.

That day, I spent the whole day drinking Paramal.

I threw up as much as I drank.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 23, 17:30]

Unwelcome guests arrived at AoAeo island.

They were the ones who made Paramal and tried to control the people through it, probably.

As the targets did, they spread their voices throughout the entire island. The voices were commanding the people who drank Paramal.

Were they trying to find the survivors?

However, I was the only one who could respond to them.

As soon as I met them, I attacked them.

I was not all that interested in their goals or potential information.

As for the ship that they arrived in, I burned it.

After that, I returned to the basement of the café.

That day, I spent my time drinking Paramal and throwing up.

* * *

[Round 18, Day 29, 07:30]

I had thought this once.

I will lighten up by the time I leave AoAeo island.

It was because I thought I won't be leaving until I felt that way.

I think it went as I planned.

I had spent the past few days drinking Paramal and throwing up while crying.

I didn't want to drink Paramal anymore.

I no longer felt regrets or remorse.

It was not that the emotions disappeared.

It was just that I had poured out so much emotion. Now, no emotion were left. No thoughts came either.

I just felt empty.

My head and heart...

After I cried for a long time, I felt numb. I felt empty. At the same time, I felt a little refreshed. That's how I felt.

No thoughts came to my head.

I didn't feel anger. I didn't feel sadness.

At this moment, I was emotionless.

I didn't know if this state would continue, but I thought that I will be all right for a while.

It was time for me to leave.

First, I got out of the storage room.

Through the portal, I could leave the stage. However, I wanted to check my status for a bit.

Slowly, I checked the sensations, starting from the tip of my fingers.

There weren't any problems.

As for my mind... I don't know.

I think it would be good to take good care of myself so I won't shake my mentality.

I opened the status window and checked my growth.

I leveled up a bit. Skills leveled up quite a bit as well.

If it was like the past, I would have been happy about them, since I gained things.

Although I didn't feel any emotion, I felt the chill going down my spine as I thought of that.

I felt goosebumps on my arm and cheeks.

It seemed I was not able to empty it all.

Well, how could I empty all of it.

I think it will continue to follow me around.

I checked the Soul Collect skill that I received as the reward for clearing the 18th Floor.

[Soul Collect (Lv. Max)]

Description: After pondering on this for a long time, the God of Death gifted the power to the challenger that the god had taken the most interest in lately.

Although careful, the God of Death is also impatient. The god is already regretting his decision.

As usual with all power skills, I could not figure out what this skill was for based on the description alone.

From the name, it seemed like it was a skill for collecting souls. However, I could not get a feel for how to use it.

I should ask Kiri Kiri.

Beyond the window, I looked down at the street.

At the moment, there were several hundred thousands of souls here in this island.

I thought about trying out the Soul Collect as a test. However, I decided not to.

I don't even know exactly what kind of effect it will have.

My wounds just stopped bleeding for a moment. I didn't want to poke at it for the sake of a fickle curiosity.

After finishing the thoughts, I got on the portal that was just a step away.

“Teleport.”

I closed my eyes for a moment and opened. I was moved to the green field.

“I’m sorrrrying!”

As soon as I was moved to the field, Kiri Kiri screamed and jumped toward me.

She was throwing a tackle at me. I collided with her and fell back.

“What are you doing, Kiri Kiri.”

Kiri Kiri tightly held on to me and cried her eyes out.

“Hiiiiing. I didn’t do my job.”

You didn’t do your job?

Ah, is it because she didn’t give advice about the 18th Floor?

Actually, that was because I rushed back to the waiting room.

To begin with, I had not been hearing much advices on how to clear stages lately. Also, after clearing the 17th Floor stage, I had many things I had to mind.

If I am to assign blame, then this is not Kiri Kiri’s fault. It is my own.

“No. It is my fault. I should have stopped you from leaving and told you about the 18th Floor.”

It is really all right.

If it was a few days ago, then I may have resented her.

However, now, I didn’t feel emotions like resentment or regrets.

“Kiri Kiri. Instead, I would like to ask you for explanation on the Soul Collect skill.”

“Hiiiiing. I got it.”

Kiri Kiri lifted her head and responded.

However, she did not release her arms which were tightly holding onto my body.

I also asked her to give me advice for the next floor.

Kiri Kiri said there won't be much danger at 19th Floor.

As a side note, she included explanations on how to treat the cold and how to take care of someone who had it.

I didn't have to worry about getting cold. So, this meant that I'll be meeting someone at the 19th Floor who has a cold.

This is slowly getting stuffy.

I got up and stretched.

I thought Kiri Kiri might unhand me if I got up. However, although I got up, Kiri Kiri was still hanging onto me.

She was like a koala.

“Can you please let go now?”

“Nooong.”

“I'll give you cake if you let go.”

“Okaying!”

Kiri Kiri detached herself from me immediately.

I bought her a piece of cake.

“Hooouuuuuaeeee, aren’t you going to eat too?”

“I’m not going to eat. I don’t think I’ll be able to eat anything sweet for a while.”

Literally, I had been drinking Paramal until I puked.

So, I became sick of anything sweet.

“Hiiiiiiing... Please don’t kick yourself so much. It is not your fault. That was just a difficult trial.”

I’m sure she was trying to console me. Still, I did not agree with her.

Anyway, I am thankful for her. She is showing concern for me.

Still, I suppose I did get something from the 18th Floor.

I learned to be thankful to another in honest way.

“No. You had always been honest to your emotions and were not afraid to show them.”

She is complimenting me out of the blue.

“Usually, having other beings reading one’s mind is very scary and uncomfortable. However, you didn’t mind me or other gods for looking into your thoughts. That was because you were not afraid to show us your thoughts and were not embarrassed about them.”

I am not sure. I don’t think that’s why.

I have many embarrassing thoughts. I do wish that I could hide them as well.

Still, well, it does feel good to be praised.

“Hoooojjajeee, you are!”

Kiri Kiri suddenly shouted.

She then closed her eyes. She started to think deeply about something.

She had been like that for a while. She suddenly opened her eyes widely, faced me and said,

“Your fingers are beautiful.”

Kiri Kiri looked very proud as she said it. Meanwhile, I could not immediately understand what that was for.

I was able to understand her intent only after I thought about what I had been thinking earlier.

She was giving me compliments for my own sake.

That sure is an odd one. She spent almost three minutes to think hard about it, and that’s what she came up with? That my fingers are beautiful?

I wondered if I should take away the slice of cake. I gave it a serious thought.

“Ho... Hoooojjajeee, you are!”

Kiri Kiri noticeably stumbled with words.

After that, she closed her eyes and thought hard.

I’m looking forward to her answer too.

I wonder what kind of compliment would she give me this time?

“Your name is fun!”

As I thought, I think I should take the cake.

* * *

I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri and went back to the waiting room.

I had chatted away with her for a long time before I left, so I was feeling a little excited. Now, my mood was calming down again.

I sat at the bed in the waiting room and thought about things.

My emotion had become dull.

I wondered if this would become a big problem later.

For now, there was nothing bad about it.

At AoAeo island, I really had seen the bottom of the barrel.

I cried like a crazy person and did all sorts of unsightly things.

My current condition was far more preferable than a continuation of that.

It was more comfortable as well.

Maintaining agitated emotional state is very taxing mentally and physically.

However, this might become a problem later.

I feel anxious.

I checked my current mental state as if I was a third person.

At a glance, I look as if I obtained the enlightenment.

I had thrown away all desires that human beings possess. I have

defeated my own emotions.

However, I knew well that I didn't obtain the enlightenment.

How should I explain this...

Right. I feel like I am currently in the state of anesthesia.

I had become mentally numb.

Just like how senses become numb from extreme pain, just like that.

I had pondered about this for a moment. It didn't look like there is anything that would cause problems.

This is not the first time.

After I just fell inside the Tutorial, I had been constantly experiencing terror from life-threatening elements. I had been seeing numbers which indicated the death of people.

Also, I had spent time in agony while blaming myself for not being able to save those people. As such days continued, before I realized, my heart had become numb.

I had been treating myself without much care like an avatar in a video game.

These are not some distant memories.

They are the things that have happened ever since I entered the Tutorial and until now.

To make a rough guess... It is until just before I summoned Idy at the 12th Floor and stayed with her.

I actually have been thinking that I had become complacent and careless lately.

Killing and subduing the emotions and looking at situations objectively is helpful for survival and growth.

It is not a bad thing.

It was just that I have been too relaxed lately.

I organized my thoughts that way.

I finished agonizing over things. Afterwards, I was finally able to have a moment to spare to look around myself.

I looked around, but there wasn't much.

It's a waiting room, so it is just a waiting room. Well...

There was one thing that was different.

When I returned to the waiting room after the tournament was over, I was under the effects of extreme loneliness and solitude.

I was in pain. I was sad.

Now, I didn't feel that way.

As I thought, this is not a bad condition to be in.

However, my senses were still dampened.

I didn't sense any movements from my eyes.

It was obvious.

There was just myself in the waiting room that was moving.

Other than the sound of my breathing, I couldn't hear anything.

I held my breath for a moment. Now, I could only hear the sound of

my heart beating.

Dugun... Dugun...

The sound of the heart beat was very small. However, its presence felt as loud as thunder.

Following the rhythm of the heartbeat, I felt like the pressure inside the dark waiting room was rushing at me.

The waiting room was dark and empty. However, it felt like the place was full of something.

I felt like I was going to get buried under my dampened senses.

There were not many things that I could do to escape this.

I opened the inventory and brought out Transmutable Thousand Arms.

Slash... Slash...

In this dull waiting room, the sound that I hated hearing, only the horrible sound of flesh being cut echoed.

Chapter 131

Tutorial 60th Floor (11)

I closed the library room's door and came down to the lower floor.

At the lower floor's living room, there were Yong Yong and the clone bastard. They were gathered at the table eating fruit pie.

Yong Yong had his mouth full of the pie and chewing. I picked him up and sat at the chair that he was sitting.

I had Yong Yong sit at my lap.

It seemed the fruit pie was delicious. Even as I was placing him on my lap, he only focused on chewing on the pie.

“Any progress?”

I nodded.

There was.

I was now certain that the method I had been trying so far does not stand any chance anymore.

The Tutorial's stage was no different than individual dimensional isolation barriers.

The biggest characteristic of the stages was that the passage was only one way past.

One could move on to the next floor through the portal that opened by the system. Other than this, no other direction of movement was possible.

The tournament and the day of the great harmony were exceptions. However, I am not yet able to interfere with those.

Lately, there had not been any events, so I was also lacking in examples.

So, the method I had been trying lately was breaking open a path between the 60th Floor's stage and other stages.

Even if I don't make a connecting pathway out of the Tutorial, if I could just break open a path to the 90th Floor or 99th Floor, I can clear the floors right away.

After I tried my idea, I failed.

"How bad is it?"

"It is impenetrable even if a god came to try breaking it."

"...This is worse than I thought. Could it be a product of joint efforts by many gods?"

"It could also be the work of a god who specializes in dimensions."

Anyway, with my current abilities, I think it would be difficult to break open a new pathway inside the stage.

Uuuuaaaaa.

The project I had been pushing for turned out to be a dead end. I feel like I'm losing strength and enthusiasm.

I tossed a gigantic jawbreaker candy inside my mouth.

"Daddy, I want one too."

Yong Yong saw me eating the candy. He opened his mouth and said 'ah~'.

I also put in a jawbreaker in his mouth.

Yong Yong rolled the candy around in his mouth. He then picked up the pie again.

He held the candy on the edge of his rear teeth and continued to chew on the pie with his front teeth.

If he swallows the pie and the candy goes with it, then the candy will get stuck in his neck.

Well, it probably won't matter.

"What's next?"

"Um... I'm not sure."

I had not thought about what I would do if this idea failed.

Actually, I had always been thinking about other possibilities, but nothing useful came to my mind.

I was running out of ideas.

"I have no leads. I don't have anything that could work as a medium either. In the end, it means I need a completely unique idea that I never thought of. I need creativity. Creativity."

I mumbled on by myself like that, and the clone bastard sighed and turned his gaze to a book.

Yong Yong was energetically eating the candy and pie. I brushed his head once and opened the newspaper.

Yong Yong was sitting on my lap. So, I had the paper floating above my head so I could read it.

What caught my eyes was...

The biggest topic in the newspaper was about Lee Yeun-hye clearing the 17th Floor.

I already knew about this very well, so I have no need to read it in detail.

As for items on the auction, nothing is catching my eyes...

As for stories about what's happening in the outside world...

[Kim Min-hyuk, the former second in command of the Order of Vigilance, is in a conflict with Korean Government?]

What's this about?

The headline really caught my eyes. I hurriedly checked the details in the article.

According to the article, Kim Min-hyuk established a new clan and had been gathering Korean Awakened warriors who were scattered across the globe. Having realized Kim Min-hyuk's work, the Korean Government expressed their discomfort with his actions.

I sent a message to Park Jung-ah so I can learn a bit more about this article.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: That seems to be the case.]

[LHA, 60th Floor: Try explaining it further.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: From what I've heard, the number of S rank and above Awakened warriors in the newly established clan exceed the number of such warriors who belong to the government. I'm sure the government feels uncomfortable about this. I heard Kim Min-hyuk is even planning on gathering up Awakened warriors who are foreign nationals.]

Korea has produced the most number of highest rated Awakened warriors. However, the Korean Government retained the least number of such warriors in comparison to all other nations.

I'm sure this is rubbing them the wrong way.

The Awakened warriors were no ordinary super humans.

They had financial power and connections. Not only that, each warrior was sometimes viewed as a symbol, a rallying point of the people.

Some became celebrities in the entertainment industry. Some became dealers who moved the prices of lands and houses.[2]

The Awakened warriors defeated monsters and influenced a nation's defensive capability as well.

Their presence also directly affected the pride of a nation along with foreign affairs and even currency exchange rates.

The Awakened warriors were incredible strategic resources. Literally, they were beyond the norm.

The Korean government was facing the reality of not being able to keep their Awakened warriors from a foreign country's capital power. Instead of forcing the warriors to stay, Korean Government chose to let them go overseas under a few conditions and maintaining their Korean nationality.

In that situation, the fact that the highest rated Awakened warriors who didn't even have Korean citizenship were gathering inside the country was definitely an unstable movement for the country.

I have never been outside, so I don't know the situation exactly, but...

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: In middle of all this, saying bad stuff to the government or getting tangled up with reassignments... Well, I think there are lot going on. During the last round, there was a message from the government.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: To us? What did it say?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Well, you know. The message asked us to

stop Kim Min-hyuk. I gave a rough response, saying how are we supposed to stop someone outside when we are inside the Tutorial.]

That was true.

We are trapped here. How are we supposed to stop Kim Min-hyuk?

Also, even if we were outside, we wouldn't be stopping Kim Min-hyuk.

To the outside, Park Jung-ah and I are known to be the leaders of the Order. However, practically speaking, Kim Min-hyuk was the one who led most of the Order's projects.

Park Jung-ah and I were closer to just being the faces of the Order for the purpose of public relations.

The conversation started with Kim Min-hyuk's story. However, it soon led to useless banter.

The pointless chatter between Park Jung-ah and I continued on and on until the clone bastard next to me expressly directed his discomfort towards me.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How's the newbie doing? I heard that she made it past the 17th Floor.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: She is continuing well. It would be great if she could keep up the current pace and get up here. I wish she could hurry, but...]

Now, the topic had moved to Lee Yeon-hye. She became the most popular person in the Tutorial lately.

The 17th Floor was my biggest concern, and she managed to get past it. Now, she was sailing through smoothly.

Even at the 18th Floor, thanks to the information I gave her beforehand, she was able to clear it without facing any danger.

Ah, that makes me think about the 18th Floor again.

I glanced at the clone bastard next to me and stopped thinking about it.

Our mental connection was off. However, even with that, we could still vaguely detect each other's' thoughts.

I want to avoid the clone bastard finding about my thoughts regarding the 18th Floor.

The clone bastard was not someone who was completely different from me, although I couldn't say he was exactly the same as me either.

To be specific, it wasn't that the clone bastard and I shared everything together in identical ways. He was a collection of some parts of myself.

He was made based on the thoughts, experiences and memories I gained since entering the Tutorial.

He was not like myself who had memories of my life before the life inside the Tutorial. All memories he had were from inside the Tutorial, and his entire life was what he has lived so far at the 60th Floor. To him, the memories of the 18th Floor is a critical trauma.

He still had not overcome the memories. It looked like he just had been forgetful of it.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How much longer would it take for the newbie to get to the 60th Floor?]

I am not sure? I really don't know about that.

If I had the specs she had, I would be able to get here in a flash.

However, Lee Yeon-hye has been progressing so slowly.

Also, since the 20th Floor, I had been getting past the stages rather fast, so I don't have much information about them.

Of course, I have information I obtained through the manager. However, they are not as good as the information I obtained through actual experiences.

As for how long it would take for Lee Yeon-hye to get to the 60th Floor, I really am not sure.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm sure she will do well on her own. What is important is not the time it takes. It is not dying.]

She made it past the 17th Floor, but it was not like all obstacles that posed threats to her life were gone.

There are numerous dangerous stages left.

I chattered away with Park Jung-ah for a while again and then concluded the conversation.

Even after the conversation ended, I thought about Lee Yeon-hye for a while.

Since the 17th Floor, the number of messages from Lee Yeon-hye have decreased noticeably.

As for letters, they didn't come at all.

Lee Yeon-hye said she heard information about me from Kiri Kiri.

I'm sure this falls to the category of private information. I wonder how she heard it.

She mentioned gods, so I think she was given a proposal that was not related to me and heard about me in the process.

I can be certain about one thing. Kiri Kiri kept her promise with me.

However, apart from that issue, the information that Lee Yeon-hye heard from Kiri Kiri was dangerous.

She now knew that I had been trying all sorts of things to leave Tutorial. She also learned that I had been making small bits of progresses.

From Lee Yeon-hye's perspective, if I am to clear the 60th Floor by myself, then she will be stuck there by herself. It could not be helped that she would be sensitive about this.

She could feel disappointed in me. She could feel upset.

"Km. Km. Uuuuhuuuum. Uhm!"

I was organizing my thoughts, but the clone bastard faked a cough next to me.

What is he up to?

His lungs and breathing won't have any problem even if he hibernated in a chemical-infested, biologically dangerous and radioactive training room.

"Uuuuhuuuhm! That... Km! I have something to say..."

The intro was unnecessarily long.

"Km... that... How should I say this."

Watching him like this, I am reminded that the clone bastard and I are completely different entities.

He was based on my past, but is it because the personality's growth has been different since his birth?

He had completely different philosophies and personality.

"I also want a n... I want to have a name too!"

With the same face as mine, he was blushing and closing his eyes as he shouted that. Watching him do that overcame me with emotion inside somehow.

However, regardless of what I was feeling inside, the clone bastard's little wish was very understandable.

“Why a name all of the sudden?”

“I can't be called a clone forever. It is not like I'm an ordinary clone.”

That's true.

To be precise, he was not a clone or mental formation.

He was closer to a new life form born from genetic engineering.

“It did not matter when I was just with you, but I don't want to be called uncle clone by Yong Yong forever.”

It seemed he had been agonizing over this for some time.

Having heard his name, Yong Yong raised his head up. I looked at him.

Since Yong Yong was born, the clone had recognized the concept of another person. At the same time, he developed a desire to make a distinction of his own existence. I think that's how it can be explained.

Also, I think the novels he had been reading lately influenced him as well.

I guess I will really have to make a name for him.

“Which name do you like?”

It is not like he is a newborn baby. I think it would be best to give him the name he wants.

The problem was the clone bastard's answer...

“Hooch Nedval.”

What a sight to behold.

What nonsense is this?

[TL: Hooch Nedval is one of the main characters of Dragon Raja, a Korean fantasy novel that was mentioned before. The clone had read the whole thing.]

“What! It's a great name.”

“In that case, let's go with Ho-chi. The Ho part is a tradition. Lee Ho-chi. That's a great name.”

Having heard my suggestion, the clone bastard's face turned red. Yong Yong started to laugh. It seemed Yong Yong found the sound of the name to be funny.

Yong Yong, is his name that funny?

It is similar to your daddy's name?

The clone bastard huffed and puffed for a moment. He then took off.

Looks like he is angry.

Still, Hooch Nedval was just not right.

Yong Yong was still smiling. I hugged him tightly.

“Yong Yong, it seems your uncle wants to have a name too. What kind of name should we give him?”

“Uncle's name?”

“Yes. It looks like your uncle doesn’t know how to make one for himself. I think your daddy will have to help him.”

I feared that the clone might come up with a name like Frodo Baggins if we didn’t make one for him.

Yong Yong’s eyes suddenly sparkled. He grabbed my sleeve and said,

“Daddy! In that case, I want to make a name for my uncle!”

Huh?

“Yong Yong, you will?”

“Yes! Yong Yong will!”

I think this idea is making me feel anxious in its own way.

I get the feeling that whatnot-etcetera the fourth or something like that will result from this.

Still, I think it will be better than leaving it to the clone bastard.

I wrapped it up that way and put my hand toward the fruit pie that was still left on the table.

When I almost finished the pie, I could feel the clone bastard’s movement.

His movement was not toward here. He was headed to the portal.

Soon, his presence disappeared near the portal.

I think this rascal must be really pissed.

All by himself, the clone bastard went to the 61th Floor stage.

Maybe he is thinking about asking the old man or the granny about

names.

It probably won't matter. Well...

It is not like he is a child.

* * *

"Daddy, why isn't uncle coming back?"

The clone bastard had not returned for three weeks.

Chapter 132

Tutorial 19th Floor (1)

[Adorable...]

[Pardon?]

[I said adorable.]

[It... it so sudden to hear you say that about me...]

[No, not you.]

* * *

[Round 19 will begin.]

[Round 19, Day 1, 00:00]

The message signaling the start of the new round appeared, and I finished getting ready to head out to the stage right away.

Park Jung-ah or Kim Min-hyuk and others would be busy minding the newbies who just entered the Tutorial at the start of the new round.

It was not like I had anything in particular to tell them, so I decided to go straight to clearing the stages.

Now, let's go.

I calmed my heart through the past few days. I feel refreshed too.

[God of Adventure is anxious.]

[God of Slowness is cheering for you.]

[God of Goodwill feels sorry for you.]

Seriously, I let it be known to them that I am annoyed with their messages, yet why are they still at it?

Since two days ago, they had been sending me messages like that in every few hours.

I stretch-yawned once and got on the portal.

With renewed attitude, let's go.

I went through the bonfire room and entered the 19th Floor stage. It was a dark forest with lush trees.

The forest was packed with tall trees. The above was covered in tree branches and leaves. Not a ray of sunshine came through.

The tall tree's branches were all above my height, so they didn't get in my way or block my view.

Because of the trees, the view was not very wide.

There were bits of fogs here and there, so the air was moist and cold.

Fortunately, the ground was solid enough.

It was not mushy mud. That alone was something to feel fortunate about.

Overall, the environment was not comfortable. Still, I was satisfied with breathing the clean air with the smell of grass.

[God of Goodwill feels sorry for you.]

Ugh, really. I wish they just stopped it already.

I ignored the message from the god who cared too much. Instead, I turned my attention to something else around me.

What am I supposed to do in this stage?

Usually, I could figure out the theme of the stage before the message appeared to explain the stage's clear conditions.

However, I am not able to get a feel for the theme of the 19th Floor stage.

A lush forest.

If I have to point out anything out of the ordinary, there was a small animal that was hiding behind a tree and shivering.

What kind of animal is that? Why isn't it running or attacking?

On top of this, it is not even hiding all that well.

I can see its tail wagging. The tail is fully exposed.

Could it be that this is not a wild animal but a pet?

I thought about approaching it. However, the animal was shaking a lot. It appeared to be choking in fear, so I decided not to.

Instead, I spread mana and checked the appearance of the animal that was hiding behind the tree.

As I observed visually, the animal had brown fox tail.

Above the tail... A human?

Surprisingly, the one hiding behind the tree was a human.

Considering the ears and the tail, perhaps I should say a beastman.

I guess this one is similar to Kiri Kiri.

[TL: The author did not define the gender of the one that the MC just ran into because he won't be able to tell at this point, so I cannot use the gender specific terms such as he or she. In Korean language, a writer can write an entire book without ever using words like he or she if the writer wanted. For now, I'll refer to the beastman as 'this one', 'that one', 'rascal', 'kid' or etc.]

At first, I thought this one was an animal not just because of the tail, but also the animal-like low growl and thick animal-like smell.

I guess this one is a little different from Kiri Kiri?

Kiri Kiri introduced herself as a rabbit, not a human, but practically speaking, Kiri Kiri is closer to a human who happens to have bunny ears.

On the other hand, I think this one is closer to being an animal that looks like human.

There is the low growling cry. There is also the crunching pose too.

If it was not for the fact that this one was wearing a green raincoat, I might have still mistaken this one for a wild animal even after checking its body and face.

It was at that moment. The message appeared.

[The 19th Floor's trial will begin.]

Explanation: Mr. Guide, have you ever lost your way in middle of a dark forest? I hope you never have. Lately, there is a terrifying rumor going around about Graywood forest.

The rumor has it that there are ghosts who are trying to eat people's livers. The ghosts, with their ghastly cries, are roaming around the forest.

In middle of the forest, there is a child who needs help.

Guide the child to the outside of the forest.

[Clear condition]

1. Guide the child, who is wearing the raincoat, to the outside of the forest.
2. The child must survive.

That was quite a simple message.

I felt like the message's tone was a little different from other floors, but that was not a big problem.

It sounds like I just need to be that kid's temporary guardian.

I thought something was up when Kiri Kiri showed me how to take care of cold symptoms.

Ugh.

Without me realizing, I sighed.

I am no good at taking care of another.

I never tried it either.

Um... What should I do.

I should try it first and summon Idy if I feel like it won't work.

“Uururururu...”

Anyway, how am I supposed to take care of this one?

I think this one is afraid of me.

Actually, more importantly, that one appears to be afraid of me, yet it

has the audacity to growl at me?

That defeats the purpose of hiding, doesn't it?

I was trying not to contact the busy people, but I had no choice.

I need help.

[Lee Ho-jae, 19th Floor: Help!]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Busy.]

You heartless bastard.

To start with, I suppose it would be better to ask Park Jung-ah instead of Kim Min-hyuk about this.

It requires a fine touch, so...

If anyone asked if Park Jung-ah was gentle and refined, then I would not know how to answer that. Anyway...

[Lee Ho-jae, 19th Floor: Do you have a bit of time?]

[Park Jung-ah, 45th Floor: Yes, of course. I have time for a quick chat.]

This is the first time to see Park Jung-ah saying she had time for a quick chat.

It looks like she must be very busy.

There was no need for a long introduction. I went straight to the point.

[Lee Ho-jae, 19th Floor: What should I do to calm an animal that's frightened?]

[Park Jung-ah, 45th Floor: I am not sure. Befriending an animal is usually accomplished with food, right?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 19th Floor: I got it. Thanks. I'll contact you again later.]

I closed the message window and opened the dimensional pocket from the inventory.

Which food should I tempt this one with? Which food would work well?

Considering the ears and the tail, I think this one is a beastman kind that is similar to foxes.

It means this one is probably a carnivore or omnivore.

Even a rabbit-human like Kiri Kiri is an omnivore, so I think it would be best to get both meat and vegetables.

First... I should make the bonfire of course.

This is following the cliché.

In martial warrior stories, when the main character runs into someone who had been suffering from starvation, this is right about the time when they had a bonfire going and roasting fishes together.

There's no need to bother with handling or preparing it. Also, while the fish gets roasted, the smell spreads too.

There's also the warmth from the bonfire, so the situation fits exactly to the cliché.

Also, this is one of the clichés that are very plausible.

I collected fallen leaves from nearby.

As soon as I got up, the one behind the tree flinched big, but the one didn't run away.

Among the leaves, which were mostly a little wet, I found ones that were relatively dry and rubbed them with the heat stone.

Soon, the leaves caught on fire.

There was no need for me to do bothersome things like having the tree branches get caught on fire and blowing at it to grow the fire.

I brought out charcoals from the inventory and tossed them around the heat stone.

The bonfire will be more or less complete as long as the charcoals catch on fire before the heat stone's power dies off.

I placed a fishing chair about a step away from the bonfire and sat down.

I totally feel like I'm out on camping.

I brought out ingredients from the dimensional pocket.

At a long kabab stick, I placed meat and vegetables in order.

They were already cleanly cut, so I could get the kabab ready without much work.

I made two kababs, placed them on fire and started to roast them.

I didn't have a platform to place the kababs, so I held them on my hand and roasted them.

After a bit of time, the roasted vegetables' sweet aroma and roasting meats' smell started to spread.

The smell was pretty good.

I placed one kabab on the ground diagonally by stabbing the ground with its handle portion so the food stayed above the ground.

I started eating the other kabab by holding it.

The meat was only lightly seasoned, so it was a bit fatty, but the inner meat was soft.

It was not stuffy to eat, and I liked that the most.

As I thought, the expensive meats were worth the price.

Spicy vegetables between meats compensated for fatty meat's taste.

I had not had much appetite lately, but I was still able to eat the kabab and enjoy it more or less.

For a while, I had forgotten about the fact that the goal was to entice the one behind the tree with food. Instead, I focused on enjoying the meal. Still, I think I accomplished the goal anyway.

The one hiding behind the tree was drooling big time from the mouth. So...

Now, um... What should I do?

I moved my hand toward the other kabab that was stuck on the ground, and the rascal's eyes shook wildly.

I had my back turned toward the rascal, so this one had about half of the body out of the tree.

I'm sure this rascal is thinking I cannot see, but I was watching this one using my detection skill, not my eyes.

I think I'll need to do some acting?

"Um... Hm... What do I do? I still have food left, but I'm too full. Ah, it is such a waste, but looks like I'll have to leave it here."

Although I was the one who said the line, the line itself and my delivery were seriously lacking in commitment to the acting.

I think a kindergartener reading a fairytale book out loud would sound more natural than this.

As for the runt behind me who was drooling out a river and fiddling around, that one was completely out of the tree.

Although the rascal was still maintaining the distance.

Let's wait a bit longer.

While I waited, I brought out food ingredients from the dimensional pouch and laid them around the ground.

The runt's breathing had become even harder.

When about 30 minutes had passed since I started to wait, the distance between me and the kid had closed substantially.

Although slowly, the rascal slowly came closer to me and the bonfire.

The kid was approaching at a snail pace of one step per five minutes, but still, the rascal was coming closer.

Since the rascal came closer, I decided to use the mana to examine the kid's appearance in detail.

I was planning on examining the appearance visually, but I think it would take another 20 or 30 minutes before the kid gets to front of my eyes.

As I noticed earlier, the rascal had fox-like tail and ears. The kid was a beastman kind.

This one was wearing a large, dark-green raincoat. Under the hood were large sparkling eyes. The kid looked adorable.

The height was less than one meter. The kid was small.

Considering the face, and the height, this one really appeared to be a

little child.

Still, since this kid was not human, I could not be certain of this.

No matter how long I waited, the rascal was refusing to come any closer beyond a certain distance.

The runt was just fidgeting and hesitating around. Like that, I waited for over an hour. I couldn't help myself but to just give up and get up.

“Ah, I think I'll have to go relieve myself. It would be great if someone ate the leftover kabab.”

Leaving behind the horribly delivered line as if I was reading from a book, I left the scene for the kid.

I was hoping that the rascal would pick up or eat the kabab and other food ingredients.

If possible, I would have preferred to wait for the kid and befriend this rascal. However, this one was unable to come closer despite drooling and shivering hands from the hunger. Looking at the kid, I could not wait anymore.

I stepped away from the bonfire and walked into the forest. Meanwhile, I used the detection skill to monitor the kid.

I felt sorry for the child.

The kid's eyes were sunken and dark below. There was drooling from the mouth, but the lips were completely dried up that they were cracked.

The kid's fingertips were full of numerous little wounds that they looked like the fingertips would be covered in white scars. As for the kid's arms and legs, they were skinny as bones.

Despite all that, the little one was still not able to pick up the barbeque kabab in front of the bonfire.

This runt sure was a scardy-cat.

* * *

After about 20 minutes passed, I could detect that the kid was moving away from the bonfire.

It seemed this one finally finished the meal.

I started to move to go back to the bonfire.

When I returned to the bonfire, what I saw was unexpected.

It was a little surprising.

The meats and vegetables on the barbeque kabab were still there.

Actually, there were minor differences.

There were one less piece of meat and pimento each.

Still, the arrangement of the pieces was changed slightly, so it was not obvious from taking a glance at the kabab that their numbers had been reduced.

If I didn't count the pieces when I made the kabab, I would not have been able to notice this easily.

Moreover, it was not just the kabab that changed.

Next to the bonfire were two long tree branches that were plugged on to the ground, and the kabab was placed above the two tree branches.

Thanks to that, the kabab was warmed up.

It seemed the height was just right as well. Kabab didn't burn either.

Also, as for the food ingredients that I scattered on the ground, they

were neatly arranged based on type and shape.

None of the ingredients were missing.

There were small rocks surrounding the bonfire to form a circle.

They were placed to prevent the spread of fire.

The fallen leaves around the bonfire were all moved away from the bonfire by a certain distance. On top of this, the dirt that got on the portable chair's legs were wiped clean.

Without realizing, I turned my head to look behind me.

The kid had the head peeking out of the tree, but the runt tumbled and hid behind the tree as soon as I looked.

I think this one is not a fox but the Snail Bride?

[TL: The story of Snail Bride is a Korean fairytale. A farmer found a large snail. This happens to be a snail who could transform into a girl. When farmer went to work, she transformed into a girl and cooked meals for him in secret so he would have the food when he came back. Later, the farmer meets the girl and marries her. The governor of the village learns about the incredible beauty of the girl, so he tries to take her away by forcing the farmer into wagers. It turns out the girl is the Princess of Underwater Kingdom (Korean version of Atlantis), so with her father's help, who is the King of the Sea, the farmer triumphs in every wager, making the governor to give up. To be precise, that is the happy ending version. There are many different versions in dictionaries, and apparently most of them are tragedies where the girl is taken away by the governor or the farmer and the girl both dies.]

I could not help but to ponder about this.

Someone who is so weak and who had suffered starvation for so long only ate a piece of meat and another piece of vegetable before putting down the kabab. Is that possible?

On top of that, this kid paid back for the kindness?

Chapter 133

Tutorial 19th Floor (2)

The kid was hiding behind the tree with just the head peeking out. I checked on the little one once again.

I figured that this one was just a scaredy-cat, but it seems like the kid was also very kindhearted.

The child only ate two pieces from the kabab, the meat and the pimento, cleaned the area and even made a platform for the kabab.

What I could not understand was that the kid was still drooling. It seems the rascal is still very much hungry.

Also, it seemed the kid has starved for a long time. This one's body didn't appear to be in a good condition.

Is this possible?

After losing one's mind over hunger, people would do anything, even snatching food away from another.

How could such a hungry child just leave unguarded food behind, eat a few pieces so it wouldn't be noticeable, and then leave?

I'm certain that the kid spent more energy cleaning than the amount gained from eating the little bits that this one ate.

The wet leaves and small branches on the ground were all cleaned away from the bonfire.

Even sharp rocks on the ground were arranged so that the flattest surfaces faced upward. Uneven surfaces on the ground were filled in as well.

This rascal's behavior is way different from what I expected.

It was enough to make me panic.

I pondered about this for a moment before I opened my mouth again.

“Ah, I think I should go to sleep now. I wish someone would eat the leftover food.”

With that brief line, I moved away from the bonfire.

After walking about 30 steps, I brought out a floormat, placed it on the ground and sat leaning on a tree.

Like that, I closed my eyes and stopped moving.

I did this because I was wondering if the little one might be more at ease to come eat the food if I stayed like this through the whole night.

Fortunately, as I hoped, the rascal slowly approached the bonfire, making little bits of progress every five minutes.

I calculated that it would take a little over an hour for the kid to get to the bonfire.

I hope the child will eat the kabob and the other foods.

I directed my thoughts away from this afterwards.

I was always short on time, and there were so much to think about.

The highest priority right now was the soul collect skill.

It was the skill that I obtained after clearing the 18th Floor.

The God of Death gifted me with the power skill while revealing that it came from the god. God of Death had never done that before.

Other skills from the God of Death that were gifted to me did not have indications specifying their origin in the God of Death. Instead, they merely said the skills were gifted by a god who does not wish to reveal the identity.

It seemed the God of Death was now really interested in me.

Anyway, I now have three skills gifted from the God of Death already.

Dead Summon, Soul Steal, and Soul Collect...

The Soul Cry is not a power skill, but it is likely to be related to the God of Death.

That means I received four skills from the God of Death.

I wonder if I might end up being the God of Death's apostle.

[God of Adventure is feeling anxious.]

[God of Slowness is snorting and making fun of someone.]

It seemed that even the God of Adventure was feeling uneasy.

Meanwhile, it seems the God of Slowness is feeling confident.

Well, the God of Adventure was always feeling anxious even when there was just the God of Slowness to compete against.

Still, I think I'll be choosing either the God of Slowness or the God of Adventure, not some other god.

Of the two, I'm leaning most towards the God of Slowness.

In the past, I thought my characteristics were closest to those of the God of Adventure.

I became increasingly certain of this after meeting the monks at the 13th Floor.

The God of Slowness wanted the process of repetition to achieve results. Meanwhile, God of Adventure was all about having a goal and overcoming hardship and difficulty in the process. I thought the God of Adventure's characteristics were closer to me than anyone.

The monks valued growth and duels. As for me, I valued victory as the result.

However, lately, my position on the matter was slowly changing.

I'm definitely different from the monks. I want to win and get the rewards.

However, what I want isn't a large and final conclusion. I just want to win and continue to win.

I want to achieve victory after victory and grab the rewards from them.

I could understand myself more easily by thinking about my old days as professional gamer.

Even then, I only wanted to win.

My fellow players wanted to achieve victories to win the entire tournament and stand at the pinnacle. That was their goal. Meanwhile, I just wanted to win and win.

Also, I wanted to stay at the top indefinitely.

[TL: The above is not a mistranslation. I think it is inconsistent too. Isn't that goal same as the fellow players' goal? It is not like professional gamers plan on losing after getting to the top.]

Instead of thinking of the victory as the result, if one thought of victory as the process, then my characteristics are very similar to God of Slowness.

This is probably why the monks thought my values were similar to their own.

[God of Slowness is looking at someone and smiling.]

[God of Adventure is yelling and running off from someone's room.]

Still, it was not like I was incompatible with the God of Adventure's characteristics.

Anyway, breaking through the difficulties and obtaining the victory and reward is in line with the God of Adventure's character.

In the past, I was uninterested in my comrades, people around me, and my enemies. Now, I have been very mindful of other people and sometimes tried hard to understand them.

I think maybe I am becoming more similar to God of Adventure's character.

[God of Adventure suddenly looks better.]

[God of Adventure grinned and went back to someone's room.]

[God of Slowness is telling someone to leave.]

The God of Adventure and the God of Slowness have some parts of their characteristics that are contradictory to each other, but I believe their values can co-exist.

I cannot be certain which god is best suited for me yet.

Let's get back to Soul Collect skill.

[Soul Collect (Lv. Max)]

Description: After pondering on this for a long time, the God of Death gifted the power to the challenger the god had taken the most interest in lately.

Although careful, the God of Death is also impatient. The god is already regretting his decision.

When activated, the neutralized beings' souls will be collected. You can use them as your subordinates.

The collected souls will last for a month.

The collected soul's abilities will be proportional to the caster's abilities and their compatibility with the soul in addition to the soul's original abilities before death.

When activated, the godly power of the God of Death is used, so the skill does not require any power from the caster, such as mana, mental focus or holy power.

Thanks to Kiri Kiri's help, there were more descriptions now.

From the description, it appeared to be more of a soul enslavement skill than a soul collection skill.

Before I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri yesterday, she handed me a small note. I opened it and looked what it said.

Surprisingly, the note contained writing in Korean, although the letters were not written very well.

I didn't know Kiri Kiri could write Korean too.

The note was simple.

[How to use Soul Collect!]

1. Defeat the enemy.
2. As the first part of the Soul Collect, collect the soul (it might be better if you used the Soul Steal at the same time).
3. As the second part of the Soul Collect, summon the soul.

PS. Make sure to buy me a cake next time.

Now that I read it, I realized the note was no different from the description on the skill.

It only had one additional tip about using simultaneously using Soul Steal.

The note is not all that useful.

Maybe Kiri Kiri was still feeling sorry about the 18th Floor so she decided to give me a small service.

Or, maybe she wanted to just tell me to buy her a cake.

Thinking like that, I put the note away into the inventory.

The Soul Collect skill makes me think about Pokémon. I cannot help it.

I thought it probably will be similar if I actually used it.

Spirit Monster, Go!

Like that.

Now that I said it, this feels like one of those run-of-the-mill mobile games.

I should try it out when I get the chance.

While I was thinking about all sorts of things, a wet leaf fell on my face.

The leaf was wet as drops of dew collected on it. The water was flowing down my face.

I was about to raise my hand to get rid of the leaf, but I noticed a change in the little fox child who had been hesitating around near the bonfire. The kid made a move.

I was concerned about the little one being frightened, so I didn't move. Instead, I waited.

The kid was only two steps away from the bonfire. The rascal glanced at the bonfire and then looked at where I was sitting. The kid kept looking back and forth.

That's right. I'll be sitting right here quietly, so please eat.

Suddenly, the kid brought the two hands together to the chest and made tight fists.

The hands were smaller than small pebbles.

The kid's behavior is cute to watch.

It seemed the little one finally decided to eat the kabob.

The fox child nodded vigorously and stepped forward.

It looks like this one is finally going to eat.

I wasted two hours already while trying to get that kid to eat.

If this is not the triumph of human patience, I don't know what...
Huh?

The fox child ignored the kabab right in front of the nose. Instead, suddenly, the kid started to run toward me.

What? Hey, hey! Why are you coming this way!

I protested inside. Regardless, the fox child scurried toward me.

This is totally unexpected.

First, I awakened my focus and circulated mana through my body.

I thought it felt odd to assume a combat stance when a little child like this one was approaching me, but this place was Hell Difficulty.

I had to be prepared.

The fox child ran all the way to the front of me before stopping about two steps away from me.

It seemed the dash exhausted the little one. The fox child took a moment to calm his breathing. Afterwards, the kid walked to the front of me.

The fox child stood on the toes, and...

The little one lightly picked up the leaf from my face.

After that, the kid wiped off the dirt and water from my face using his hand.

As if the kid thought the work was done, the little one turned around and quickly ran off.

Dumbfounded, I opened my eyes and vacantly stared at the kid's back.

With gigantic dark-green raincoat, the kid was diligently running into the distance.

That rascal just came to clean the leaf from my face?

[God of Goodwill is happy to see someone's act.]

I think this is my first time seeing the God of Goodwill expressing something other than sorrow for someone.

The fox child went back to the tree that the kid had been hiding behind before.

The distance between the child and the bonfire had increased back to where he was one hour ago.

...Huh... Oh my... What an adorable little one.

* * *

In the end, the rascal didn't approach the bonfire until morning the next day.

Throughout the night, the leaves fell on my face several times, and the fox child ran to me to clean them off every time.

I was surprised at first, but after that, I was able to accept it while smiling inside.

With short legs, the kid scurried toward me. Watching the kid do that made me feel happy every time.

It would have been better if the child picked up a few pieces of food and ate them while doing all that.

I scratched my head as I opened my eyes.

The dark forest had become a little brighter.

I checked the fox child's location again.

The kid was still hiding behind the large tree trunk, which was about ten steps away from the bonfire. Also, it would take about one hour for the kid to get there.

I confirmed that the kid was asleep. I got up and quietly approached the kid.

The raincoat was as big as the kid. I looked at the kid here and there.

His condition is worse than I thought.

Since the sunrise, the rascal had been crouching down behind the tree trunk. So, I didn't know how ill the kid was.

The fox child was sweating all over. His face was burning red.

His forehead was hot as fire as well.

The child was a scaredy-cat, yet this one was unable to wake up despite me being right here and touching the forehead.

As I thought, maybe I should have fed the kid something even if I had to catch the kid.

I regretted it a little.

I realized that I had developed a slight distaste for doing things that others might not like or hate.

It was not a good sign.

Anyway, it looked like I didn't need to worry about the kid waking up as much as before. So, that was a good thing.

As it said in the manual that Kiri Kiri showed me, I brought out the sleeping bag and tent and set them up. I laid heat stones around to raise the ambient temperature.

First, I had the rascal lay down inside the tent and poured in warm water into the mouth.

I was concerned about water going down the wrong pipe. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

Next, I had the kid drink a few sips of a vitality recovery potion.

After the potion went in, the breathing and the facial color improved significantly.

Unfortunately, I didn't have a potion that cured the cold itself.

I had removed the large raincoat that the kid was wearing.

The kid was a boy.

Under the raincoat, he was wearing a rag-like fabric.

I felt sorry to call it clothing. The clothe was torn and worn out. One side of the shoulders was torn, completely exposing that side's shoulder.

[PR: M wrote a note advising me to replace the next 10-20 sentences with something more PG. I didn't think it was that bad so here it is.]

I wrapped my finger with mana to cut the clothing in order to undress the kid.

It was not awkward.

The kid was younger than my nephew.

Also, the kid was a boy.

Like that, I removed all of his clothes and wiped his body with a towel soaked in warm water. After that, I used a dry, soft towel to wipe off all water and put on a t-shirt and pajama pants on him.

It was fine to have him wear a large t-shirt. However, the pants were just too big.

When I pulled the pants up, it reached the kid's shoulder.

Well, it won't matter.

I put on another shirt that was thicker and had him lay on the sleeping bag.

With warm water towel, I wiped off the sweat from his face and neck before getting out of the tent.

It should be fine if I wiped off his sweat every few minutes.

I need to make food that this fox child can eat.

* * *

Although foxes can eat anything, I heard that they like fruits the best.

I think I saw that from Animal Farm.

A warm tomato egg soup with all sorts of vegetables, a few fruits, some eggs and a soup with ground meat should be enough.

The bonfire was still burning brightly. I brought out kitchenware in front of it.

I handled the vegetables and meat while waiting for the water inside the pot to boil.

When I saw the theme for the 19th Floor for the first time, I thought it was such a bothersome stage.

It was a lot of work to look after myself as it was. Now, I had to be a guardian for another. There was no way I could be happy about that.

However, now...

While I was diligently working with the knife, I went over the treatments for fever, stuffy nose and throat, and cough. Also, I considered other complications that young children get from cold.

I didn't know anything for certainty about these.

I posted a note on the community and looked for challengers who knew a lot about children and cold.

Fortunately, there were a few challengers who had experience in raising children.

It had been months since I chatted with people in the community the last time.

I felt very sorry for the child who was struggling next to me due to the illness. Still, looking after the kid and chatting with the people over the community was not bad.

Chapter 134

Tutorial 19th Floor (3)

The fox child was sleeping inside the sleeping bag inside the tent. It wasn't until the lunch time that the kid finally woke up.

I was changing the wet towel on top of his forehead at the moment, and the kid opened his eyes. We stared at each other.

The rascal screamed and then burrowed into the sleeping bag to hide.

I opened the side opening of the sleeping bag to look inside. I could see that he curled up his body and was shaking.

It hurts to see this.

There's no need for you to be so scared of me?

His face was buried to the other side of the side opening. He had his hands gathered up to cover his eyes.

What are you doing?

Just because you cannot see me does not mean I cannot see you.

I waited for a while, and the kid mumbled something quietly.

“Going to be angry at me...”

[TL: As usual, the author omitted the subject, so it is not certain if the child is talking about MC or someone else, so please leave it to the ambiguity.]

...Why would I be mad at you?

“Might beat me...”

Um, that really hurts to hear it.

Like that, the fox child muttered on for a long while inside the sleeping bag.

As I listened to the kid for a few minutes, my impression of his words changed. Now, I felt uneasy instead of being disappointed.

What he was muttering about was not directed at me.

He was reminding himself.

He was saying that he must not trust others because that's dangerous.

I watched him for a long time yesterday. He was a gentle scaredy-cat.

He was fundamentally kind and generous.

Considering his personality and the numerous scars on his body, it seems he was abused by someone in the past.

Above the sleeping bag, I placed my hand on top of the kid.

“Do not worry. I won't hit you. I won't hurt you either.”

After a moment of silence, another mutter could be heard.

“Lies...”

“I am not lying.”

I wish I could say something to allow him to trust me, but that was impossible with my abilities when it came to conversations.

I felt awkward. So, I went outside the tent. I waited there.

I should just cover the soup up so it will be warm.

Maybe he will relax a little once he smells the food.

After about 30 minutes, I could see the kid peek his head out of the tent.

He was still shivering, but he didn't look like he was choking on fear now.

He was sniffing and drooling.

When he was starving this badly...

I said to the kid,

“Hey. I left some clothes for you. They are brand new and also warmer. So, get changed before coming out.”

He changed to the clothes I left for him. The shirt and the pants were all too big for him, but it could not be helped.

“Come over here.”

The kid hesitated for a moment, and then slowly, very sloooooowly, the kid approached me.

He was afraid as always, but he listened pretty well.

I told him that the food was ready so he should sit down and eat.

However, the kid still didn't completely lower his guard.

“I must not eat it. It might be poisoned...”

“There isn't any poison in it, you rascal.”

I flinched inside, so I raised my voice a little.

That did piss me off.

Does he have any idea how hard I worked to make these?

Probably because of the frustration expressed in my voice, the little one panicked.

His large eyes were starting to fill with tears.

This... Did I do wrong? Am I the one who did wrong?

Damn it all.

I picked up the dish that had the soup and ate a big spoonful's worth.

"Here, see? There is no poison. Come here. You should eat some."

I picked up another spoon full and brought it toward the kid's mouth.

Uuuuuunnng

The kid shook his head and stepped back.

What was that for?

I extended my hand out, grabbed the back of the kid's clothes and had him sit in front of me.

He was struggling, but I had him sit there and picked up the soup again.

Like that, I brought the spoon toward him. Still, the rascal didn't open his mouth.

"Come on. Say, ah..."

He soon said ah... and opened his mouth.

Once he ate one spoon worth of soup, he started to eat well.

It seemed that the kid who refused to eat the soup had left the scene without a trace. Now, he was even saying that it was delicious as I spoon-fed the soup to him.

The change in his attitude was quicker than I expected.

This reminds me of feeding my nephew when he was little.

I fed him soup. As for snacks afterwards, I cut the fruits, handed them to him and asked,

“Would you like to eat more?”

The kid shook his head left and right.

Fortunately, he didn't look like he was afraid of me anymore.

The look on his face was a lot more relaxed now.

I checked his forehead. He still had some traces of a fever.

“Go back to the tent and get some more sleep. I'll go clean these.”

I collected the kitchenware and started to wash dishes.

The rascal didn't go back inside the tent like I asked.

It was not that he was trying to run. He just sat there and quietly watched me.

I thought about forcing him to go sleep, but I decided to let him be.

As he sat and watched, he started to doze off.

I carried him in my arms and laid him down in the sleeping bag.

I wiped off the sweat from his face again and got out of the tent.

I noticed the scars on his body again. They bothered me again.

Starting with his arms and legs, there were scars on his neck as well, and they seemed to be going across his body.

They were not from claws of animals.

Wounds from knives or whips... Burns from hot metals...

The child appeared to be five to eight years old in terms of human age. What could have happened to the kid that led to such scars?

He was very distrusting of me in the beginning. Just now, he was eating soups that I spoon-fed him. Last night, he came to clean up the leaves on my face and cleaned the area around the bonfire. All these behaviors were bizarre.

If an innocent child who used to be trusting of others was lied to and was tortured by someone, then that would lead to defense mechanism like this, right?

My inside was in commotion in various ways.

I finished the dishes and sat in front of the bonfire.

The goal of the 19th Floor was leading this child outside of the forest safely.

He seemed to be still a little afraid of me, but he wasn't trying to run from me.

When I placed him on the sleeping bag, he slept. When I fed him, he ate the food.

I don't think it would be so hard to have him tag along.

Still, I think it would be best to have him fully rest for the day.

It should be fine if we headed out tomorrow.

The problem was if the kid knew a way out of this forest.

If he didn't know, then all I could do was walk in one direction until the forest ended.

I tossed in more tree branches at the bonfire and thought about things. However, I could feel the presence of many around me.

Kuuuuuu...

Kyaaaaa...

Kiiiiiaaaa...

There were things that appeared while making those sounds. They were some sort of spirits.

To explain it more easily, they were ghosts.

There were three of them.

It had been a while since I saw spirits appearing as my enemies.

I think I saw them once at around 10th Floor. I was able to deal damage to them using swords wrapped in mana, so they were not a big threat.

The 10th Floor stage was the kind that tried to stimulate fear in the challenger in various ways. However, the stage was not all that scary.

These ghosts were not all that scary either.

The ghosts looked white and translucent in human forms. They had blood and intestines here and there. Their eyes were white; they had no iris.

Their hands were twisted in a gruesome manner. Their mouths were

wide open with red tongues and pitch-black darkness to the beyond.

They were quite a sight to watch, but they were weak.

I formed a long spear with the Transmutable Thousand Arms and poked at the spirits to attack them.

The spirits screamed as if they were on their dying breaths. They scattered.

Although they were not dangerous, it took a while to get rid of them.

I poured in a bit more mana into the spear and formed Aura Blade at the tip.

I tried stabbing the spirit with it.

Kiiiiaaaaaac!

The spirit didn't moan this time. It screamed loudly and disappeared.

Um... I'm being reminded again, but Aura Blade is quite a cheat.

It allowed me to pour in my will to the mana and focus the mana into wrap it on weapons or body.

It was a simple technique, but its effect was as different as the sky and the ground in contrast to simply pouring in a large amount of mana.

The Knight who taught me the skill at the 16th Floor was surprised about the Aura Blade, and he had a good reason for his reaction.

Anyway, with this, I was able to quickly destroy a spirit.

There were two more left, but I didn't feel they were a threat.

While at it, I decided to test a new skill.

[Soul Collect]

[There wasn't any soul you collect.]

Oh? What's this?

I tried the skill, and a message came up.

Although I failed to use the skill, a message could be seen as well.

This is good. This will make it easier for me to get used to the skill.

This time, I pierced a spirit with the spear wrapped in Aura Blade at its tip and used the Soul Collect at the same time.

[Soul Collect]

[There wasn't any soul you could collect.]

This doesn't work either.

It would be nice if the message also explained why things didn't work.

I swung my spear toward the last spirit.

This time, after the spirit was struck by the Aura Blade, I used the Soul Collect at the moment when the spirit was becoming faint.

[Soul Collect]

[You collected the soul.]

[Collected soul count: 1]

I succeeded this time.

It looks like I'll have to use the skill right after I kill it.

Since then, the spirits came by in groups every few hours.

Their numbers grew each time, but it made no difference.

The combat against the spirits were not fun, but collecting the souls were fun.

Occasionally, I tried out controlling the spirits I gathered.

However, I could not figure out how to control the souls.

The skill's description really did say that I could use them as my servants.

Kiri Kiri's memo said so as well.

I should keep trying whenever I have the time. If it does not work, then I should ask for advice from Kiri Kiri again.

* * *

[Collected soul count: 17]

Like that, I defeated the spirits and collected the souls. I had been pondering about how to control the souls I collected. Before I realized, it was night already.

I thought about going into the tent, but I decided to sit in front of the bonfire and spend some time there.

The spirits came to attack in irregular intervals, so it would be best to stay outside.

It looks like I won't be able to sleep from now on.

Well, I don't sleep well outside the stage anyway, but...

I tossed a few more branches into the fire and closed my eyes.

Although I was not going to sleep, it was still a good idea to rest my eyes by closing them.

A scaredy-cat kid was sleeping near me, so it was not like I could stink up the place with the smell of blood by harming myself for training. So, I just closed my eyes and rested.

I was resting like that, and I detected small movements inside the tent.

The fox child peeked his head out of the tent and stared at me. He then came out of the tent.

He walked away somewhere.

Is he running away?

Using detection and tracking skills, I could find him quickly even if he went very far. Still, it was not going to be a good idea to wonder off like that.

I opened my eyes and tried to get up. However, I saw that the kid was standing nearby. So, I closed my eyes again.

It looked like he needed to relieve himself.

He crunched down nearby and spent about ten minutes like that.

He is just a little kid, but he already has constipation problems?

It looked like he was done with the business. He got up and walked toward me.

He was walking in short, fast steps, which was unique to him.

I felt that he came all the way in front of me. I could not help but to feel nervous.

...Hey, after you pooped, did you wash your hands?

I seriously thought about if I should open my eyes or if I should keep my eyes closed and pretend to be asleep.

The kid fiddled with his hands for a few seconds. He then placed something on top of my head and went back to the tent.

I confirmed that he crawled into the sleeping bag and then opened my eyes.

I carefully picked up the thing above my head and checked what it was.

It was a ring made of white wild flowers weaved together.

Seriously... My heart was touched.

He didn't come out to relieve himself in the morning. He wanted to make me a gift.

I smiled and tried putting the ring on my finger.

It was a fragile ring. It could be squashed easily. However, it warmed my heart.

* * *

The next morning, I became closer to the fox child.

Perhaps it was because of the food I made for him and the flower ring on my finger. The rascal was no longer weary of me. He stood around me when I prepared the meal.

"See, there was no poison this time either, right?"

I asked him after finishing the breakfast.

The kid nodded.

It was a joke, but he didn't even smile.

“Did it taste good?”

“It was delicious...”

He still blurred the end of his sentences like that.

Could it be that he still feels anxious?

“Can I ask you one thing?”

That was out of the blue.

“Of course. It’s all right. What are you curious about?”

“C... Can I say thank you...”

I could not understand right away.

Oh my... Is he asking me if he could thank me? That’s ridiculous.

I nodded.

“Thank you...”

“You are welcome.”

I stroke the back of his head and responded.

Now that I think about it, I didn’t hear his name yet.

I asked what his name was.

“Myong Myong.”

“Myong Myong?”

“Myong Myong is my name...”

That's a surprising naming sense.

Is it a type that's similar to Kiri Kiri's name?

He is a beastman like her, so perhaps that's why.

It seems that beastman have the tradition of coming up with unique names.

"That's an adorable name."

I could not think of any other praise.

It seemed Myong Myong didn't like that. Perhaps he read the look on my face. He pouted and said,

"My name means Salvation..."

I merely thought his name was unique. However, he said his name contained the meaning of 'Salvation.' I fell to silence for a moment.

Are you serious?

"Really?"

"Yes..."

This means... Maybe Kiri Kiri's name has a brilliant or magnificent meaning behind how it sounds.

I should ask her later.

"My name is Ho-jae. Lee Ho-jae."

"Ho... Hooouuuujaaeee?"

Why do beastmen pronounce my name this way?

“Yes, Lee Ho-jae.”

“...T... That’s a good name. Puhup... A good... Huup. Name...”

For the first time, I saw smile on Myong Myong’s face.

Also, there were tears.

He covered his mouth with his two hands and tried very hard to stop himself from laughing. However, the laughter kept on leaking through his mouth.

Later on, to stop himself from laughing at all cost, he pinched his leg. He was in tears. I could not believe this.

Is it that funny? My name is that funny?

Damn it all.

Chapter 135

Tutorial 19th Floor (4)

With his mouth covered by his hands, Myong Myong was trying very hard to hide his laughter.

His face was turning red. It seems he was having very hard time holding his laughter.

“Is my name that funny?”

I was just curious as to why he thought my name was funny.

However, it seems that Myong Myong didn't take it that way.

It seems he thought I must be angry. He visibly flinched.

He raised his hands to cover his eyes. He lowered his body and crunched down on the ground.

“I... I'm sorry...”

...This is complicating my heart.

Myong Myong curled up his body in a ball. He was lightly trembling.

Is he trembling because he is afraid of me possibly being mad at him or is he still desperately trying to hold down the laughter and quivering in the process?

I think it is both.

He finally calmed down after about ten minutes later.

I had him sit in front of the bonfire and asked him again.

Earlier, he said his name had the meaning of “salvation”.

“Myong Myong, is there a word in your language that sounds similar to my name?”

I tried to be as kind and calm as possible as I asked.

However, it didn’t work.

As soon as Myong Myong heard what I said, he covered his face and suddenly got up.

Like that, he turned around and scurried away. He hid behind the tree and started to laugh while trying to suppress the sound. Looking at him, I sighed.

It seems the word Ho-jae in his language is no ordinary word.

I don’t think I’ll be able to hear from him about what it could mean.

I should ask again later when I get the chance.

I got up and went to Myong Myong who was crunching behind the tree.

“I... I’m sorry...”

Myong Myong was frightened. He apologized.

I looked at his round, large, sparkly eyes and his drooped ears. I felt the urge to tell him not to be afraid and then hug him.

However, instead of giving into my urge to hug the kid, my brain was rolling in a cold and logical manner.

I should use the opportunity that I could use.

I strained my eyes and crumpled my looks. I said,

“Since you did wrong, you should pay the price.”

“I’m sorry. I was bad. Please forgive me...”

Myong Myong repeatedly apologized. There was a tear flowing down from his eye. At that moment, I felt like a piece of human garbage.

No, I am indeed a piece of trash.

“Um... If you grant me one wish, then I’ll forgive you.”

“I’ll grant you any wish, so do not be angry with me...”

I am a piece of trash. I am a piece of trash.

Self-hatred was surging up from inside. I suppressed it and said,

“Myong Myong, by any chance, do you know a way out of this forest?”

“Yes.”

Myong Myong nodded.

“I actually lost my way in the forest. If you were on your way to leave the forest, I was wondering if you could take me there too.”

Myong Myong had a crying face, but finally, the light returned on his face.

“Yes. I’ll help you.”

With this, I’ll be able to lead him to the outside of the forest.

The fox child would have panicked if some random person showed up and told the kid that he must take the kid to the outside.

He might have become even more wary of me, suspicious that I might be trying to kidnap him.

Becoming a tag-along guy like this while asking him to lead the way is far less suspicious.

It seems Myong Myong was feeling good now. He hid his mouth behind his hands and smiled like a shy child.

“What’s so great?”

“I’m glad that there’s something I can do to help you.”

He is seriously selfless and kindhearted.

“I’ll be... uncle’s...?”

Did you just call me uncle, as in like an old man?

That’s too much.

“Call me Ho.”

If I asked him to call me Ho-jae, I’m certain that he won’t be able to stop laughing.

“I’ll lead the way for you, Ho.”

Looking at Myong Myong who was smiling in joy, I also smiled.

* * *

[Round 19, Day 3, 08:15]

It’s been three days since I met Myong Myong.

I judged that Myong Myong’s health had improved significantly. So, I put away the tent.

While I was putting away the tent, Myong Myong decided to prepare the meal.

For breakfast, Myong Myong prepared meat stew, simple sandwiches and warmed milk.

The ingredients all came from the dimensional bag, but the preparation was done by Myong Myong alone.

[TL: The author sometimes calls the dimensional bag as 'bag' or 'pouch/pocket.' Perhaps he really does have two separate things where one of them is a bag size and the other one is a pocket size.]

After I put the tent away, I watched Myong Myong walk around with his short legs while wearing the t-shirt that came all down the way to his ankle. He was preparing the meal.

Watching him made me feel hearty and delightful.

With such skinny hands, he picked up the ladle and tasted the stew. Watching him, I thought about taking a picture of this moment and have it with me at all times.

Like that, I quietly watched Myong Myong work.

It was not that I was feeling lazy and trying to get the kid to do all the work.

Myong Myong wanted to handle all of the cooking.

According to Myong Myong, his tribe had been very skilled in housework for generations.

His tribe members innately liked taking care of others and helping others. So, they usually took on the caring professions such as cooks, gardeners, cleaners, maids or butlers.

I had been wondering why this frightened child who was unable to come out from behind the tree was also strangely selfless. It seemed that his selflessness was a special characteristic of his tribe.

Also, he said his tribe members do not like having someone joining in at the task.

Their labors were usually helping others. So, having someone joining in at the task is taken as themselves not being as helpful.

So, I didn't help him in the breakfast preparation. Instead, I watched him do the work.

As I watched Myong Myong, I remembered the scars on his body.

Just who, what kind of twisted, cruel mind...

On such a kind and frail child, who could anyone leave such scars?

If I ever ran into the one responsible for his wounds, I'll definitely destroy this bastard. I firmed my resolve on my matter.

The meal was prepared. Myong Myong not only brought the utensils in front of me, but he also brought the cup, poured milk in it and even brought the chair for me to sit.

The array of dishes and foods were as diversified as if I was sitting at a restaurant table.

It looked like I'll never have to touch water for housework if I lived with Myong Myong.

Myong Myong was that detailed and considerate.

As if these were not enough, when I sat down, Myong Myong picked up the spoon full of stew, blew it to cool it a little and brought it toward my mouth.

"Say, ah..."

You didn't need to go this far, you rascal.

I stopped Myong Myong who was trying to spoon-feed me the meal. I

picked up the utensils.

The dishes he prepared were all delicious.

To be honest, they were even more delicious than the foods that Idy made.

Also, Myong Myong was more adorable than Idy.

[Day 3, 09:00]

With his tiny, bracken-like fingers, he neatly organized the dishes he cleaned and brought them to me. I said to Myong Myong,

“Well done, Myong Myong. You are really good at this.”

Just like earlier when I told him that the foods were delicious, Myong Myong covered his mouth and laughed.

It looked like he was trying to pretend that this was nothing, but his eyes were like crescent moons. He could not hide the smile in his eyes.

I put the dishes away and waited for Myong Myong to put on the washed raincoat.

“Now, shall we get going?”

After confirming that Myong Myong was ready, I asked if he was ready to head out.

“Yes! I’ll led the way for you to get out of the forest, Ho.”

Myong Myong responded energetically and held one of my fingers.

After that, he started to march forward with grit.

Due to the height difference between me and Myong Myong, he had to raise his arm all the way up to hold my finger.

At this rate, this will eventually exhaust Myong Myong and myself.

So, I asked to walk without holding the hands. However, Myong Myong looked noticeably sadder.

Having noticed this, I changed my mind and asked to hold hands again.

Again, Myong Myong started to walk with brightened look on his face.

It was very uncomfortable to walk at a pace that matched Myong Myong's short steps.

However, I could get used to it quickly when I decided to think of this as training.

However, I didn't like that I could not have Myong Myong within my field of view easily.

He was walking besides my legs. Even when I looked down toward him, all I could see were the top of his head and his fox ears.

Actually, they are adorable on their own.

“Watch out!”

I was watching Myong Myong perking up his ears, and I almost tripped over a tree root and fell.

* * *

The heaven always gives opportunities to those who wait.

With his eyes closed, Myong Myong was held in my arm. Looking at him, I thought that.

It's already been two hours since I followed Myong Myong's short steps.

Myong Myong was slowly getting exhausted. As for me, I slightly displeased with the slow pace caused by having have to match his short steps.

So, I tried to hold him in my arms or give him a piggy back ride. However, he refused, saying that he could walk on his own two feet.

It seemed he was thinking that his task was leading me to the outside of the forest and he wanted to do it without getting any help.

It was more of an insistence on a task he was given rather than being a stubborn child.

At that moment, a pack of wolves appeared in front of us.

With detection skill, I already knew about the wolves approaching us, but I pretended to not know so I could hold Myong Myong in my arms and carry him.

[Kururururu...]

As soon as Myong Myong found the wolf pack, he was about to plummet to the ground. I picked him up and held him in my arms.

Operation successful.

As for the wolves, I used the Overwhelm skill and chased them away.

As the wolves moved away to the distance, Myong Myong tried to go back down to the ground.

However, I did not let him.

“Wolves might be still nearby. You are leading the way, so it would be a problem if you got hurt. That’s why I’m going to continue walking while carrying you in my arms. Just like how you are leading the way, my task is to protect you.”

Ku... That was a perfect line that resonates with Myong Myong’s

perspective.

Fortunately, Myong Myong was also convinced by my words. He said he understood.

“It would be heavy if we continued on line this...”

No, you are not heavy at all.

In fact, hugging you is healing me.

Like that, while holding Myong Myong in my arms, I continued to move again.

While being held in my arm, Myong Myong directed me to the end of the forest.

The forest was full of huge trees. So, it was like a natural maze. It was difficult to get a sense of direction without Myong Myong's detailed instructions on how to navigate through the forest.

It might be a different story if I used the Talaria's Wings and just flew up.

I really thought about flying up with Myong Myong and getting out of the forest. However, I was concerned that Myong Myong might be scared of it, so I gave up on the idea.

Like that, I walked a little further, and we ran into another group that ambushed us.

This time, instead of a pack of wolves, it was a pack of ghosts.

In this forest, the packs of ghosts regularly appear several times a day.

Like the usual ghosts, they did not attack us, but they were bothersome and uncomfortable to be around.

[Kuuuaaaaaaaaa...]

[Kyaaaaaac...]

There were just two. However, I was supporting Myong Myong with one of my arms, so that posed a problem when I thought about destroying the ghosts.

“Should I go down?”

Myong Myong whispered at my ear.

I shook my head and said it was all right. I brought out a stone from the inventory and held it in my hand.

I focused for a moment and wrapped the stone with Aura.

As my understanding and mastery of mana circuit and aura improved, I became capable of layering Aura on not just weapons but even ordinary objects.

In addition to this, my throwing ability had rose to mid-rank, so I could maintain the Aura on the object even after it was thrown.

I threw the rocks and single handedly destroyed the ghosts.

As I defeated them repeatedly, I found something that could be said was weak point.

Each ghost entity was different, but they all had a spot where the mana was focused.

When I attacked that spot with an attack that had Aura applied, the ghost was destroyed instantly.

[Level Up!]

I defeated the ghosts and asked Myong Myong if he was all right.

“I’m all right.”

He really did look okay.

How he looked now was completely different to how he was earlier when we faced the wolves.

“You are not all that scared of the ghosts?”

Myong Myong nodded and said,

“I had seen them many times, so I’m used to them...”

Used to them, huh...

Could it be that he had seen the ghosts many times while wondering around the forest?

The ghosts were annoying to the ears and eyes, but they did not cause physical harm to the body. So, it seems even Myong Myong was not all that scared of the ghosts.

After confirming that Myong Myong was all right, I put him down on the ground.

“Let’s rest here for a bit and eat lunch. We can get going again afterwards.”

I put the floor mat on the ground and brought out kitchenware and food ingredients from the dimensional bag. I handed them to Myong Myong.

I put him in charge of preparing the meal and looked at the status window.

As I thought, although I leveled up just now, none of my stats improved.

There was no new skill. There wasn’t any skill that went up in the skill level.

The level up reward didn't come in this time.

This is the first time where this happened.

I feel uneasy.

The situation was that the stage clear rewards had been decreasing and decreasing already.

During the last stage, God of Death gifted me a power skill, but I didn't get anything in particular from 17th and 16th Floors.

Even at 14th and 15th Floor, I only got points and random items as rewards. I didn't obtain skills as rewards.

When things were like this, now the level-up reward was also gone.

First, I should ask Kiri Kiri after I clear the 19th Floor.

I have quite a large amount of information allowance that I had been saving up, so I should be able to get a detailed answer for this along with a proper solution and advice.

I organized my thoughts and directed my gaze at Myong Myong.

Before he prepared the food, he used the flint stone to make a small fire.

He tossed in firewood into the fire and started to pour in water into the pot. Watching him made me think that he was like a fairy from movies that lived in someone's house.

Of course, Myong Myong was way cuter.

“Myong Myong, what do you think of the name, Dobi?”

“It's odd, although it is not as odd as your name.”

Chapter 136

Tutorial 19th Floor (5)

[Round 19, Day 10, 23:55]

“In the kitchen where the feast is being prepared, the dishes are clanking, and the doorbell at the main entrance is ringing and ringing...”

Of numerous great things about Myong Myong, the second one was that he was talented at so many things.

He was good at cooking, laundry and cleaning. Not only that, whenever he was resting, he sang songs like so while dancing along adorably.

Of course, the first great thing about Myong Myong was that he was adorable.

“Myong Myong, you are great at singing too.”

After finishing the song, I complimented him. He covered his mouth with his hands and smiled.

Oh my... How adorable.

It's been ten days since I met Myong Myong after entering the 19th Floor.

Through the time, I became even closer with Myong Myong. I also got to know a lot more about him.

Myong Myong likes being complimented.

He also likes being smiled at. He likes having his hand held.

He likes having fairytale stories told to him. He likes having meals together.

Of all, he likes being hugged.

At first, I only held him in my arms when walking. Now, having realized that he likes being hugged, I had been hugging him all day.

Of course, I had to put him back on the ground when he is doing things like preparing meals.

“Do something fun for me too.”

He means that he is requesting me to do something since he just sang to me.

I put forth my right hand.

[Soul collect count: 183]

The ghosts had been ambushing us periodically, and I had been collecting them diligently. So, before long, I collected 183 souls.

I had been working hard every night, so I was able to learn some simple control methods.

“Appear.”

The key things were mana and will.

The mana and holy power for the skill were provided by the God of Death, so I just needed to start the skill.

The word signaled my will to use the skill, and it effectively described the detail of my will.

It was not very different from other skills. So, I could get used to it soon.

Following my command, a small ghost appeared on top of my palm.

According to the Soul Collect's description, the soul I could use maintained its form and abilities depending on the soul's innate abilities and its compatibility with me.

The ghost was not all that powerful, and its compatibility with me was rock bottom.

So, the ghost that appeared on my palm appeared to be smaller than a pinky finger. Also, its body was faintly visible. It was almost transparent.

Kuuuooooooooaaa!

The baby ghost roared!

Its effect is incredible!

The roaring sound was like a baby kitten moaning. Myong Myong broke into smile.

The skill looked like it was going to be very difficult to make a good use of during a battle. However, the fact that I could use it to bring smile to Myong Myong made it a great skill.

I watched Myong Myong look at the baby ghost.

Actually, 'appear' and 'disappear' were the only commands I could give to the ghosts.

Orders like, scream, roar or move were not followed or received by the ghosts.

The ghost was acting cute in front of Myong Myong. With its arms tumbling around, it was doing its cute little roar. These actions were all by the ghost's own will, not by my commands.

The souls collected by the Soul Collect all had an individual will and

ability to analyze situations. They also had individual personalities and preferences.

The souls of the ghosts usually liked Myong Myong.

The ghosts didn't move at all when I summoned them while being alone. However, when they were in front of Myong Myong, they sometimes acted cute and played in front of him.

Myong Myong watched the baby ghost for a long time. It seems Myong Myong is getting sleepy. He was rubbing his eyes.

“Should I bring out a tent?”

I asked just for the sake of it.

Fortunately, Myong Myong shook his head.

Myong Myong didn't like sleeping in the tent by himself.

Even if it was a little uncomfortable, he preferred staying outside with me, who was standing watch.

During past few days, when I was sitting in front of the bonfire to stand guard, Myong Myong sat on my lap and leaned on me as he slept.

At first, I was worried that it may be uncomfortable. However, because of the flexibility unique to beastmen, it didn't result in things like back pain the next day.

As for me, although it was a little uncomfortable, I liked holding Myong Myong sleeping through the night instead of spending the time pointlessly alone.

I brought out a large blanket from the inventory.

I covered my body and Myong Myong with it. Although the night inside the forest was quite chilly, having the blanket made me feel

quite warm.

Soon, Myong Myong fell asleep completely.

Myong Myong fell asleep quickly when he tried to.

I envied him because I suffered from insomnia.

I stroked the back of Myong Myong who was asleep. Like that, I spent the time. However, something tripped my detection skill.

There were ghosts again.

There were 35 of them.

I pulled the blanket and carefully wrapped Myong Myong's body. I slowly got up.

This is the first time that over 30 ghosts to show up at once.

Until now, even when there were many, there were less than 10.

Soon, I could see the 35 ghosts.

Their number was not the only thing that was different about this time. Their appearances were very different from the usual as well.

They were not human-shaped ghosts in white. They had dark bodies as if they were drenched in mud. It was as if they were hiding themselves in the darkness.

Also, their hands were sharp like ice picks. Their mouths had large teeth like daggers.

I really think these are for attacks?

So far, although I had faced ghosts, I never felt seriously threatened by them. This was because the ghosts were incapable of attacking others physically.

They could only frighten others by appearing suddenly in their white, blurry form to invoke fear.

However, through the detection skill, I could tell their approach before they got close.

Also, the ghosts had poor defenses, so they were no threat to me.

However, these ghosts definitely appeared to be different from the usual ones.

Actually, I was not even sure if they were ghosts.

Maybe they are monsters that look like ghosts.

I can hear their footsteps when they are walking toward me.

These bastards can physically affect their surroundings.

First, I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory and formed a spear with it.

I was facing these opponents for the first time, but they were not threats to me.

The problem was Myong Myong, who was asleep in my arm.

It would be far safer for him to keep him in my arms instead of putting him down somewhere.

Also, not only am I hoping that Myong Myong would not get hurt, but I also hope that he won't wake up.

He is sleeping so well. I hope he won't wake up so he does not have to see these ghosts and get scared.

One thing fortunate about the situation was that these ghosts were not screaming to make noises.

The 35 ghosts slowly closed into a circular formation.

I calmly waited for it and thrust my spear forward.

A ghost came within the range. I pierced its core clean.

After its core was pierced, it disappeared like dust. It looks like these are indeed ghosts.

Because I was holding Myong Myong who was asleep, I moved as slowly and cleanly as possible.

Next, I retrieved the spear and took half a step back.

At the same time, I changed the Transmutable Thousand Arms's form to a long sword. A ghost was charging into the range. I pierced its core with it and destroyed it.

The two restrictions, having to make the movements small and slow, made the battle quite difficult.

I was giving up speed, which was my strong suit. Instead, I was moving slowly. To compensate for this, I had to be accurate with my predictions and attacks.

I turned around and swung the long sword across.

I swung it slowly as if I was painting with a brush. Two ghosts' cores were precisely caught on its path.

Along with its trajectory, I took a step forward.

Next was a thrust.

I retrieved the Transmutable Thousand Arms to my right waist and then thrust it.

I struck the core of a ghost in front. I pierced through the ghost and took another step forward.

I turned to the side and dodged the icepick-like hands aiming at me from the right.

Along the turning movement, I swung my sword wide and cut the core of the ghost that just finished attacking me.

Although I'm fighting so slowly, it is working out somehow because there is a large difference in ability.

Also, the move I did just now was like something from swordsmanship techniques.

I thought about the swordsmanship techniques I learned from the Knight at the 16th Floor.

Although I learned them, I never got to make proper use of them so far. I think I should utilize them in this opportunity.

At 16th Floor, at the doppelganger's stage, the swordsmanship I learned from the Knight had one unique attribute.

The swordsmanship was defense-oriented to hold out against attacks, and the techniques ended the duel with a powerful move.

Although the Knight who taught me the techniques did away with defensive measures and used his certain-kill move from the start, the basis of his swordsmanship was completely defensively oriented.

The Knight taught me 38 moves that were the fundamentals of the swordsmanship.

Of the moves, some of them focused on keeping the charging opponent in check while defending.

They were moves like using the shield to block the attack and introducing other variables by stopping the flow of attack.

The moves were defense-oriented. So, the attacks were not deadly.

However, they were very stable.

The goal of the moves was buying time and forming a solid foundation for defense. So, the moves didn't involve significant risks.

The moves were short. After the parry moves, they always led to other moves that allowed me to safely avoid the attacks or prepare for the next move after defending.

Of the moves that the Knight taught me, I decided to focus on using these defensive moves.

There were many opponents charging at me. Also, I had to minimize my movement and leave no gap for being attacked.

I was certain that I was significantly stronger than the ghosts, so I assessed that I should be able to defeat them all using just the defensive moves.

One step, then another step... I moved forward like that and retreated.

I sidestepped and created distance and prepared the next move.

Again, I took a step forward and faced the approaching opponent a moment sooner.

In preparation for the next opponent, I retreated again and defended my rear.

Using this cycle of moves, I slowly swung my sword. Like that, I was able to defeat all 35 ghosts.

Huuuu...

I breathed out heavily and looked around.

There weren't any opponents left.

On the ground, there were numerous footprints from me.

It looked like as if I just danced at a banquet.

It was strange to see them.

My attack patterns were relatively simple.

Usually, I charged forward and approached the opponent and fought a close-range battle. That was all.

Instead of taking steps and moving a step at a time, I often took a large leap forward.

I thought it was the first time for me to fight while taking numerous steps like I these as if was dancing.

[Mid-rank swordsmanship level increased by one.]

That actually led to a level up.

Is it because I was seriously lacking in fundamentals when it came to this aspect of swordsmanship?

Anyway, this is good.

I had been feeling anxious lately because my skills had not leveled up at all from my overall level increasing.

I should practice the moves I learned from the Knight some more.

Having organized my thoughts, I plummeted down at the floor mat that Myong Myong placed in front of the bonfire again.

I put the Transmutable Thousand Arms away into inventory as well. I calmed my breathing. While I was at it, Myong Myong woke up.

He didn't even open his eyes yet. He muttered something.

I tried my best to not shake him as much as possible. Still, it seemed like I woke him up.

“Myong Myong, what is it? Did you wake up because of all the shaking?”

Myong Myong shook his head.

He buried his face at my chest and said,

“The sound of your heart beat had grown faster, so...”

Oh my... It seemed that he woke up because my heart beat rate increased and he heard it.

“I see. Continue to sleep.”

Fortunately, Myong Myong went back to sleep soon.

* * *

Since then, the dark ghosts continued to come.

Unlike white ghosts, the dark ghosts attempted direct attacks, and Myong Myong was afraid of them.

Whenever the dark ghosts appeared, I tried to defeat them as quickly as possible. However, over time, more and more showed up, so Myong Myong ended up afraid for longer during each battle.

[Round 19, Day 14, 16:50]

Myong Myong was in my arms and shaking. I asked him,

“Myong Myong, how long will it take for us to reach the forest?”

[TL: Although this is unexpected, the author literally said the above instead of ‘end of the forest’ or ‘outside of the forest.’]

In crying voice, Myong Myong said that it will take about nine days.

We had been traveling by walking slowly. I think this is as far as we can go like that.

The path was completely blocked.

The dark ghosts were coming in endless waves. They were blocking the path.

Including ones that I could see and the others within the detection skill's range, I think there are several hundred of them.

As for the ones I cannot see because they are hidden behind tightly packed trees, I cannot even get a feel for it.

Of course, I have the confidence to defeat them all and reach the destination even if there were several thousand of them.

It is not like this is the first time for me to face an enemy force that approached a thousand in number.

However, I need to protect Myong Myong.

And it's hard to fight against so many while holding him in my arms.

So I need to charge around violently, crashing into my enemies to throw them off balance, without putting him on the ground for a single moment.

Still, I cannot put Myong Myong on the ground for a single moment either.

Alone, Myong Myong won't be able to survive the dark ghosts' attacks for even a moment.

God damn it.

I was enjoying traveling with Myong Myong every day. I was so happy.

These ghosts are meddling to no end.

This is too much.

“Myong Myong. Have you ever wished you could fly in the sky like a bird?”

It seemed Myong Myong was dumbfounded. He stared at me as if he was saying that the question was completely out of the blue given the situation.

I asked again, and Myong Myong said,

“I think flying in the sky would be dangerous...”

“No, it is not dangerous at all.”

“Really?”

I put the Transmutable Thousand Arms in the inventory and tightly held Myong Myong with both of my arms.

I wanted to explain this a little more, but the dark ghosts were approaching. I had to make the move before they came closer.

[Talaria's Wings]

I opened the wings and flew up.

I avoided the tightly packed tree branches and ascended beyond the forest canopy.

The forest was always dark because of the trees blocking the sunlight. We got out of the forest and faced the bright and blue sky.

The scenery was refreshing to watch. It felt like my heart was opening.

The blue sky was extending endlessly above my sky. Below me was a sea of greenery. It was extending to the beyond the horizon.

The view was truly magnificent.

Except for the unwelcomed guests, that is.

Chasing after me and Myong Myong who flew up, the dark ghosts started to fly up.

I didn't know those things could fly too.

While we're at it, let's check just how many of them there are.

I quietly watched the dark ghosts that were rising up to the sky. I slowly felt sick of them.

They continued to rise.

Continuously, endlessly.

In my visual range, when there were over ten thousand of them, I stopped counting. I asked Myong Myong.

"Myong Myong, are you very scared?"

Myong Myong was shaking. He said,

"N... No. I'm not scared. This... Is this really not dangerous?"

"It's not dangerous. Just trust me."

Just trust the Big Bro. I cast the line and then tightly held Myong Myong in my arms.

Myong Myong also put his arms around my neck.

I put my hand behind his head and said,

"Now, we are going."

“I... I trust you!”

At the same time, I activated the Talaria's Wings's flight ability.

From the left, right, front, back, and even below and above... There were dark ghosts that were charging at me. To avoid the ghosts, I started to fly at full speed.

Chapter 137

Tutorial 19th Floor (6)

There were several tens of thousands of dark ghosts coming at me. Still, I am confident that we could escape them.

My confidence is based on two things.

First, the dark ghosts' flight speed is not all that fast.

They were way behind Talaria's Wings's flight speed.

Of course, since I am holding Myong Myong, I am not going to be able to use the maximum speed. Still...

Secondly, I had the Soul Steal, which will be critical against the ghosts.

[Soul Steal]

The Soul Steal's effect was applied on the ghosts that were coming at me.

The dark ghosts usually didn't make any sounds. However, once the Soul Steal was used, they started to scream in pain. It seems they were suffering.

There were several tens of thousands ghosts, and they were all starting to moan in pain. It is creepy experiencing this.

With the Soul Steal applied, the ghosts' flight speed has slowed significantly.

The Soul Steal's cheat like qualities included that superb effect, but moreover, there were also that the effects were applied in a very wide

range, and the effects were not affected by the number of the targets.

The skill's performance is not negatively affected no matter how many enemies there were; let it be orders of thousands, tens of thousands or more.

Through the noticeably slower dark ghosts, I flew through them as if I was doing aerobatics.

In the past, I had used the Talaria's Wings's flight ability many times through long hours. So, I am quite used to the flight, and I was able to lose the ghosts pursuing us.

The dark ghosts chased after us. They didn't give up. However, there is the difference in speed, so they were not able to catch up to us.

Instead, the distance between us and the ghosts continued to increase over time.

We escaped their formation. Now, we have some moment to spare. Myong Myong moved his head to direct the way.

Initially, Myong Myong was afraid of the flight. However, that didn't last long. Now, he is smiling like the little kid he is.

He said he liked the wind pouring onto his face more than the flight itself. He said the wind was cool and refreshing.

After a while, I even held Myong Myong up so that he could fully face our destination with his body.

Like that, we flew for a few hours. The lush forest ended, and a wide green field started to come inside the view.

It seems to be the destination.

All I did was follow Myong Myong's directions to get here. We were able to get here without getting lost.

Unlike my initial concern, Myong Myong is not afraid of the flight. So, we were able to get here faster than I thought.

If I knew this, it would've been better if we moved by flying since the first day.

Wait, if we did, then my journey with Myong Myong would have become shorter.

The pace was slow, but it is enjoyable traveling through the forest with Myong Myong.

Thinking about that made me feel sad that we left the forest.

“Myong Myong, should we land and walk from now on?”

Out of foolish regrets, I asked.

“Ho, are you very tired?”

It seems Myong Myong interpreted my question to mean that I must be tired and having difficulty in maintaining the flight.

Talaria's Wings is a power skill. It didn't spend any of my own power for its use.

However, I decided to keep quiet and nodded to say that I was.

After seeing me express that I was exhausted, concerns and a sense of apology showed in his large, round eyes.

Could it be that he is thinking I overdone the flight for him and got tired because he said he liked flying?

It is poking my conscious.

I avoided the random tree branches that were tangled up and landed on the surface.

As soon as we landed, Myong Myong said to me,

“Ho, let’s eat here and rest before going again.”

I looked around the area with my detection skill and then agreed.

The dark ghosts were not even near the area yet.

We came here at quite the high speed. I think we have plenty of time to eat and rest for a bit.

As Myong Myong requested, I brought out various things for him from the inventory and the dimensional bag.

First, Myong Myong fixed some uneven surfaces on the ground and picked off rocks.

At an even surface, he placed the floor mat and cushion seats.

He firmly pressed the cushion to see if it was soft. Myong Myong said,

“Ho. Have a seat here and rest. I’ll prepare everything by myself.”

Usually, even when Myong Myong took charge of cooking, I handled setting the places to sit on the ground and making the fire.

However, perhaps because Myong Myong thought I was tired, he said he would do everything by himself.

I knew Myong Myong liked doing things for other people, so I let him be. I sat on the cushion seat.

I watched Myong Myong be busy. It is pleasant to watch. However, at the same time, I felt sad. The feeling kept on lingering.

If we walk like this, we were going to be able to leave the forest in half a day or a day at the most.

I was about to sigh, but I held it in.

Myong Myong would worry if he saw me sigh.

I took a moment to organize my thoughts. I decided.

I decided to take Myong Myong to the outside of the forest as soon as the meal is over, and I will take him there without hesitation.

During the last floor, I had been circling around out of my desire and greed to stay there longer. I handled the stage haphazardly. I remembered the result of my actions very well. They were still very vivid in my head.

There is no guarantee that the same kind of things would not happen.

I did not want to experience something so horrible again. So, I decided to take Myong Myong outside of the forest right away and clear the stage.

That is what I decided.

Myong Myong was preparing the food. However, it seemed he saw the gloomy atmosphere on my face. He was holding a pot, but he put it down and walked toward me.

He went to my back and massaged my shoulders.

Myong Myong's height was about the same as my sitting height. So, he had to stand on the tips of his toes and massage my shoulders.

“Was it very exhausting?”

I could feel the sincerity in his voice. He is genuinely concerned.

I felt something surging up from inside.

I was holding down the sigh, but I could not help but to let it out.

I felt like something else was going to fall down if I didn't sigh.

I raised my hand and held Myong Myong's tiny hand that was on my shoulder.

"No. I'm fine."

I wanted to sound as normal as I could. However, my voice was shaking a little.

Myong Myong leaned on my back and hugged me.

I felt the warmth coming from the back. As I felt the warmth, I could be even more certain of my decision.

It is truly unfortunate that I could not be with this child longer. However, I am unaware of the traps still left in this stage. Therefore, I must clear the stage as fast as I can. That is what I decided.

I swear that I won't let the horrible misfortune hiding in the stage to surface in front of this child.

I swear that I'll resolve it no matter what if it does happen before I clear the stage.

* * *

We finished the meal and cleaned up the place. At that time, I could hear the ghostly scream in the distance. I thought the dark ghosts could not catch up to us today because of their slow flight speed. So, I could not help but to be surprised.

I flew up to the top of a tree. From there, I saw something unexpected.

The one approaching with ghostly scream was indeed a dark ghost.

However, there is just one ghost instead of the swarm earlier.

Also, the ghost is truly humongous.

The ghost completely covered the open sky. It is so large that it is fully

blocking the sunlight.

When the swarm of dark ghosts faced the situation where they could not catch up to me and Myong Myong before we leave the forest, could it be that they combined together or something?

The gigantic dark ghost is approaching us at an incredible speed.

First, I quickly went down to the surface and explained the situation to Myong Myong.

After that, I brought out the tent from the inventory and set it up in middle of trees.

The tent had several magical effects installed, including camouflage. So, it should be better than being out in the open.

I ushered Myong Myong into the tent and used the Soul Collect skill.

[Soul collect count: 11043]

They were the souls I had been collecting all along so far.

They were mostly white and dark ghosts.

I had been experimenting through the past few days. So, I already checked that the collected souls do not join forces with other ghosts.

“All of you, appear.”

The skill was activated. The souls of the ghosts came out and filled the area around the tent where Myong Myong was in.

The souls were all tiny, smaller than the size of a pinky finger. Still, there were over ten thousand of them, so they exuded quite the presence.

“All of you, protect Myong Myong.”

These were the souls who would ignore a command as simple as moving forward when given from me. However, when it came to requests related to Myong Myong, they usually granted the requests.

The requests such as “surprise Myong Myong” or “be around Myong Myong” and other requests like that were usually granted.

So, I tried out the command while hoping for the best. Fortunately, the souls followed my words and gathered tightly around Myong Myong.

As for the souls that could not enter the tent, they made a large barricade around the tent.

When I tried to approach the tent, the souls all opened their arms and screamed.

...I had no idea what kind of combat abilities I could expect out of them, but their presence should be better than nothing.

“Myong Myong, please wait here for a bit.”

Beyond the tightly packed wall of souls, Myong Myong complained and begged me not to leave him alone, but I ignored his complaint.

Until now, I was confident about being able to protect Myong Myong regardless of the strength of my enemies.

So far, it was actually safer for Myong Myong to be right next to me at all times.

However, currently, there is a huge enemy approaching.

Instead of having Myong Myong coming with me, it is the right choice to have him stay here and go to the battle by myself.

After placing defensive measures around Myong Myong, I opened Talaria's Wings and flew up to the sky.

While watching the gigantic ghost approaching rapidly, I organized my battle plan.

I don't know how powerful the ghost's defenses were. Still, I don't think it would be able to block an attack that has Aura Blade applied.

Moreover, I could feel the giant ghost's core clearly.

It is a mountain-sized ghost. However, I should be able to eliminate it if I destroy that core.

The problem is that this important core is inside the ghost's body. Also, I didn't have a weapon that could pierce the core in a single shot.

To reach that ghost's core, which is located in the middle of the ghost, I will need a weapon that is at least as long as a building.

However, to destroy the ghost, I have to destroy the core.

I changed the Transmutable Thousand Arms's form to a long spear.

There is only one answer I can think of.

Using Aura Blade-based attacks, I need to cut away little by little toward the center of the ghost from the outside.

I'll repeat the process until its core is exposed, and then I'll destroy the core.

I will fight in a relatively simple pattern.

The gigantic ghost possesses incredible speed, and it also has sharp ice pick-like hands and huge teeth. Still, I am confident about dodging all of the ghost's attack midair.

So, the battle is going to be about if I could destroy the core before being exhausted. It is a battle of attrition.

[Kuuuuuuurrrrr!]

As the distance closed, the giant ghost hastened its speed by a level and charged toward me. Watching the ghost, I tightened my grip on my hand.

Although my plan is scratching away at the ghost's body little by little, considering the ghost's huge size, I had to make the Aura as long as possible.

Having the Aura to extend beyond the weapon is a very exhausting practice. So, I must activate the Aura only during the moments when I'm attacking.

[Battle Focus]

I used the skill and calmed my breathing.

Instead of the enemy's attack, I should focus more on my own attacks.

[Kuuuooooaaaaa!]

The ghost came to a close range. It constantly roared.

Instead of waiting for it to attack, I approached into its arm's range.

As soon as I approached it, the ghost swung its arms to attack me.

Its gigantic arm is coming at me up front.

Instead of it being an arm, I feel like a building is flying towards me.

In fact, that's probably closer to what's actually happening.

I dodged the ghost's arm by a thin margin and diagonally swung the spear which had the Aura applied.

By the time the ghost's arm reached the other side in the distance, I was able to leave a long wound on the arm.

Lengthwise, the wound is over a few dozen meters long. However, in comparison to the ghost's gigantic body, it is not even noticeable.

Damn it. When will I reach and destroy the core at this rate?

This is totally just going to be a grind.

* * *

[Round 19, Day 15, 07:10]

[Kuuuuuooooooooaaa...]

With a scream that sounded as if the source was moving away to the distance, the gigantic ghost dissipated into the empty air.

I confirmed that the ghost is destroyed and then used the Soul Collect skill.

[Soul collect count: 211659]

The count had increased substantially.

As I thought, the gigantic ghost was the result of a huge number of ghosts combining together.

Still, are the souls not merged as one and recognized individually?

I think I should ask Kiri Kiri about this later.

Two hundred thousand, an incredible number, were added. Still, I am not able to feel all that happy.

I am too tired to feel that way.

The ghost was literally the size of a mountain. To destroy its core, I spent several hours flying around and swinging my spear.

Later in the battle, one of the ghost's arms was cut off in a whole. So, its attack patterns had been one sided since. Although I had been pouring on attacks since then, it still took too much time.

The battle started during the dinner time. However, the battle ended in the morning the next day.

I landed and disengaged the Talaria's Wings.

As soon as my legs that supported my body weight hit the ground, my knees faltered.

I spent too much mana.

It seems my mana circuit is affected. A corner of my stomach felt stiff.

My stamina also felt empty.

I think it has been a very long time since I have exhausted myself like this.

I moved my faltering legs and headed to the tent where Myong Myong is.

Fortunately, there were still over ten thousand souls of ghosts that were standing watch around the tent.

“Step aside.”

I commanded the souls who were blocking the tent's entrance. However, the souls did not step aside.

“...Disappear.”

Fortunately, the “disappear” command was effective.

The countless souls suddenly disappeared.

With the souls gone, I was able to look inside the tent.

Inside the tent, Myong Myong was there. He is sobbing while being curled up just like how he was on the first day we met.

“Myong Myong, did you wait long?”

Having heard me, Myong Myong quickly got up and rushed into my arms.

He tried to say things, but I am not able to understand them exactly.

Still, I could be certain about what he meant for the most part.

It seems that he is very scared. He is unable to stop crying. I brushed Myong Myong's back and sighed.

For a Hell Difficulty floor, I thought the 19th Floor stage was going rather smoothly, so I was starting to feel worried.

Usually, when a Hell Difficulty stage felt easy, it meant there was a trap hiding somewhere.

However, now that I safely defeated the gigantic ghost that appeared at the end, I felt slightly at ease.

With lightened heart, I patted Myong Myong's back and consoled him. Myong Myong is unable to stop crying.

* * *

[Round 19, Day 15, 13:05]

I held Myong Myong's hand and continued to walk. We arrived at the line that is the border of the forest.

Beyond the border is a wide green field.

Also, in this place where the forest ended and the green field started, there is a small village.

It is Myong Myong's home village.

Myong Myong said his tribe members were all skilled at housework, and they took on the professions for helping others.

So, if only his tribe members lived together, since they all would insist on doing works such as cleaning and decorating, the economy of the village would not function smoothly.

Therefore, most of the tribe members left the village to work in other places.

He said that his tribe members usually got work from the merchants who stopped by at the village and left the village together.

Because of that, some are away from the village for a few months to several years, and some stay away for a long time, even up to half of one's lifespan. Like that, Myong Myong's tribe members worked at places far from the home village and earned money.

He said that they return to the village once there isn't any more work. They would rest and find new work or prepare for retirement.

They were quite literally benevolent house spirits.

Perhaps because this is the village of such a tribe, the roads around the village were organized neatly.

There is a large wooden fence that surrounded the entire village. However, instead of a practical fence, the fence is decorated like something out of a modern day's movie set.

The scenery inside the fence that I could see is also clean and humble.

I held Myong Myong's hand as we walked toward the village. A message appeared.

[You cleared 19th Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your abnormality and wounds will be healed.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for the first clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 3500 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 600 points.]

[Additional rewards are given based on the play record.]

[You acquired 4500 points as an additional reward.]

I succeeded in clearing the floor.

It looked like this is the end of the 19th Floor.

A portal appeared below my feet.

I stopped for a moment, and Myong Myong looked up at me.

Um... Should I at least take him to the inside of the village and then leave?

Thinking like that, I started to walk toward the village again.

Step after step, my steps felt heavy. While I walked toward the village, the village's wooden fence suddenly moved.

The fence made a loud noise and slammed closed in front of me and Myong Myong.

I vacantly stood there. I was unable to say anything about the situation. At that moment, from beyond the wooden fence, I heard a locking sound.

I think the village is definitely refusing to allow me and Myong Myong to enter the place.

What is this?

The stage is cleared already, so what is this?

Chapter 138

Tutorial 19th Floor (7)

I stare at the wooden fence, which closed with a loud bang.

Next, I look at Myong Myong, who had his head down for some reason.

After that, as the last thing, I looked at the portal that appeared below me.

Is this saying that I should get on the portal or not?

Even after I cleared the 18th Floor, there were things happening such as suspicious people visiting the island.

However, I think this is a little different from that.

What is happening now didn't happen until well after the stage was cleared like how it happened at the 18th Floor. Unlike the 18th Floor, this new development is happening as result of me bringing Myong Myong to the village as directed by the instructions. Also, is happening immediately afterwards.

I have not seen any stages in Hell Difficulty so far with such a progression.

I have not heard about stages like this in other difficulties either.

We successfully got out of the forest and brought Myong Myong to the village. Myong Myong safely arrived at the village.

Also, the clear message and portal appeared.

The story ends here.

That's how it should be.

However, in front of Myong Myong's eyes, the village's gate is firmly shut. Myong Myong's mouth is firmly closed with his head drooped.

Even though the stage was cleared, I cannot leave. My heart is not at ease.

From beyond the closed wooden fence, there is no response.

There is no voice refusing our entry or telling us to go away.

The fence is shut. That is all.

I tried to take a knee to level my eyes at Myong Myong's.

However, Myong Myong's face is directed at the ground. I cannot see it at all.

I bring my hand at his cheek so I could lift his head. However, Myong Myong suddenly turned around and started to run.

He is scurrying away to the forest. I quietly watched Myong Myong's back from a distance.

I cannot chase after him right away.

I briefly saw his face. His face was covered in tears.

I got up and looked at the village's fence for a moment.

I could see that there is a face above the fence.

Red fox ears.

It is a face of a woman in her 20s.

Could she have closed and locked the fence?

I wanted to voice my complaint, asking what the hell is this for. However, I decided to chase after Myong Myong first.

Chasing after Myong Myong, I enter the forest again.

As I expected, Myong Myong is hiding behind a large tree, crunching down.

“Myong Myong.”

Myong Myong didn't answer.

He only cried quietly.

I want to have him stand up somehow and talk with him. However, it seems that he was not able to hear me properly.

He cried and muttered something.

I could not understand it.

The articulation of his words was not clear enough. So, the knowledge before the time of Babel was not able to translate it.

However, I have heard Myong Myong muttering words like these before a few times.

Based on my memories from those instances, Myong Myong must be mumbling about one of the two.

I am sorry, or I am scared.

It is one of the two.

Regardless of which, I don't like either of them.

I took a moment to brush Myong Myong's back. He is still unable to calm down. I left him be and got up.

[Soul Collect]

[Soul collect count: 211659]

“Appear.”

I summoned all of over two hundred thousand souls.

The area was filled with finger-sized souls of ghosts.

“Protect Myong Myong.”

As I saw once last time, the souls tightly surrounded Myong Myong.

With so many, I am sure they will buy me time until I return.

I turned around and walked.

I brought out two Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory.

I form one into a long sword and the other into a sheath.

I place the long sword inside the sheath and wear it on my waist.

I had promised before.

If anything happened to Myong Myong while I went through this stage, then I'll definitely resolve it.

I will keep my promise.

It is a promise that I must keep.

I left the forest and headed back to Myong Myong's home village again.

The wooden fence, which was firmly shut earlier, is open wide again.

Seeing it turned my insides upside down.

Ugh.

I take a deep breath.

I do not know what's going on yet.

So, I am trying hard to be calm, but I cannot help the anger surging up inside.

The fence which closed in front of Myong Myong, and all the traces of abuse that were left on Myong Myong's body...

There must be a connection between the two.

If the perpetrator is inside this village...

As I approached the village's entrance, I could see the fox-like human walking toward me.

It is the female beastman who I saw earlier. She was on top of the fence back then.

If she shows even a little bit of hostility toward me, or if she didn't have eyes full of tears, I may not be able to suppress my anger anymore. I might draw my sword.

Otherwise, I might just charge at her.

My head is full of blood, and it is not rolling properly. However, seeing the sadness in her face calmed my head a little.

Again, I slowly breathe out.

Perhaps because of my heated inside, I feel like even my breath is warm.

“Are you the one who brought Myong Myong?”

I nod.

After that, I decided.

I decided to make the move after having a clear understanding of what is happening.

I cannot resolve issues while being so heated up in my head.

Also, this is not my problem. It concerns Myong Myong.

Even if I have something to be angry about, I should put it aside for now.

“Are you also the one who defeated the giant ghost that appeared in the forest?”

I nodded again.

“I see... Myong Myong... Where is he?”

“He is crying inside the forest.”

The ears of the female beastman are fully drooped.

It does not look like she harbors ill feeling towards Myong Myong?

“...I understand. I think the conversation will take long. Would you like to come in for a moment?”

Seeing that she is attempting to have me enter the village, it looks like they locked the fence because of Myong Myong. I’m sure of it now.

I want to understand this situation quickly, so I agreed to enter as she suggested.

After that, she led the way, and I followed her into the village.

The village is neatly organized as I saw from the outside the fence.

However, I barely feel any presence of others.

I tried spreading the mana.

I could feel a few, but in comparison to the size of the village, there are just too few of them.

Could it be that they all went to other places?

As I walked through the village, I saw a gentle mound in the distance.

It is not visible from the forest's direction.

I feel a powerful presence there.

It is an excessively huge concentration of mana.

* * *

As I tried to sit at the reception area, and a few beastmen approached me.

I instinctively became alert and wary of them.

They pulled a chair behind me and placed a cushion on it. They also prepared fruits and tea for me before going away.

Without making any sound, as if they were sliding away, they left the room. Watching them creeped me out a little.

Of the beastmen who just left the room, I am sure not one of them has stealth skill level that is lower than mine.

To see that such skilled practitioners practicing common labors such as pulling chairs and setting up tables while wearing maid uniforms...

They really are gentle house spirits.

“Let’s start the conversation.”

Anyway, that’s that, and I should ask what I want to ask.

I say to the female beastman who is sitting in front of me.

I could properly observe her appearance only after sitting at the reception room.

Unlike round, puppy-like cute face that Myong Myong had, the woman is an archetypically beautiful fox woman.

“My name is Lalalila. I’m in charge of managing the village. First, I would like to express my gratitude for protecting Myong Myong. By any chance, do you know about our tribe?”

“I didn’t know anything before meeting Myong Myong. I have not heard much from Myong Myong either.”

I told her that I did hear a brief summary from Myong Myong about the special characteristics of the tribe.

“I see... I don’t know where to start...”

It seems Lalalila is not the kind who is confident with explaining things.

“Start with explaining why you locked the fence.”

I think it would be better to ask each issue individually and resolve my curiosities one after the other.

“If Myong Myong entered the village, then the ghosts will start to attack the villagers. It cannot be helped.”

Ghosts?

“Aren’t the ghosts supposed to appear in the forest?”

“Ah... So you didn’t know about that either. The ghosts appear around Myong Myong. To be precise, they chase after others who come close to Myong Myong.”

The ghosts do not appear naturally at the forest? Instead, they appear around Myong Myong?

Let’s go over my memories of what has happened so far.

When the message explained the stage, it said the forest was rumored to spawn ghosts.

The ghosts definitely came to find me and Myong Myong.

It didn’t look like they just wandered around the forest and found me by coincidence.

Even when we left the area, they actively pursued us.

Myong Myong was not afraid of white ghosts.

He said he was used to them because he had seen them many times.

The ones Myong Myong was afraid of were the dark ghosts, and they made their first appearances only after I destroyed the white ghosts for a few days.

Considering what has happened, what Lalalila explained made pretty good sense.

“So, why are there ghosts appearing around Myong Myong?”

“It is a curse.”

“A curse?”

“Yes. We do not know the details either, but it seems that Myong

Myong was subjected to extreme torture by someone while he was working in a foreign land.”

I thought about the scars on Myong Myong’s body.

However, what does that have to do with the curse?

“The curse is probably directed at the one who inflicted them on Myong Myong.”

“Can you explain it a bit more detail? I do not understand it at all.”

“Our tribe members usually work in foreign lands. You know about this much, right?”

I nodded to affirm her assumption.

“When we first started working in outside places, we were subjected to a lot of harassment by other races.”

I could nod without difficulty

I have been thinking that all along.

They liked helping others, and they took on life-long professions on such tasks.

I don’t think all employers who hired and used them would be kind to them.

Usually, people were cruel to others under them. Also, they were crueler when the others who worked under them were gentle-spirited.

“So, we asked for help from our Great Mother.”

“Great Mother?”

“Yes, to our guardian goddess.”

It seemed Lalalila thought I obviously knew who this goddess was. Lalalila didn't add more to her explanation about the goddess.

I also have a guess when it came to who the Great Mother would be.

The gentle mound that I saw while walking through the village...

The huge existence who is asleep under it must be the Great Mother.

"The Great Mother cursed the ones who hurt our tribe members. The curse consisted of having ghosts coming to visit the ones responsible for hurting our tribe members."

"In that case, the one who hurt Myong Myong is..."

"Yes, that one was probably killed by the ghosts."

Although the white ghosts' combat abilities are low, from an ordinary person's perspective, they are definitely existences to be feared.

They appear out of nowhere. Only few would manage to hold back a nervous breakdown and remain calm.

Also, even if one overcame the white ghosts, after that, the dark ghosts who can deal physical attacks will come.

Since their numbers increase continuously, I saw no possibility that the bastard who hurt Myong Myong would still be alive.

I felt great inside, but I was also disappointed.

If given the chance, I wanted to beat the shit out of that bastard and kill that piece of scum myself.

I could relax a little now.

It is not like the one who hurt Myong Myong was in this place. Also, it is not like Myong Myong is being rejected by the village.

All of this was going to be handled once the curse was resolved.

“In that case, why are there ghosts appearing around Myong Myong still when the one responsible for hurting Myong Myong is dead?”

“The Great Mother punishes those who hurt our tribe members. Also, as a warning, the Great Mother curses areas where the atrocity had occurred, and it lasts until she removes the curse.”

“In the area? Isn’t the curse in effect with Myong Myong’s body as the medium?”

“Actually, the curse is cast with... the corpse as the medium. The curses appear after our tribe members are killed.”

“Now what are you talking...”

“Yes. Of course, Myong Myong is alive. We think that Myong Myong was on the verge of death but miraculously survived. He was injured so critically that the curse which appears only after death activated. Regardless, he recovered and returned to the village. Actually, this has never happened before, so we are not sure either.”

Although Lalalira said that she was not confident in her theory, even I thought her theory was in line with the situation.

I should be able to confirm this if I hear from Myong Myong.

“In that case, is the curse going to continue for the rest of his life? To all who come near Myong Myong?”

“No. Since Myong Myong appeared in front of the village two weeks ago for the first time, we have been performing a ceremony to awaken the Great Mother every time there is the full moon. Once the Great Mother wakes up from her sleep, we should be able to undo the curse as well.”

“When is this Great Mother going to wake up?”

“T... That is... It depends on how deep of a sleep she is in. If she

wakes up early, it could be in a few days. However, if it takes long, it might be after few years.”

Ugh.

I cannot help but to sigh.

She is saying that there is no limit to her sleep.

“So, excuse me... I have a request... request to make. While we awaken the Great Mother, can you please look after Myong Myong?”

“I will.”

[PR: As some of you might have noticed, the tense in the flashback has changed to the present tense. Generally, that's how you write flashbacks in English. The dialogue “I will” was changed from “I told her I will.” because it's hard to express that sentence in the present tense. Maybe I'm overstepping my bounds or you don't like this style; in that case, I'll revert back to my old style of editing. (let me know if you think so in our Discord channel by pinging me)]

Lalalila said it may take several years. However, it won't take that long.

I have no intention of waiting for this being called Great Mother to wake up through the ceremony.

When it comes to bastards who cannot wake up from the sounds of alarm clocks, you need to give them a good smack on the back to wake them up.

Chapter 139

Tutorial 19th Floor (8)

Compared to how worried I am, the situation is not as bad.

It is not like Myong Myong is being bullied and cast out by the villagers. Also, although I do not know who hurt Myong Myong, the bastards who did were probably all killed by the ghosts.

My work will be done once I resolve this curse issue.

I lean on the back support of the chair I am sitting on.

I was stiff and alert all this time. Now, I am getting relaxed, and that is making me feel tired.

“Would you like to wait for a bit while drinking tea? We are preparing food for Myong Myong. We would like you to wait for a bit and deliver the food to Myong Myong later.”

I have plenty of food in the inventory, so I don't really need to get their help on this.

However, I knew that they were also worried about Myong Myong, so I decided to agree on the request.

While I am sitting like that, I suddenly think of a question.

“The place I met Myong Myong at was at the center of the forest. Why was Myong Myong there all by himself? Even if you could not go near him, you could have helped him in different ways, such as leaving food on a pre-arranged place for him to pick up that's nearby the village?”

Lalalila slightly blushed and responded,

“It was Myong Myong’s choice. Our tribe members like helping others, and we live for that purpose.”

“I know. I’ve heard that many times before.”

“Also, as a negative side of that desire... We prefer not to... get help from others.”

“...Although it looked like he was going to starve to death, he left to the center of the forest because he didn’t want to get help? Myong Myong did that?”

“Yes... Our core identity and pride are about helping others and not being burden, so...”

No matter how hard I think about this, they are too obsessive about these.

Even Dobi is not this diligent.

I can understand their reasons, but I do not feel the same about the issue.

“In response, if we receive favors from another, we spend our entire life to repay their generosity. Myong Myong will most definitely try to do volunteer work for you for the rest of his life. A... Also... I... I... will... for you...”

Lalalila was blushing already, but now she is blushing heavily. I am concerned that blood will start leaking out of her skin. Her face is the shade of a candy apple.

She covered her face with her hands and continued to say that she would spend the rest of her life doing volunteer services for me.

Myong Myong was like this, and now Lalalila is doing this too. It seems this entire tribe covers their faces with hands when they are embarrassed.

“I’m merely delivering food for him. There is no need for you to do

volunteer work for me for the rest of your life.”

Honestly, that feels burdensome on me.

Also, I'll be leaving this place soon.

Their intentions and hearts are kind. However, I won't be able to receive their kindness.

“N... No! My role is managing the village and the living arrangements of the villagers! Helping Myong Myong is my work. It is only obvious that I should repay you for helping me!”

Her face is still covered with her hands. With her eyes closed, she shouted those words.

She is being stubborn. I am aware that it is not about keeping the decision she made but a matter of her pride.

Myong Myong has shown similar responses when I tried to help him when he was working.

She must be thinking that it is also her work to repay me.

I just said I understood and that she could do it.

Who is she going to do volunteer work for once I'm gone anyway?

I accepted all of her requests. However, Lalalila said she also had one more request for me.

“What is it again?”

“Myong Myong will feel like he is being a burden if he notices that the foods we prepared are from us. Also, if you tell him that you will stay with him to protect him, he might go back to the inside of the forest again.”

Considering the behaviors of Myong Myong and the tribe members I

have observed so far, given their characteristics, I really think he would do that.

Now that I think about it, I didn't tell Myong Myong that I will be escorting him back to the village. Instead, I told him that I was lost and I would like him to be my guide to get out of the forest. That really was a brilliant move.

"You want me to formulate an appropriate lie for those, right? I got it."

"Thank you. Really, really thank you. Also, Myong Myong probably is not aware of what exactly is happening to him. So, please..."

"I got it. I'll give him a simple explanation."

It should be enough to tell him that the ghosts won't be appear around him anymore and he won't have to worry anymore.

With marble-sized teardrops rolling from her eyes, Lalalila repeatedly expressed her gratitude.

To watch such a beautiful woman like her thanking me while crying... It is quite...

"Ah, I have not even asked the name of the one who had been so kind. Can you please tell me your name? We will record it and pass it down through the generations."

I wish you guys didn't do such things. It is making me feel uncomfortable.

I know she is not going to listen if I said that, so I decided to tell her my name.

"Lee Ho-jae."

"Pardon?"

“I said my full name is Lee Ho-jae. My family name is Lee. My name is Ho-jae.”

“Ho... Hooo... Jae? Pardon?”

“Ugh. My name is Lee Ho-jae.”

Lalalila suddenly got up and rushed out of the reception room.

She ran out in such a hurry that the cup of tea above the table was tilted over. The chair fell over as well. She ran out making loud noises.

If I didn't hear it wrong...

Just before she closed the reception room's door, didn't I hear suppressed laughter?

Is it just my mood?

Lalalila returned after five minutes.

She came back with two other beastmen. They are carrying food supplies in full. Unlike earlier, she looks calm now.

I pushed in the supplies she handed to me.

[PR: I'm assuming he's putting it inside his inventory.]

“You have such a useful thing. Anyway, I was very rude earlier. I am very sorry. I apologize for the behavior. I didn't know that our benefactor would make such a joke...”

“No. I am not joking. My name is Lee Ho-jae.”

“Hupuuuuuhuhuhu... Uuuup.”

“Kup. Koloc. Koloc. Koloc. Uuuhuuuk. Kolok.”

Their reactions are totally amazing.

The two other beastmen who came with Lalalila showed incredible reactions as soon as they heard my name.

One broke into laughter without realizing, and she poked herself in the side to calm herself.

The other one tried to hold in the laughter and ended up coughing due to asphyxiation.

As for Lalalila, she turned her face away.

Her shoulder is shaking. So, it seems that she is having a hard time holding in the laughter.

It would be alright if I got mad about this, right?

I can be angry, right?

* * *

Of course, I knew well that my name sounded ridiculously funny to the beastman kind.

There are the cases of Kiri Kiri and Myong Myong.

However, it usually spoiled my mood, so it did spoil my mood.

I know that they are not laughing intentionally, but I don't want to let it be.

Unable to sit still, Lalalila and other beastmen tumbled down and apologized. However, I shot back at them and complained how could they treat me like this when they said I am their benefactor. After that, I got out of the village.

Instead of making me feel refreshed, it made me feel uncomfortable instead.

[PR: Imagine Japanese dogeza?]

Lalalila and the other beastmen are very apologetic.

Watching them kicking themselves over the matter is making me feel sorry that I expressed my anger at them.

In the end, because of the awkwardness between each other, I left out of the reception room.

Anyway, just what does my name mean? Why are they reacting like this?

In the end, nobody is willing to tell me what it meant.

Should I pour in my information allowance to determine its true meaning?

Otherwise, should I make a request for information through the Order?

Ask what the word ho-jae means in beastman's language?

No, that is a little embarrassing. The meaning of it might spread to others too.

I left the village and returned to the forest.

Fortunately, it seems that nothing happened to the souls who had been protecting Myong Myong.

“Step aside, will ya?”

The souls did not step aside.

I tried to approach Myong Myong while ignoring the souls, and the souls screamed kuuuang, kuuaaang, making similar noises.

Their arms are the size of tiny rice grains. They lift their tiny arms up

and roar at me. It is ridiculous.

They are even getting tangled up and colliding with each other in the process of stopping me.

Aren't you guys liking Myong Myong a little too much?

“Disappear.”

Fortunately, they respond to the disappear command.

With the souls surrounding him now gone, I could see Myong Myong.

He is on the ground, curled up in a ball.

Also, he is still sobbing.

I go next to Myong Myong and sat down.

It seems Myong Myong knew I came. He lifted his head.

Still, I could not see the look on his face.

“I am sorry...”

Saying he is sorry...

It seems that what he was mumbling earlier was also this.

I wonder what it is that he is sorry about?

Is he thinking that he was being a burden and causing harm to me and the people of the village?

I raise my hand and brush Myong Myong's head.

“Thanks to you, I was able to get out of the forest. Thank you, Myong Myong.”

Having heard my words, Myong Myong lifted his head and looked at me in the eyes.

What a face...

I bring out a handkerchief and wipe off the tears from his face.

Even in middle of all these things, Myong Myong is still uncomfortable with getting help from me. He held the handkerchief himself and wiped his own tears.

He is a lot calmer than earlier now.

"I think I'll be staying here for a while."

"...Here?"

"Yes. Near here. If it is alright with you, would you like to stay with me for a while?"

I am intending on forcing the existence called the Great Mother to wake up. However, I don't know how long it would actually take.

Perhaps I will fail at waking her up and will have to wait for her to wake up through the ceremony that Lalalila mentioned.

"Together?"

"Yes. I would like you to cook meals for me, converse with me and go on walks with me while you are staying with me. Unless you don't want to stay with..."

"That's great!"

"Shall we get going then?"

"Yes."

His face finally brightened.

They say you will grow horns on your butt if you suddenly smile while crying. Still, it is good to see Myong Myong smile.

“Also, Myong Myong, I’ve heard about you a little from the village.”

“Y... yes...”

His face darkened, back to how it was earlier. Oh my...

“The villagers said that the ghosts won’t appear around you anymore once the Great Mother wakes up.”

“R... really?”

“Yes. Although we may have to wait for a bit until the Great Mother wakes up.”

Myong Myong is trying to hold it in, but he started crying again.

They are not tears of sadness.

They are tears of relief and happiness.

I hold Myong Myong in my arms and lull him.

* * *

I check the face of Myong Myong who is asleep in the sleeping bag, then got out of the tent.

He is not even well at the moment, and he cried whole day long. Perhaps, because of this, Myong Myong was very tired.

Using the food ingredients that the villagers packed for us, we haphazardly prepared food. I set up the tent and had Myong Myong go to sleep right away.

I summoned the souls to watch over the tent and head over to the mound that I saw during the day.

Because I am on an open field, I could see the night sky. It has been a while.

When I was inside the forest, thanks to the excessively lush trees, I could not see the sky.

There are so many stars in the sky. They look as if they could rain down. In the midst of all these stars is a moon.

It is a crescent moon.

As I walked while enjoying the night sky, I reach the mound.

I knew the way I needed to go.

I didn't figure out the path that led to the Great Mother's sleeping place from Lalalila.

However, I can pinpoint as to where to go with certainty.

I head to the place where humongous amounts of mana are being exuded energetically. There is a small opening. It is barely large enough for one person to go through.

In front of this small cave, there is incense and food. They seem to be traces of ceremonies.

This must be what Lalalila talked about.

Also, there were towers made of small rocks. They were piled up using pebbles the size of a palm.

There are writings in front of the towers.

Wishing for health, long life, happiness, eternal love...

It seems the towers were made by villagers, each of whom were praying for their small wishes.

I walked inside the cave.

The entrance is barely the size of a person's height. However, as I walked in further, it became bigger. Eventually, the ceiling was over four meters tall.

At the end of the tunnel, I saw the Great Mother.

The Great Mother is a giant fox. She is lying down, her body curled up in a ball.

I am not sure how many tails she had. However, I can see many tails behind her body.

Immediately after confirming her existence, I drew the sword from the sheath and spread mana.

It is time to smack the sleepyhead who ignored the ringing alarm clock.

Your back! Present your back, Great Mother!

[Welcome, human with a humorous name.]

What?

[Put your sword away. I am already awake.]

Chapter 140

Tutorial 19th Floor (9)

[I am already awake. Put your sword away, human.]

The Great Mother's voice is echoing inside my head.

However, I didn't put the sword away. I didn't stop the expansion of my mana either.

The Great Mother's gigantic body...

It is hard to believe that she was asleep until now. Unbelievable amounts of power are twitching inside her.

I can feel it so clearly.

Moreover, the mana that this Great Mother held was...

Literally overwhelming.

The amount, the purity...

Her high-density mana in the atmosphere around her and the mana sleeping inside her body are resonating with each other in real time.

I feel like I am being mesmerized just from observing this phenomenon quietly.

There is a limit to how much mana that one can pile up inside.

However, what if one can spread mana around the surrounding like her?

In doing so, she can manipulate even more mana than what would be possible through internal containment. She can have both the mana gathered inside her to the limit of her body and also the mana that is spread around her.

Normally, mana that's spread around the body dissipates quickly.

However, the Great Mother is holding the external mana in its place.

She is doing this through the mana resonance.

I wonder, what will I need to do to recreate this myself?

What kind of methods are hidden behind this?

This isn't about simply operating a larger amount of mana. There may also be a different method of utilizing it.

I am curious.

I want to clash with the Great Mother and learn about it.

[Human, put away your sword.]

The Great Mother's words are being absorbed into my head.

The voice is not through a physical voice.

It is a will conveyed through her mana.

[Is this how?]

When it comes to mana and conveying a will through the mana, I have already mastered it from the Master Monk.

I heard how to do it, and I had seen him do it several times as well, so I was able to mimic it right away.

In addition to that experience, I am now seeing the Great Mother using the method in a slightly different way. Now, I was able to get a clear feel for it.

It seems the diligent practice I had been doing all along was not wasted. I am able to perform the telecommunication right away.

[...I recognized it when you appeared in my dream of premonition. As I thought, you are no ordinary human.]

[I appeared in your dream?]

The Great Mother did not respond.

[I thought you can be awakened only through the ceremony?]

[Usually, that is the case, if it wasn't for the shock that was conveyed to me when the giant ghost was destroyed. It must be you who is responsible for it, yes?]

I nod.

I wonder how she woke up without the ceremony. It seems she woke up because of the shock when the giant ghost was destroyed.

[Why didn't you undo the curse on Myong Myong although you are awake?]

[What are you talking about, human? I have undone all spells cast on my child as soon as I have woken up.]

Now that I think about it, ghosts did not appear around Myong Myong ever since the giant ghost was destroyed.

I thought it was just a respawn timer for new ghosts. It seems that it was actually because the curse was undone.

[It seems there is a misunderstanding. Put away your sword now, human.]

I didn't put my sword away.

[...Just why are you doing this to me?]

Instead, I took a step forward, sword in my hand.

[You fool! What are you expecting! No matter how strong you are for a human, do you think you can win against me! You will die without being able to hold out for even a moment!]

I think so too.

There definitely is that much of a difference in our caliber.

Still, I take a step forward.

[Such ridiculousness... Human, you are overflowing with pride and confidence. Please stop this!]

The tone of her words is rapidly changing.

[Treasures, I'll give you treasures! If not, I'll give you an elixir that will allow you to obtain even greater power!]

I stop stepping forward.

"I don't really need treasures."

I use my voice to say it instead in order to conserve mana, even if it is a small amount.

[In that case, I'll give you the elixir! It's a great one!]

I have one thing that I was curious about.

"Why are you trying to give me the elixir? As you said, you are probably far stronger than me. You just need to defeat me. Isn't that right?"

The Great Mother is shriveling; to the point that I thought it is really weird.

She seems to want to avoid clashing with me so much that she was willing to offer me treasures and even the elixir.

Could it be related to the premonition that she mentioned earlier?

The Great Mother didn't respond.

I took another step forward.

If we fight, I'll definitely get broken to pieces.

In just one strike, I'll be flattened like a pancake.

The Great Mother has the power to make it happen.

However, I cannot back down.

Since the difference in our physical sizes is overwhelming, I need to charge in as deeply as possible and fight.

I should dash in and aim for under the chin of the Great Mother.

The Great Mother, who is currently curled up in a ball, will get up and try to create distance.

What will come next would be probably her front leg or tail.

If not, she might respond and fight me using her magic.

In my head, I visualize each of the possible responses by the Great Mother and think about the next moves to match them.

There isn't even a need to use battle focus. My mental focus is sharpening to the extreme automatically.

My heartbeat is running wild.

My blood is boiling. My body is heating up.

My arms and legs are twitching because I wanted to charge in right away. Trying to calm them is hard enough as it was.

It has been so long.

I have not met a good opponent in a very long time.

I faced difficult and dangerous situations since I entered the 12th Floor's stage where I had to play alone. However, they never posed a real danger to me, except the Great Mother who was in front of me.

The differences in combat potentials are clear.

However, I cannot picture myself being defeated at the end of this battle.

Still, it is not like I have gone through battles where I was at a disadvantage only a few times.

Before the 12th Floor, I had fought such battles as if they were everyday thing.

Moreover, now, I am at the peak.

I have more than enough confidence to turn the tide of being in an overwhelming disadvantage.

[H... Human! I am proving the qualification for becoming the apostle of the God of Goodwill! Aren't you the same as well!? I can feel the trace of god from you!]

God of Goodwill.

That god is slightly related to me.

It is the god who is always feeling sorry for me.

[I'm being good and kind to become the apostle. Can't you understand me? We both wish to be apostles. Shouldn't we help each other?]

It seems that the Great Mother was going through the trial to become the God of Goodwill's apostle.

However, I am not sure. I am only interested in the power that I'll have after I become an apostle. I don't have a dream about becoming anyone's apostle.

I am not interested in being kind to someone who is trying to become an apostle either.

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

I ignore the message from the god of fools and took another step forward.

I am within striking range.

I will dash in at the next step.

[I... If you truly think of my children as friends! Stop immediately! If I am hurt, then the children would be sad!]

Is that how you are going to go now...

The tense atmosphere was quenched cold as if a bucket load of cold water was thrown on it. It seems the Great Mother noticed this too. She only moved her eyes around and quietly confirmed my mood.

"Don't you think you are going too far with that?"

[However, it is still true. My children most definitely will be very sad if I get hurt.]

"...In that case, how about we have a very light duel? Light enough so

that none of us would get hurt.”

[I don't want to. I'll definitely get hurt.]

Unexpectedly, the Great Mother has a shameless side.

Let alone a battle, she is refusing my request to use magic on me one-sidedly.

In the end, it is better to walk away after just getting the elixir.

I have everything I want, and no longer have anything else to do, so I will go back.

[I'll tell my children that the curse is now gone. You won't have to go find them to tell them about it in person.]

I am thankful for that.

The problem was resolved easily.

I thought the curse issue might take long, but it was already resolved. Not only that, as a bonus, I also got the elixir that will improve my abilities.

With lightened heart, I walk away from the cave. However, the Great Mother said,

[Have a safe trip back, human with funny name. Never come back.]

I was not going to have any business to come back for. Still, for some odd reason, it is spoiling my mood.

When she is saying such things, I thought it would be odd for me to go back and ask what my name meant. So, I just walked out of the cave.

The outside is still dark.

In the night sky, there are still stars shining, along with a faint

crescent moon hanging there.

However, there is something that was different.

After the sun fell, the village's fence, which was firmly shut, was now open wide.

Also, a small distance away from the opened fence, there are beastmen gathered there.

I focus my eyes and watch them in detail.

There are over twenty beastmen there. They are hugging each other and pouring out tears.

Surrounding them are souls. Surrounding them in full, they were lighting the area like fireflies.

In middle of them, I could see a few familiar faces in the mix.

Myong Myong and Lalalila.

The Great Mother said that she will tell them that the curse was gone.

As soon as they heard from the Great Mother, it seems that Myong Myong ran toward the village while the beastmen from the village ran out of the village, eventually running into each other.

It is such a long distance from here, and it was dark as well. So, I cannot see them very well.

I cannot hear their voices either.

However, I could feel the warmth blooming from the distance.

I was about to move my legs again and walk toward them.

However, it looks like there is no need for me to butt in there.

The picture there, and the story there, was already complete.

Also, I am an outsider to the story.

Since I had to part ways with them, I thought it would be good for me to do so.

Instead of walking down the mound, I plummeted down at my seat.

After that, I looked up the night sky again.

It was a magnificent view. I can never get bored of watching it.

The moon of the night sky in Seoul was only faintly visible. The night sky here is beyond comparison.

Looking at incredibly amazing night sky, I was reminded of an old question again.

Is this world really a manufactured world?

The trial of the 19th Floor was not simply guiding Myong Myong to the outside of the forest.

Within it all, there were Myong Myong's past and his circumstance.

There are also the culture and tradition of the tribe members. The guardian goddess called the Great Mother even predicted my appearance through her dream.

Is this really a world manufactured to test me?

My theory on my question was as following.

This world does exist.

It is from a time that existed in a world.

This trial is a fabrication based on the real events, and the real people involved in them are appearing in the trial.

There are other opinions in the community. However, that's what I have been thinking.

In that case, when this really happened in the real world for the first time, how did it end?

Did Myong Myong survive in the forest by himself until the curse ended?

If someone met Myong Myong in the forest, what would that person have chosen to do?

Would that person have been able to defeat the ghosts and bring Myong Myong to the village?

Also, would that person have led the story to a conclusion with Myong Myong and Lalalila smiling and talking?

Would there be a new story after this ending?

What kind of tragedy would have followed in the AoAeo island that was addicted to the narcotic called Paramal...

I changed the subject from the stories in the beginning to the stories about me at the end.

How am I supposed to face the story's end?

It is a fabrication of what has already existed.

To put it simply, it is just an illusion.

An illusion of Myong Myong, an illusion of the beastmen village, and an illusion of the Great Mother and the illusion of the night sky...

Am I supposed to treat them as just fabrications?

I sigh.

Lately, I have been sighing frequently.

It is a bad habit.

Below the mound, there is a vast green field. It is extending to the beyond the horizon. Above it, I can see a magnificent night sky.

However, I feel confined, frustrated.

What's going to happen to Myong Myong now?

Once I leave this place through the portal and go to the waiting room, is this story going to end like this?

Also, is Myong Myong going back to being the frightened child in the forest and repeat this story forever with next challengers, while the memories of the time we shared forever lost?

All to be just a trial for the Tutorial's challengers?

At the moment, it is a question that I have no way of knowing the answer to. It is a problem that cannot be solved.

I dust myself and get up.

I took a moment to look at Myong Myong and then raised my hand.

On my finger is a ring made of flowers. It was the one that Myong Myong made for me.

I placed the flower ring on top of a stone tower.

After that, like how beastmen did, I prayed.

I prayed for Myong Myong's health and happiness.

“Teleport.”

Since today’s daylight time, the portal had been following around my feet. I activated the portal.

From the dark field, I was teleported to a bright field.

A bright voice that was as bright as the sunlight welcomed me.

“Hello! Human with a funny name! Ahhahathat.”

Kiri Kiri is hiding her mouth with her hands and snickering.

When Myong Myong laughed like that, he was absolutely adorable. However, when Kiri Kiri did it, she could not look more mischievous.

* * *

On top of an empty plate, I dropped a fork while making a clanking noise.

While I was eating the cake, Kiri Kiri was tagging onto me the whole time. Now that I finished the cake, she is finally getting off of me.

My mouth tastes sweet. To wash it off, I brought out a bottle of water from the inventory.

The taste of the cake is very satisfying.

How I felt became very satisfying as well.

In front of me was Kiri Kiri. She plummets onto the ground in a tantrum. She is kicking and struggling around in disappointment as if all is lost.

She is crying out a river. She is crying loudly like a child who just lost track of her mother.

I had no idea why she was so sad. With her face aimed toward the

sky, there were tears flowing out endlessly from her face.

There was one more difference between Kiri Kiri and Myong Myong.

When I saw Myong Myong cry, I felt incredibly sad. However, when I saw Kiri Kiri cry, I could not feel more happier. I would not have missed it for the world.

Chapter 141

Tutorial 20th Floor (1)

I wait while watching Kiri Kiri licking all the leftover cream from a plate.

The plate Kiri Kiri was licking is definitely not the empty plate I left after finishing the cake myself.

Of course not.

I am not that big of an asshole.

After I made Kiri Kiri to promise not to make fun of my name, I bought a whipped cream cake for Kiri Kiri.

I attempted to ask Kiri Kiri about the meaning of my name, but Kiri Kiri refused to tell me because apparently, it's a private matter.

“But hey, look, if it's my name then it's technically MY private matter, so then why can't I know about it?”

“Heheh, is that so.”

Kiri Kiri smirks at me and avoids answering my question earnestly.

I snatch away the plate Kiri Kiri was licking.

“Ahhh. Give it back. Give it back!”

“Then will you answer properly?”

Kiri Kiri promised to answer earnestly this time, so I will give the plate back to Kiri Kiri...

But as soon as Kiri Kiri got the plate back, Kiri Kiri said such information is just not meant to be revealed yet, and went back to licking the almost-clean plate once again.

Alright I get it, any information regarding the private matters costs quite a lot.

So I'm going to just let this one go.

Right now, knowing the meaning of my name isn't that important anyways.

"Alright Kiri Kiri, about the 19th floor then."

Kiri Kiri is still busy licking the empty plate.

I breathe a sigh and purchase one lollipop.

"Kiri kiri, say, ah."

"Ah."

I shove a lollipop into Kiri Kiri's mouth while Kiri Kiri was saying Ah-.

And I snatch away the plate and place it in the inventory.

But since Kiri Kiri got driven away with a lollipop in its mouth, Kiri Kiri didn't seem to mind getting the plate taken away at all.

"I'm going to take that lollipop back if you dare to reply to my questions insincerely again"

"Okay. Okay."

Again, she answers with that careless tone of voice.

It was the usual, but today it was slightly worse than other days.

“So, about the 19th floor.”

“Heh. I’d say it’s better to be concerned about the upcoming floor rather than a floor you’ve already passed.”

“Well, there will be other challenger trying for 19th floor next. So I need some information for them. Plus, I am quite curious myself as well.”

Kiri Kiri smiled awkwardly, and began to talk.

“Let me guess, it’s all because of that new accident that happened right after you cleared the 19th floor, right?”

I nodded.

It’s very convenient to have an advisor who can read my mind.

“Well, even if you remove the curse, or even if you awake the God Mother, there will be absolutely no reward for that. This is completely normal, since the stage has already been cleared.”

“Then what was the point of those installations after the floor was cleared?”

“In order to observe what kind of decisions challenger would end up making even when there is no reward promised for him and to observe what type of movements he would make. It has nothing to do with stage clearing, but these are the things the Gods want to know more about. They want to see the choices challengers make, and want to see if those choices are reflective of their characteristics. They really want to know these things.”

I understand it now.

The reason why Gods oftentimes observe challengers and even gift them certain authorities is to persuade the challengers to become their apostles in the end.

So it would be great to have as many installations as possible to test

challengers' characteristics.

There must have been some of those installations present in the past stages as well.

There must have been several installations hidden in each stage.

However for the 19th floor, they must have put the installation specifically to test how the challenger would react in a situation where there is no reward to be achieved.

“Unlike Hojae, other challengers do not get a change to face giant ghost figures before arriving in the village. In fact, the appearance of giant ghost figures had been triggered much earlier than it should have been, all because you were defeating too many of them too quickly. Other challengers only needed to protect Myong Myong and hold up until the God Mother was awakened by the ritual. They can either do that, or they can decide to just run away from them. Guarding Myong Myong with their lives without any promised reward for a long, long time without knowing when it would even end; now that's the objective for after the stage clear.”

“So that was the objective for that stage. I knew it; it was way too easy.”

“Eh?”

“Yeah?”

“Eh?”

“What”

“Well 19th floor was not an easy stage, at all”

Is that so.

It was way easier compared to 17th and 18th floor.

“That’s only because Hojae made the 18th floor much more difficult. And you just immediately passed the 17th floor!”

Well, now that I think about it, Kiri Kiri’s words make sense.

If there were any challenger who passed 17th floor before me, the difficulty level he faced must have been much lower than the difficulty level Lee Hyung-Jin will have to face in the future.

“Um... Then let’s talk about Myoung Myoung on the 19th floor...”

Once I started the sentence, my mind went completely blank and I forgot what I was going to say next.

“Are there any more questions regarding the 19th floor?”

Kiri Kiri’s question perplexed me.

I didn’t really have any questions left; nothing that popped up in my head.

I had no questions regarding the stage clearing strategies either.

“Well.”

“I see, you just want to chat more huh?”

I’ve already said it once, but I will have to say it twice.

It is very convenient to have an advisor who reads minds.

“Yeah. I guess.”

I admitted it.

I want to talk more about Myong Myong and Lala Lila and other people.

I want to know more about them, even though I've already passed them, even though they may not be significant to me at all anymore.

With chocolate cookie and milk laid out on the floor, I chatted with Kiri Kiri for a long while.

* * *

"It's not weird at all that you are unable to control the souls by soul collection skill. It's because soul collection is literally a skill to collect souls. In order to persuade souls, you need to ask them politely, instead of giving them some sort of orders to do certain things for you."

Is that how it is.

Then what, do I need to perform some sort of ancestral ritual with pig's blood?

"Actually that's not a bad idea at all."

Would that really work...

"Or you will have to do something to help release the souls' sorrow, or gift them something they really like, or do something they like..."

After listening to Kiri Kiri's explanation, I have to give up my original plan of actively manipulating the souls completely.

I can't really be bothered to behave like their little slave, just to be able to control some tiny little ghosts which are only good for uselessly screaming things like Kyah- and Oooh-.

"Well if you get to establish deeper friendships with them, they would grow as big as the size of your hand."

"They'd still be hard to use still. Oh well..."

I wanted to skip to next question, but Kiri Kiri stopped me.

“Wait!”

Kiri Kiri raised one hand firmly and gestured ‘stop’ just like traffic police officer, and said.

“There isn’t much quota left now. I will only receive two more important questions.”

This is the third time I have to say it today; it really is pretty damn convenient to have an advisor who can read my mind.

Kiri Kiri knew what question I would be asking next, and decided to tell me to filter them out and only ask the important ones.

“Ahem.”

Kiri Kiri put her chin up, and widened her shoulder.

“Then I would like to ask about the level up rewards. How come there are no more level up rewards, all of a sudden?”

The stats and skill level that we receive as level up rewards have been decreasing from one point, and now there are no rewards given for leveling up at all.

A level up reward was one of the ways to improve stats and skills conveniently along with stage clear rewards. Hence, it was a major issue that there is no more level up reward.

This is my current status screen.

[Lee Ho-Jae (Human)]

Lv. 40

Power : 40

Agility : 58

Health : 41

Magic : 41

Skills : Battle Concentration Lv.20 Will Power Lv.14 Arousal LV.2 Prediction Lv.9 Insight Lv.5 Race Lv.8 Covertness Lv.14 Meditation Lv.12 Detection Lv.7 Chase Lv.13 Natural Healing Lv.12 Revival Lv.5 Strengthening of sensation Lv.14 Sensation Explosion Lv.8 Energy Lv.6 Expansion of Vision Lv.4 Metal Wall Lv.2 Somatosclerosis Lv.3 Shouting of soul Lv.3 Advanced Sword Skill Lv.6 Advanced Shielding Skill Lv.2 Basic Spear Skill Lv. 8 Advanced Desmoplasty Lv.2 Basic Trapezoidectomy Lv.6 Basic Cooking Lv.6 Magical circuit Lv.16 Malice Lv.7 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv. 5 Spirit Friendliness Lv. 2 Knowledge before Babel Time Lv. 6 Collection of Soul Lv. 9 Immune to Mental Pollution Lv. 5 Tolerance for pain Lv.3 Tolerance for bleeding. Lv. 10 Tolerance for fainting Lv.6 Tolerance for Penetration Lv.4 Tolerance for Poison Lv. 3 Tolerance for Paralysis Lv. 15 Tolerance for Fire Lv. 1 Tolerance for Cold LV. 4 Tolerance for freezing Lv. 3 Tolerance against Curse Lv. 7 Tolerance against rich magic Lv. 6 Tolerance for Nephrogenesis LV. 1 Invincibility Lv. 4 Structure Lv. 2 Ignite of Boju Lv. Max Talaria's Wings Lv. Max Collection of soul Lv. Max Lion Summoning Lv. ???

Others: God of slow has been watching you with great attention.

Ordeal from God of Slow [Achievement: 6/11]

Ordeal from God of Adventure [Achievement: 170/224]

Through training and practicing, I gained strategies to assist my improvement of skills, and which was why I was able to strengthen several skills very quickly.

However, I am unable to strengthen every single one of my skills in such short time.

There are still few skills I haven't really touched on, since it was difficult to strengthen those skills only by repetitive practices.

That's why I needed the level up rewards: in order to strengthen those skills which I haven't really been able to touch on quite yet.

“I will explain it briefly this time.”

Kiri Kiri usually shortens the sentences when she talks about expensive information.

Kiri Kiri explained to me previously that it is so to provide me as much information while using keywords, which uses the limited amount of allowed quota more efficiently.

“They are not completely gone. It’s just that your improvement has already caught up with the systems’ physical layout. But there is no need to feel sad about it. Because it also means that you have already received everything you could possibly receive on your current level. Now you just need to obtain your current status before reaching the next standard, Level 51.”

“Alright, so it means that I won’t be getting any level up rewards before reaching the level 51. Then can I receive them after level 51?”

Kiri Kiri scratched her chin, and pondered.

“In a normal case, yes. When you reached over level 51, you will receive level up rewards ONLY if your standards don’t exceed the next standard line”

The next standard line.

51th level was the first line, so I think the next line must be 101th level.

It is kind of impossible for me to estimate what improvements in my status would happen by that time.

“Alright. Then next question, I need advice on the 20th floor”

After awfully struggling on the 18th floor, I have decided that it’d be a good idea to listen to Kiri Kiri’s advice on the next floors.

Even though I am successfully clearing the stages without confronting any critical danger, there is a huge difference between able to be

aware of types of traps that are waiting on the next stage, compared to having absolutely no information at all.

“Even for Hojae, this stage will be quite challenging.”

“Oh, really?”

My heart begun to race faster as soon as I heard the word ‘hard’.

“Because the next stage requires a party play. Maximum 6 players.”

Ohhh!

Oh Oh!

My racing heart has begun to pound harder.

As if my heart was doused in oil, my expectation for 20th floor blew up instantly.

It is a first stage that requires a party play since the 11th floor.

Have I improved enough?

Would I be stuck just like I was on the 6th floor, or would I be able to overcome the barrier? I really can’t control my excitement.

“Heh..... I wasn’t expecting this kind of reaction.”

Kiri Kiri awkwardly smiled.

“My advice for 20th floor is to watch your back. It is not a stage that messes with your head, so don’t worry. And I think it’s time to drink some potions.

* * *

[Welcome to the waiting room of the 20th floor.]

I take the potions out of the inventory and lay them out on the floor as Kiri Kiri advised me to.

Potions that I've received from Juji, potions that I've received as rewards from various competitions, and the potions I've received from the God Mother are laid out in front of me.

Now that I lay it all out, there are quite a lot of potions that I've collected so far.

I am debating between whether I should drink all these potions now immediately, or later on after processing the situation.

I was in such agony for a short while, but then I finally decided to postpone the potions drinking to later.

It may be possible to clear the 20th floor without drinking any potions anyways.

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : Yo. Are you alive? Why haven't you texted me?]

[Lee Ho-Jae, 20th floor : Of course I'm alive.]

I received Kim Min-Hyuk's first text in awhile.

The busy schedules in the beginning of each stage must have passed.

We chatted for awhile, since we haven't caught up with each other for such a long time.

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : Min has entered the 89th floor.]

Park Min, an Easy level challenger.

Besides Lee Chan-Yong who is dead now, Park Min is the challenger who has reached the highest floor.

Park Min has entered the 89th floor, which Lee Chan-Yon was stuck

on.

The 89th floor is an easy level stage that has nothing to do with me; however it felt strangely relevant to me.

There is a resemblance between myself who was stuck on the 6th floor and Lee Chan-Young who was daunted on the 89th floor.

I truly feel sorry for him.

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : I am worried. Will everybody be okay?]

[Lee Ho-Jae, 20th floor : Everybody will do great. I hope they will. Please tell them to do well. I'm going to enter the stage now.]

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : Okay. Text me later.]

After wishing Park-Min a good luck, I began my new challenge as well.

“Move.”

[Welcome to the 20th stage]

Chapter 142

Tutorial 20th Floor (2)

[Member(s) available for party recruitment (1/1)]

- Lee Ho Jae

[Current Party Member (1/6)]

1. Lee Ho Jae

[Would you like to enter?]

Before entering the 20th stage which requires a 6 man party, a message popped up to confirm my decision once again.

“Yes.”

Why do they even bother to ask? It's just me anyways.

Actually, the decision confirmation message pops up before entering any stage.

However, I feel strangely chagrined when I see a confirmation message before entering a stage that requires a party play.

It's humiliating.

Oh well, but I guess it's okay since it's been awhile anyways.

[Welcome to the 20th floor stage.]

[Trial number 19, Date 16th, Time 15:00]

I entered the 20th stage right at 3 o' clock.

The 20th stage is located at the top of the castle fortress, which was built on top of the mountain.

Recently, stages have been located in areas with fantastic views of natural landscapes.

First of all, this fortress is magnificent.

This fortress contains very firm and tall walls.

And this fortress reminds me of those unrealistic fortresses which are likely to appear in fantasy movies like Lord of the Rings, rather than any actual existing fortresses built on Earth.

Actually, never mind, there wouldn't be any giant fortress built on top of the mountain like this, even in Lord of the Rings.

Who are they kidding? Logically speaking, how can anybody be able to build any castle on top of such high mountain like this?

However, that sort of nonsensical building exists right here.

I don't have any knowledge regarding war strategies or sieges. However, I am able to assume that this fortress was built in order to fight against larger number of enemies easily, even with smaller number of allied forces.

The enemies could easily die climbing the steep mountain, they could die from getting hit by weapons flying around, or they could easily die from stumbling and falling down.

Even if you somehow successfully make your way up until you reach a castle wall, the wall is too high to climb up.

Unless you have the ability to fly, it seems impossible to be able to conquer this fortress with only ground forces.

Second of all, my location is very important.

If I were summoned anywhere near the fortress, then the 20th floor clear objective might have been conquering the fortress.

But I was summoned on top of the fortress wall.

A message popped up.

[The 20th floor gateway begins.]

Explanation: The red mountain where the great Go-Ryoung had lived for a long, long time, no longer has a master.

All that is left in this red mountain is the dwarfs protecting the great Go-Ryoung's only inheritance.

The Trilogy alliance wants to take possession of the great Go-Ryoung's inheritance, in order to gain an advantage over the empire in the war.

However, all thanks to a long-lasting ill-fated relationship between the dwarfs and the Trilogy alliance, the Trilogy alliance decided to attack the fortress and plunder great Go-Ryoung's inheritance instead of convincing the dwarfs to hand it over.

Help the dwarfs and protect Go-Ryoung's inheritance.

The Trilogy alliance's attack will start on the day 2.

[Condition of Stage Clear]

1. Defend Trilogy alliance's attack for 11 days.
2. Protect Go-Ryoung's inheritance from Trilogy alliance.

It's a simple stage.

I like it very much.

Yes, this is it.

This is what every tutorial stage should be.

I activated my magic power to skim through the fortress and its surroundings.

There are no enemies approaching toward the fortress yet.

There are none that could get away without me noticing it, at least.

Then first I shall begin to chat at ease.

I turn my head to the sound of footsteps coming from behind.

It's one of the dwarfs who have been watching me for a while now.

Other dwarfs have been looking at me from far away, yet only one among them walk toward me.

When I first heard the name 'dwarf', I was somewhat imagining a species like hobbits or halflings that appear in fantasy novels.

However, the dwarfs in front of my eyes had something different compared to that of my imagination.

“H.”

“H?”

“...E.”

“What?”

First of all, they are a bit strange.

“...L.”

“...”

“...LO.”

...If I put together all those slowly mumbled words, it becomes ‘Hello’.

The fact that they have successfully spoken a word, even when they only obtain language skill from before the Babel time was truly impressive, more so than the fact that such species that speaks like this exists.

“You...”

“Yes, me what.”

“Too...”

God damn it. They are weirder than I thought.

It's not only that they speak in such weird manner.

It's also that, the dwarf who was speaking in front of me, and all the other dwarfs in my sight share one trait.

They all look exactly the same.

As if they were all identical twins.

And there are more than hundreds of dwarfs in front of my eyes right now.

They can't possibly be all identical twins.

“H...”

I figured it would be at least twenty times more efficient to zone out than to listen carefully to each word they speak slowly.

Not only were their facial appearances identical, but their physical frames were also identical, as if they were some sort of artificial life forms that have been cloned.

To be honest I feel uncomfortable.

I activated my magical power, and observe dwarfs' bodies more carefully.

It was a huge discourtesy; however they don't seem to be offended by it at all.

After a while, I drew a conclusion.

They are all the same person.

Whether they are all one's alter ego, or an artificial robot, or some sort of doll or I don't know what exactly.

Maybe it has something to do with that great Go-Ryoung.

When my train of thought reached that point, the dwarf standing in front of me had spoken quite a lot of words.

When I put all those words together, it becomes the following sentence.

'I am fine. You are fine as well. You speak. Speak about your relationship with Trilogy.'

I couldn't be sure if whether the simplicity of the sentence structure was due to their lack of intellectual capacity, or if it was in order to save some time since they spoke terribly badly.

"I am... Trilogy's..."

"Fas..."

I was speaking in the same manner as the dwarfs, slowly but

obviously faster than them, but one dwarf cut me off.

I stopped speaking to listen to him in order to see what sort of important message he was trying to tell me.

“Ter...”

Faster?

“Spe...”

Faster Spe?

“Ak...”

...They are telling me to speak faster.

Well, shit...

Sigh. I will let this one go.

There may be some valid reason behind why they speak so slowly like that anyways.

I decided to speak faster as they've wished.

“I am not connected to Trilogy alli-.”

“if...”

“...I am not connected to Trilogy alliance, and I am their enemy.”

“it's...”

God damn it.

They not only have problems in speaking but also in hearing.

Either that or they had some sort of obsessive-compulsive disorder about completing the sentence that has already begun.

“Oh...”

I feel like something is burning inside of me.

Wow, my mental contamination immunity skill level might advance if I continue to listen to this.

“Kay...”

Okay my ass.

“I am irreverent to Trilogy alliance, and I am their enemy. I will help defend against their attack, and I will protect the inheritance of the great Go-Ryoung.”

I was planning to furtively ask about the inheritance of Go-Ryoung after establishing a deeper friendship with the dwarfs.

If the dwarfs were planning on hiding the existence of the inheritance or something, then there is a chance of my relationship with them going awry.

But because I felt awfully cramped in having this conversation with the dwarfs, I ended up spilling everything I had to say at once.

“T...”

The dwarf began to reply.

I zoned out again, while listening to his reply that will obviously take a long, long time again.

Yet I have no problem understanding his reply at all.

The objective of the 20th floor stage is to protect the Go-Ryoung's inheritance that the dwarves have been protecting against the Trilogy

alliance.

I considered the 20th floor stage to be perfectly doable when I learned about the existence of the allies and when I looked at the tall fortress build on top of the mountain.

Of course I still have no idea what the Trilogy alliance is like, not yet.

Therefore I thought it would be okay to engage in this stage without having to drink any potions.

That was my hasty judgment.

I would be much better off drinking potions to carry this whole thing alone by myself, rather than trusting these little things as my allies.

When my thought process reached until this point, the dwarf had made quite some progress.

“Trilogy’s enemy, our friend”

It must mean that the Trilogy’s enemy is their friend.

Since the dwarf didn’t finish his sentence yet, I continued to think about other things.

I will ask them to show me the inheritance of Go-Ryoung as soon as this conversation is over.

After knowing the location of the inheritance and structure of the fortress I shall make a basic defensive plan.

Fortunately the dwarfs don’t seem to have any problems in moving, even though they had some obvious deficiency in communication.

It would be possible to defend to some extent even if they only roll down several stones and rocks from the top of the wall while I fight the Trilogy alliance at the front lines.

In the meantime I really have to drink and absorb the potions.

The plan was neat.

However I had doubts about the feasibility of the plan.

They said that the Trilogy alliance's attack will begin on the day 2.

I was wondering why their attack would begin on the 2nd day, rather than on the first day of stage entrance, but now I know why.

There was no guarantee that I would be able to completely finish conversing with the dwarfs and drink the potions before today is over.

It will take up an entire evening just to talk about Go-Ryoung's inheritance and to have a look around the fortress.

Hah.

A sigh slipped out of my mouth.

If I combine the words that dwarf said up to this point, it becomes a sentence like this.

‘Trilogy's enemy, is our friend. Let's protect the great Go-Ryoung's inheritance together. We welcome your vi.’

They must mean that they welcome my visit.

Convincing the dwarfs was way easier than I thought it would be.

Honestly speaking, I have no clue about why the dwarfs got convinced so easily.

I think it's only logical to be on guard when you see a stranger who appeared in fortress out of nowhere all of a sudden in a sensitive time like this.

Or maybe they are letting it pass without thinking much, simply

because they are too dumb.

A man appeared in fortress in the right timing because of the Tutorial's stage. Maybe they are programmed to maintain an amicable relationship with the challengers.

If that's not the case, maybe they have discovered something in me that was trustworthy enough, or they have a substantial clue to be assured that I am not part of Trilogy's alliance.

And if that's not the case either, maybe they're pretending to accept it while planning on stabbing me in the back afterwards.

There are several possibilities.

But for now I lack information regarding the relationship between dwarfs and Trilogy alliance.

Let's come back to this later.

* * *

Things went smoother than I thought it would.

By things, I meant the conversation with the dwarfs.

The dwarfs who welcomed me had stopped talking.

That was a very positive piece of news.

They handed me a bundle of paper instead.

The bundle of paper consisted of a map of surrounding areas and an operational plan in preparation for siege warfare.

The map contained a detailed presentation of the geographic features of the fortress itself and its surrounding areas.

It even contained the location of the Trinity Alliance's camp.

The operational plan explained their organization of forces and structure of the fortress and how to utilize its defensive facilities.

I would have to analyze how they'd be able to defend themselves against the enemy's attack based on this operational plan, and then I would have to assign myself an appropriate role.

They ushered me into a small room inside the fortress after checking those bundles of paper.

The dwarfs led me into the room and told me to use it as my lodging, then disappeared after telling me that they would come pick me up before the dinner time.

Thankfully the dwarfs weren't dumb in the head.

There is a great barrier in communication, but they were acknowledging it themselves, and they were even trying to make up for their defect with other methods.

I must say, it is a very positive thing.

Well, then.

My task from now on is to read the map and operational plan once again very carefully, and to obtain any necessary information, in addition to organizing all the questions I want to ask the dwarfs before the dinner time, and to assign myself an appropriate role for the war that will begin tomorrow.

And last but not least, I need to drink some potions.

That's about it for now.

The first thing for me to do is to drink some potions.

I activated my magical power and activated detection skill.

I sensed a few existences around me, but they weren't close enough to

be threatening.

[Collection of Soul]

[Number of Soul Collected : 211659]

I summon thirty souls.

[Kyaak-]

“Hey. Shush.”

Even though one’s scream was only as noisy as a kitten’s purring, when thirty of them begin to scream at the same time it becomes very tumultuous.

“Sorry to ask, but could you possibly protect the environs of this room? Guard against anyone coming inside.”

Of course they didn’t even bother to listen to my words.

“Alright, then how about just protecting the front door?”

Rather than listening to me, the souls were trying to find something while roaming around me.

I know what that behavior indicates.

They are looking for Myong Myong, who is supposed to be nearby me.

Unfortunately, they won’t get to meet Myong Myong around me anymore.

I even pulled out a candle, sundae (pig’s gut), liver and etc. from the inventory and tried praying to them, but they still refused to follow my words at all.

In the end, I gave up and sent the souls back.

I wanted to have more definite security, even though my surroundings were pretty safe, and there is no reason for the dwarfs to be hostile at me.

Because it becomes awfully troublesome if someone were to attack me while I am absorbing potions.

Potion that can force the enhancement of the stat is not a simple nutritional supplement.

Outstanding magic circulation skills and intense concentration is required in order to wholly absorb its entire efficacy.

Even if a marauder were to appear, I can still stop absorbing the potion and deal with them, but that would decrease the efficacy of the potion.

But rather than any attack, the dwarfs' simple visit to say hello would be more unbearable, because I would have to forcefully stop the absorption and stand up.

Even if I don't stand up, I need to open my mouth at least in order to turn the visitor away.

There is only one thing that can secure my safety at this point.

[Summon Soul]

An uncomfortable magical spell swirled up in the room, and a healthy lizard over 2 meters tall was summoned into this tiny room.

With a long spear on its back and a tail that was thicker than my thighs, it made this small room feel even smaller than it already is.

However I was delighted rather than discomforted by it.

Honestly speaking, I was waiting for the right moment to use my soul summoning skill.

For the pretext for using the skill, to be exact.

“Long time no see, Iddy.”

“Kerk. To be honest I have no idea how much time has passed since the last time we saw each other. But hey, long time no see, hubby.”

Chapter 143

Tutorial 20th Floor (3)

After looking around and securing the safety, Iddy said hi.

“Kerk. Long time no see, hubby.”

“I told you not to call me hubby.”

“Kerk, Kerk. I see that you are finally ready to accept me, now that you have summoned me in this tiny room. Thankfully, the bed is large enough. Do you prefer a son or a daughter?”

Instead of going along with Iddy’s word, I aimed for Iddy’s head with Thousand Arms.

Iddy tilted her head, and easily avoided my attack.

“Kerk. Commander, you are still such a shy boy.”

Iddy laughed momentarily, and asked me.

“Commander, is this place safe?”

“For now yes. It’s an ally’s base. Can’t be completely sure yet though.”

“I see. Well, if you have time, I would appreciate a detailed explanation of the situation. Kerk.”

I explained the situation in great detail, as Iddy requested, about detailed setting of this stage and the objective I had to accomplish.

“Do you know about the dwarfs by any chance?”

“Kerk. Dwarf is a broad term any short humanlike race. Are there any other particularly special features?”

Of course, there is one extremely particularly special feature.

I told Iddy about a particular feature of the dwarfs I’ve met.

“Kerk. Kerk. We will end up meeting the breed that is normally very hard to find.”

“You know about those dwarfs?”

“Of course. Kerk. First of all, you mustn’t call them dwarfs in front of them.”

“Yeah? Then what should I call them?”

“Dragon Soldiers.”

Dragon Soldiers?

The dragon soldiers I was familiar with are definitely not one of those dwarfs with speech impediments.

It’s awfully different to what I’ve imagined in my head.

When I told her of my impression, Iddy laughed once again.

“Of course. Dragon soldiers are a great being in its existence itself. There is no way that they would be called the dwarfs.”

Then what the heck are they?

“They are not exactly dragon soldiers, but dragon soldier wannabes?”

“Correct. Essentially, they share identical process of birth with dragon soldiers. Same creator too. Of course they’re only identical in a way that a lizard man and a crow both come out of eggs.”

“Hmm... Then what are they called usually? Ah, like when they are not listening.”

“You said it yourself. They are called the dwarfs.”

Iddy said that “dwarf” is a broad term to indicate any short humanlike race.

So I guess that means those dwarfs don’t even have an exact title for identifying themselves.

Except for the title of ‘dragon soldier,’ which is only used by them.

“Kerk. They are naturally created to serve the dragon. It’s just like one of those electronic cleaning machines or laundry machines that you’ve told me about once in the past.”

[PR Note: I think what the author means is that they are born into serving the dragon race.]

I guess he meant the vacuum cleaner or the washing machine.

I’ve briefly explained modern civilization once; it was a while ago when I was living in the cave with Iddy on the 12th floor.

Especially the ones related to housework.

“Then they must be pretty damn useless in battle.”

“Obviously. Kerk.”

I really have to drink the potions, for real now.

I announced my intention and asked Iddy to protect the room while I’m absorbing the potion.

“Kerk. Got it. But hey, if you planned such a thing, wouldn’t it have been better if you drank it somewhere safer before coming here?”

I silently rolled my eyes.

I didn't know what to say.

"Kerk. Kerk. You've become such a softie, Commander."

I had to agree with her.

Instead of giving some nonsensical excuse, I admitted it.

I have become such a softie; I've become too complacent.

It takes me longer to make a decision when I need to, and those calls are not as good as they used to be.

Even I am aware of it.

* * *

I've spent my afternoon absorbing the potions nonstop and familiarize myself with the new buffs.

"Kerk. Are we finished now?"

"No, not quite yet. Even though I've finished absorbing its power, my body still needs some time. I will be able to adjust the effects by the time the battle starts tomorrow."

"Kerk. Wouldn't it be much better to just completely finish everything before the battle begins?"

"My ability of merit dramatically increases in crisis."

"Kerk. Kerk."

Iddy laughed wildly.

Well, what can I do; it's the truth.

While I was chatting with Iddy in the room, one of the dwarfs opened the door and came in.

Do they not know how to knock?

The dwarf eyes were about to pop out when he saw Iddy, but he started to say something regardless.

“Li.....”

Ah, here it comes again.

“Zar...”

Eddie didn't even bother to let the dwarf finish his sentence and began to reply.

“Kerk. That's right. I am a lizard man. I didn't sneak in; this commander here has summoned me, so don't you worry.”

“D...”

“I am also very pleased to meet one of dragon's descendants. Oh, it's dinner time already.”

“Man.....”

What the heck is happening?

“Iddy, is it really okay to rumble by yourself like that?”

“Kerk. Kerk. I knew it, you are not really able to understand their words because you don't have the interpretation skill. Kerk. It's hard to explain.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It.....”

“Their first and second syllables usually contain most of the meaning.”

“Is...”

Huh?

“So... does that mean that when he mumbled “Li” at first, it contained the meaning of ‘Oh, it is a Lizard man. What are you doing here? How did you enter here?’”

Iddy affirmed my thoughts.

“That’s correct. Kerk. And the words that come next are usually meaningless ramblings.”

“Din...”

Can someone turn this radio off from rambling!

The slow words the dwarf threw here and there in the middle of my conversation with Iddy were getting on my nerves.

“So the first syllabus contains all the meaning, and the rest has no meaning at all, but I’ve been interpreting it incorrectly by putting all the syllables together to form one sentence?”

“Ner...”

“That’s correct. You understand things very quickly, commander. Kerk. Kerk.”

“But how come they use such inefficient way of speaking?”

“Me.....”

“The language of dragons usually functions like that.”

“The language of dragons... I see... they copy the language of dragons.”

Now it's completely understandable why the 'knowledge before the time of Babel' skill is unable to interpret the dragon language properly and got confused instead.

I am not sure if it's due to my low skill level concerning the knowledge before Babel time, or if it's due to the limitation of the skill itself. Despite its fancy name, it is actually completely impractical at all.

First of all, it's unable to understand language of Lune, which is considered a very basic language of magic, and there were lots of words among ancient languages that 16th floor castle guard was saying that I couldn't quite guess the meaning.

I was unable to interpret any dialect or slang the guard was using in the conversation.

"Al..."

"Then, how come you are able to understand them?"

"Kerk. I am a Lizard man. Of course I know some basics of dragon language."

Alright, I see some relevance here.

Dragon or Lizard man or Lizard... Well they're all similar to each other so it makes sense.

"Is..."

"Commander, do you know the location of the dining room?"

I nodded.

I've confirmed the location of the dining room on the fortress' internal map.

"Then, let's head to the dining room. They say the dinner is ready and

they're waiting for you.”

“Rea...”

So that's what the dwarf has been constantly babbling about.

“Sure. Let's go.”

We got out of the room to head toward the dining room, while the dwarf followed us from behind.

“Dy...”

Of course he didn't forget to continue rambling.

* * *

If there is a language hell on earth, this place is it.

Any linguists with their right minds will agree with me; there are no doubts about that.

The big dining room where about two hundreds of dwarfs were dining was literally chaos.

“Li... Za...”

“By...”

“Rd... Man...”

“The...”

“Long..... Time..... No...”

“Way...”

A bunch of them were speaking like that in the same place at the same

time, and I couldn't understand any of their ramblings.

Even worse, a few of them were babbling inconsistently while eating, I had no clue of what they were trying to say.

So I gave up trying to have a conversation, and let Iddy take care of it, while I only focused on my meal.

Dwarfs' food consisted mainly of vegetables.

It wasn't tasty.

"Wouldn't dragons get upset if this kind of food was being served to them?"

I whispered to Iddy's ear while she was chatting with the dwarfs.

Just in case the dwarfs gets angry by hearing this.

"Kerk. Dragon doesn't eat food. I heard there's no problem even if they don't ingest any food."

Having no problems without eating food is different from being unable to eat.

I bet the dragon refuses to eat it, since they serve this kind of food.

I didn't say it out loud, not even to Iddy.

Just in case the dwarf overhear, since there's a high chance they'll get very angry.

"Kerk. And they have decided to show us the inheritance of Go-Ryoung, after we finish our meal."

"Oh, Yes. Good to hear."

"And I've told them that you absolutely love today's dinner very much."

That was such an unnecessary thing to do.

“They were asking me what was wrong, since you were menacingly scowling, so I told them you usually make that kind of face when you eat delicious food.”

Damn...

I had nothing to say to that, since it was my fault for making such a facial expression while they served the food in the first place.

* * *

After finishing dinner, we followed the dwarfs to check out the inheritance of Go-Ryoung.

Since all the dwarfs looked identical, I couldn't tell the difference between one and another, but the one who is leading us right now is apparently the one who chatted with me this morning.

Well, I had nothing to comment on that really.

“That...”

The dwarf started to babble about something again, but I didn't have to be bothered to care since Iddy could take care of it.

Even the dwarfs seem to feel more comfortable communicating with Iddy instead of me.

I see that it has been a fabulous decision to summon Iddy; thanks to her, interpreting has become so much easier.

When I told her this, Iddy scolded at me.

“Kerk. You finally find the justification for summoning me, just now?”

Oh well.

I was surprised by her reaction, which was sharper than I expected.

“Kerk. Kerk. I like you but you are too slow-witted.”

Just like how she said how I’m slow witted, I couldn’t figure out why I felt offended by her words.

So I just kept my mouth shut, unable to say anything.

We reached the back side of the fortress after walking silently for awhile.

There was a small hall hidden behind the castle wall.

There was a necklace floating in the air in the middle of the empty hall.

Is that some sort of ancient sorcery?

“That must be the inheritance from the dragon?”

“Kerk. It seems like it. They say they cannot reveal the detailed history behind that necklace though.”

I don’t think it matters that much to know the effects or the necklace’s worth anyways.

I only need to protect it from Trilogy alliance.

“Then, Iddy, could you ask them if you could stay here and protect the necklace?”

“Me? Wouldn’t it be better if I fight at the front lines?”

“No, because I was informed to watch my back. Our priority is protecting that necklace. Since there is a possibility of marauders coming from the back side, I want you to protect it.”

The dwarfs readily approved of it.

They said, besides Iddy, they would place bunch of other dwarfs there to strengthen its defenses.

Of course, Iddy translated their words for me.

After finishing the tasks that for the day, I returned to my lodging.

I sat on the edge of my bed, and organized my thoughts.

There was nothing that seemed unstable, or which seemed like a trap.

The defense plan was very thorough, and there was no discord with the dwarfs.

This stage seems to purely be a stage where I defend an object.

However, I thought the fact that the dwarfs have been showing such complete trust toward me and Iddy were a little odd.

I mean, Iddy can be persuasive since she is related to them in terms of genealogy, but it was a bit suspicious that they trusted me so easily.

“What’s your thought on this?”

“Kerk. I don’t know. To be honest how should I know what kind of people the dwarfs of dragon are? I only know that they are dragon soldier wannabes, and that they refuse to accept what they were assigned at birth to become. Moreover, since I have no knowledge about the Trilogy alliance, I won’t be able to suspect anything.”

“I see.”

“Just don’t lower you guard, and let’s collect more information. Kerk. When the battle begins tomorrow, we’ll be able to figure something out after knowing more about the Trilogy.”

In the end, Iddy offered the exact same conclusion as the one I drew in the morning by myself.

Even though it was a same conclusion, somehow Eddie's words gave me more confidence.

I felt relieved.

I spent the night chatting about things with Iddy, instead of getting a good night's sleep.

Iddy and I are both unable to sleep easily in places where our safety isn't guaranteed.

We chatted mostly about what happened to me during my journey from the 13th floor to the 20th floor, after we had our farewells.

While I was Iddy telling stories, I got to uncover some thoughts I was unaware of.

While Iddy listened to me, she often complimented me, or she quietly comforted me.

Iddy makes me feel like I'm home.

Chapter 144

Tutorial 20th Floor (4)

[Trial 19th, Date 17, Time 10:10]

The second day's morning sun has just risen.

I've just spent the whole entire night chatting with Idy all night long; we ended up watching the sunrise through the window this morning.

We had a simple breakfast in our room.

Of course, Idy didn't cook; we just ate whatever leftover food I could find in my inventory.

It tasted way better than the shitty food the dwarfs served us last night anyway.

And I could enjoy the food even more this time since I could eat it in a quiet room with Idy, rather than in a noisy dining room full of dwarfs babbling endlessly.

Minutes after we just finished our breakfast, one of the dwarfs entered the room.

“Cas...”

“They are watching the Trilogy's advance from the castle wall. We better go now, commander.”

“Alright, let's go.”

* * *

Just like message said, on the second day morning, the Trilogy finally showed themselves as they approached the castle to attack.

I went to the fortress wall with Idy to take a look.

The dwarfs were all lined up by the castle's battlements.

I could see quite an enormous number of dwarfs; there were more than I thought there were.

It seems like there are at least five hundred of them.

Idy started a conversation with a dwarf in a commander uniform, and while they were talking, I took a look down the castle wall.

There was nothing down there.

I even activated my magic power, but I couldn't sense a single enemy standing nearby.

Idy had just finished the conversation with the dwarf as she made her way towards me.

"There is nothing! And it doesn't seem like anyone is hiding at all either," I said to Idy.

"Keruk. Keruk. Commander, you're looking at the wrong place. Of course they're not near the castle wall. Right there, take a look there."

Idy pointed to a flat field in the valleys.

The field was filled with... something.

When I looked more carefully, I began to realize that what I thought was just a plain flat field was in fact slowly inching forward, little by little.

Since it was very far away from where we were and it occupied such a large area, I misperceived it to be just a normal, flat field.

There were two good things about this.

“Well, at least it will take them quite a long time until they finally reach up here.”

This fortress was built on the peak of an extremely high mountain.

They will take at least one or two hours for them to climb up the steep terrain.

“Keruk. It takes the dwarfs 4 full days with their walking speed apparently. But they told me that they don’t know much about the enemy’s walking speed.”

The next good point was this.

“Have you been notified of their numbers?”

“Keruk. Even the dwarfs don’t know that. It’s easier to assume that it’s almost infinite.”

It was just as the dwarfs had said.

They had a ridiculously large army that even I had mistaken as a field, or at least that’s how they look from this fortress on top of the mountain.

It would be easier to assume that an endless amount of army is coming towards us, rather than attempting to estimate their exact numbers.

Not too bad.

Actually, it’s very good.

“Keruk. Don’t smile like that. The dwarfs are whispering now that you’ve just lost your shit because you got too scared.”

Lost my shit? That’s hella funny.

I don't care about the dwarfs' opinion.

The only thing that matters to me now is my bubbling excitement for the arrival of the massive army.

"All that's left for me to figure out is about what kind of 'things' they are."

Since it was too far away, I couldn't quite observe it with my eyes.

It will take me a while until they come in close enough for me to personally scrutinize them.

"Keruk. Here you are, commander. This is a telescope the dwarfs gave me."

It seems like the dwarfs are very technically advanced.

I didn't expect them to have such advanced technology.

The telescope Idy handed over to me was slightly longer than a meter.

And this telescope was of a very high quality.

Maybe even too high quality.

I should not say a single word regarding their technology ever again.

I could adjust my field of vision by using my mana to zoom in or out; it was a very easy and simple telescope to operate, surprisingly so.

When I maximized my output of magical power, I could finally see each one of the enemies walking through the mountains in surprising detail.

The appearance of the enemy that was finally revealed to my eyes was much more bizarre than I expected it to be.

"Keruk. I feel like my breakfast is coming back up."

Idy mumbled after looking at the enemies' appearances with the telescope.

Honestly though, they do have a look that could make Idy's breakfast travel back up her throat.

I couldn't find a single one that had normal body parts, no matter how hard I looked for it.

Their body reminded me of a collection of rags on the verge of falling apart. Their bodies consisted of randomly mismatched body parts placed in the strangest of places.

Their facial features were distributed unevenly and bizarrely, their inner organs were sticking out of their bodies and actively pumping, and some were walking with hands attached to their lower body instead of legs. They were even holding weapons with their legs, which were attached to their shoulder, instead of hands.

And there were few that had actual human heads.

The others mostly had animal or monster.

Maybe they took those inner organs or body parts away from other monsters and attached it to themselves.

Only one name popped up in my head at first glance.

"Chimera?"

"Keruk. That's right. They're chimeras. Now I understand what they meant by the name 'Trilogy', Keruk."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Dark, Red, and Blue; the three moons."

What the heck is that is what I'm asking.

“It is a symbol for the worst of the worst dark magicians that existed in earth history. Three different-colored moons symbolize the three evils that granted them the ability to use dark magic and taught them how to use it. They were like the death guards of dark magicians.

“Wr...”

One dwarf cut us off.

“Hmm... I see.”

Idy mumbled after hearing unexpected words from the dwarf.

“Commander, the dwarfs had just told me that they are not black magicians; they’re just an army of monsters created by the black magicians. Apparently, the black magicians who created them were executed by the empire more than 100 years ago. I guess that’s a relief for us, knowing that there is no magician among them.”

“But there are too many of them to believe that the magicians do not even exist any longer. That must mean that they have been maintaining that number since over 100 years ago without their creators.”

“Tha...”

“...According to this dwarf... Umm...”

“What is it?”

“The chimeras have a special function allowing them to reproduce. And at a frightening rate too.”

I guess the black magicians who were executed by the empire have left not only just artificial monsters behind, but a rare achievement on earth’s history before they died.

I wasn’t an expert on black magic, but even I could tell that their piece of work was truly extraordinary.

Reproduction, huh.

I mean, look at them; they don't look like they could have genitals, not to mention a sex drive.

It's impressive how they've been increasing their numbers independently without the black magicians' orders.

That must mean that they possess intellect to some extent.

I guess that's why they're invading our territory to steal the dragons' inheritance.

The black magicians' inheritances are surviving by increasing their numbers through reproduction and are now trying to steal dragon's inheritance.

It's an interesting setting.

“Keruk. Keruk.”

Idy laughed awkwardly beside me.

It really did look like her breakfast was climbing back up her throat.

“...Truly disgusting indeed. Keruk.”

I agree.

Their appearances are truly gruesome.

And it's such a pity that this is their normal and healthy appearance.

I could sympathize to that.

I have witnessed something terrible.

Idy's facial expression was full of aversion, disgust and dismay.

Well, I couldn't sympathize to that.

Of course, those chimeras are such beings that trigger sadness and pity just simply through their disgusting appearance.

I get that.

That's why I could understand if anyone were to feel horrible just by taking a look at their appearance, or feel pity or compassion towards them having such sad life.

But Idy's expression showed something more than that.

"I'd rather throw up. It's the first time ever in my life I have had to see such dirty creatures. Keruk. And that number, oh my gosh."

I looked again.

"Dir..."

"Fu..."

"T... Y..."

"Ck..."

"Ki... Me..."

I witnessed the Dwarfs swearing at chimeras.

I couldn't find any significant difference between the Dwarfs and chimera.

To me, I harbored the same feelings of pity and aversion towards them.

Of course they were notably different on the outside.

The dwarfs were short, but they all had normal human face.

They were completely different with chimeras, whose body were parts dangling around all over the place along with the blood stains on the skins.

But really, you shouldn't badmouth someone based on how they look on the outside, just because they happen to have many scars and some deep blood stains.

At least, I cannot do that.

If that's the case, there wouldn't be any creature any more hideous than myself.

If it weren't for the Elixir potion and the waiting room's healing effect, I would have ended up with an appearance and facial features like the chimeras.

Moreover, the bloods, the inner organs, the cut body parts flying around were something that felt very familiar to me at this point, to the point where they can't bother me anymore.

I guess that's why I don't find the chimeras' appearances to be too shocking for me.

And if I put the obvious visual defects aside, it's very hard for me to significantly differentiate the chimeras and the dwarfs.

It seems to me that the dwarfs, who all share the same face, same physical frame, same magical ability, same behavior, and the same characteristics, are a more uncomfortable creature to be around than the chimeras.

Lacking individuality is a greater fault than lacking body parts.

I wonder how they interpret the definition of self-esteem.

As my thoughts trailed on, I heard a loud noise echoing from somewhere far below me.

Millions of chimeras had begun to run towards the mountaintop.

Their heavy footsteps sounded like a ferocious thunderstorm.

Finally, the battle was about to officially begin; all my distracting thoughts disappeared into a smoke, left only with anticipation for the battle.

I wonder how long this battle will take.

I personally want it to last all day long, and even all through the night.

I have a feeling that those chimeras won't complain about darkness in the night at all, after all.

I assumed their vision would be equally bad in the bright daylight anyway.

“Are you going already?”

“Yes. I want to get a feel of the field until the enemies finally reach anywhere near the fortress.”

Even though the chimeras were climbing the mountain at an extraordinary speed, it still seemed like it will take them at least few hours.

The chimeras were running in a straight line towards the fortress, crossing very steep mountain hills.

It would be extremely convenient for me if I could kill them all by myself before they reached the fortress, but it would be an unrealistic goal since they have such huge army.

I better think of some other strategy to reduce their numbers.

“Keruk. Then I better head to the back side.”

“Alright. See you after the battle ends.”

“Keruk. Keruk. Just don’t get hurt, commander.”

After hearing Idy’s farewell, I jumped off from the fortress wall.

[Talaria’s Wings]

I spread my wings and began to fly.

After a short flight, I deactivated Talaria’s Wings and dropped to the ground.

The dwarfs had told me that it takes them 3 days to climb up the mountain by foot.

However, it would only take me 10 minutes to fly over to where chimeras are right now.

In such viciously hilly terrain like this, my mobility skills reach their peak potential.

Now, if I have such outstanding mobility, do I really need to wait until they come to me while I stand here?

No. Of course not. I have to go annoy them to hell.

* * *

The chimeras were a lot noisier when I was closer to them.

“Kooooehhahhgak!”

I stared at the chimera that was running towards me, shrieking horrifically.

It was about 3 meters tall.

It had 4 shoulders.

It only two arms on each side though.

I assumed my battle posture while holding two hammered-shaped Thousand Arms on both my hands.

Like a baseball bat striking a ball away, I struck that chimera away with my hammer.

It's a bumpy and steep uphill road.

The chimera that was struck away by my hammer started to roll down the hill.

After rolling and rolling, it tried to stop itself by grabbing onto something.

However, he ended up grabbing other chimeras who were only trying to make their way up.

Now the other chimeras, which were grabbed by this chimera, all lost their balance and started rolling down the steep hill. And those chimeras bumped into few other chimeras while rolling down, so now the number of chimeras falling and rolling down increased exponentially.

Here and there, there were chimeras who were attempting to stop themselves by grabbing onto some trees or stones, but it was a useless attempt since they were rolling down at such a velocity that it was impossible.

Their attempts to save themselves only caused more mayhem, as the trees and stone they grabbed onto were uprooted from ground and were now tumbling down along with them.

Chimeras continued to tumble further and further down.

It was like a domino effect; by striking away one chimera, now all of them were rolling down the hill. There they were.

Just like how a small snowball becomes bigger and bigger when you roll it, the amount of chimeras rolling down were exponentially expanding.

Since I can't quite call them a snow ball... let me just call it a chimera ball.

The chimera ball has rolled down and down the slopes, now they have returned to the flat field where they've started.

The chimera ball was now as big as a house.

And I can guess that the pressure they're adding onto each other's bodies must be quite heavy, not to mention how painful it would be when their massive bodies are thrown heavily against each other.

Even though their bodies are solid as rocks, it must hurt.

[Level up!]

They won't resist death.

Considering the fact that I leveled up right before clearing the 19th floor stage, and I leveled up just now by in one single attack, this is an unbelievable achievement.

Of course it didn't mean that I have completely stopped all of their attacks.

The chimeras were climbing up the whole mountain in all directions.

The horde that was rolled off the hill was only a small portion of their army.

But, now I've figured a very good method for hunting.

I had to reach level 51 in order to be eligible for the level up reward anyways.

My new objective has been set: I will aim to go beyond level 51 before I clear the 20th floor stage.

Chapter 145

Tutorial 20th Floor (5)

Drinking the potions was definitely a good choice. I could clearly experience the effect.

I drank a few potions including the ones that strengthened my power and agility stats, in addition to two other tonic-type potions which are supposedly beneficial for my health.

It didn't look like much of a difference when I looked at my final stats.

I only became a little bit faster, and a little stronger.

But those tiny enhancements have enabled me to bring the most important plan in this battle to realization: to attack before attempting to defend, and to stay clear of the enemies' attack before making a move.

The attack that would have missed the enemy now spears through their vital points.

Including these results, the absorption of potions has made this battle much easier and convenient for me.

“Phew.”

I breathed a sigh while watching the giant chimera ball rolling down the steep hill.

I was dealing with them pretty easily since I took advantage of the steep hill and the fact that the enemies were standing very close to one other; it just made the whole chimera ball thing a lot easier, in addition to the potion's effects streamlining my movements.

I killed at least a million chimeras in just the first three hours.

I think it's a pretty impressive record.

I have already exceeded my initial expectations, which was only to annoy them to hell and slow them down before they could even arrive at the front of the fortress.

But it seemed like the fun, easy chimera hunting was over now.

The chimeras had completely stopped marching towards me.

I assume they've finally figured out that it's much more efficient to deal with me first than to indiscriminately charge the fortress.

Not bad at all.

My objective is to prevent them from conquering the fortress for 10 days exactly, no less and no more: exactly ten days.

If they decide to create a battlefield here with me in a place far, far away from the fortress, then it will be in my favor.

The chimeras stopped marching, but they didn't immediately attack me.

Instead, they took a step back, moving farther away from me.

They are surrounding me in big circle while maintaining a certain distance away from me.

It's approximately 200 meters.

And then they distanced themselves from each other, and lowered their posture.

"What the heck is going on now, huh?"

Nobody answered my mumbling, of course.

The chimeras kept on doing whatever they were doing.

I guess they finally learned their lesson and were trying to prevent themselves from rolling down the steep hills this time.

If they're maintaining that large of a space between each other, even if the front line falls off, the back line would be able to catch them and set them upright.

Since their muscle strength is unbelievably strong, they'd be able to catch anyone easily even if I hit them off really hard.

And if that's the case, the next thing they'd bring to me is-.

'Boom!'

One giant chimera jumped over all the other chimeras, occupying my field of vision.

I knew it. If they've created a circular ring, the next thing to appear is obviously a player.

This black chimera has a beast's head.

His head, arms and legs, and whole body were all black.

It wasn't painted; the skin itself was just naturally black colored.

His head and body figure reminded me of a black jaguar.

If it weren't for the sewing marks and uneven body parts, I would've mistakenly thought he was beastman, and not a chimera.

Indeed, this chimera was very well-made.

"I knew something was up, they suddenly wised up and reacted to my attack wisely," I murmured to myself. "Definitely a commander nearby."

“Human.”

This one talks.

“Human. What is a human doing in a place like this? There is no way a soldier of empire would have come to this mountain already.”

Well, he speaks well.

Let me try to communicate.

I needed some information anyways; plus I’m sort of really curious.

“I don’t belong to the empire’s army. I just happen to be here by coincidence.”

“Then. Then may I ask why you are here?”

Wow, he is awfully polite; that’s totally unexpected.

And he talks in a far better manner than the dwarfs.

He seems to stutter a little when he talks, but his method of speech is good enough.

Unlike the other chimeras, who seem like they are only half-way to their completed form, this one has one completed figure, and seems to possess great intellect as well.

“To temporarily protect the dragon’s inheritance.”

The jaguar Chimera was silently deep in thought for a while.

“For how long are you planning on protecting the dragon’s inheritance?”

“For exactly 10 days.”

“No, No good. The army of the empire would be here by then. Could you please open the way for us? I beg of you.”

This is unbelievably surprising.

When I first saw chimeras, I didn't expect us to be able to converse like this.

And he wasn't even threatening me; he was asking in a very polite and gentle manner.

“Could you tell me why you want that damn inheritance?”

“If, if I tell you, would you give it to us?”

“Nope.”

The jaguar chimera's facial expression had hardened into a grim expression.

The black pupil of his beastly yellow eye's narrowed like an angry bull.

I slightly switched my foot position, and prepared for a fight that could happen any second.

“Then, then why are you asking me that question?”

The reason was quite simple.

“I am curious.”

The jaguar chimera's face turned even more frightening.

I didn't know it was possible for his face to frown to a greater degree it already was.

Impressive.

One more thing that surprised me was the fact that he eventually answered me even though he was growling at me.

“To get our, our humanity back.”

Humanity?

“We are human.”

“Dude, your joke isn’t funny at all.”

At this point his face was thoroughly contorted.

* * *

The jaguar chimera began to speak his story.

He told me how they were originally human, but unfortunately got kidnapped by black magicians and transformed into hideous-looking monsters.

And he also told me about what kind of life they were forced to live on as monsters.

He told me all about that painful past, and its sorrow.

He told me that now there are only few Chimeras including himself who still remember their former lives.

He said that the other Chimeras have completely forgotten about their past now and they only thoughtlessly follow his orders.

He also mentioned the fact that even though the black magicians are all executed now, they’ve left such a grave curse on the chimeras; chimeras that don’t have self-awareness are now indiscreetly expanding their numbers through meaningless reproduction.

And he said that he’d finally made up his mind, after seeing the monstrous-looking offspring endlessly coming to life.

He said he decided to end it all.

He said he decided to take the dragon's inheritance in order to become a human, and abandon their hideous monster-like selves.

He said that was his final decision.

That was his side of the story.

I felt one thing, after listening to his long life story.

I felt like this story was something he'd been waiting to tell somebody for a long time.

I could tell that he thought through about how to tell this story to someone over and over.

He wanted to tell somebody, somebody who was not a chimera.

I can't imagine how much he wanted to justify himself, and to be comforted by someone.

I'm not so sure about any of this anymore.

That was all I felt.

Nothing else really.

"That's entertaining."

"What, what is?"

"So after the dragon died, the dwarfs seem to want to become dragon soldiers by using the dragon's inheritance. They don't seem to realize that even if they successfully become dragon soldiers, the dragon that they devoted themselves to has already died and gone."

"That's right, right. They dream of something meaningless."

“And for you chimeras, when the empire killed all the black magicians, you started dreaming of becoming a human again by using the dragon’s inheritance, even though the other chimeras have gone too far from being able to return to normal human lives.”

Now the jaguar Chimera’s eyes were becoming bloodshot.

I wondered why they didn’t choose to commit suicide instead while I was staring at the jaguar chimera that was low-key growling at me.

They could’ve committed suicide after killing all of the brethren who aren’t self-aware anymore.

If they did it then, they might have been able to realize that they have a hint of humanity left in themselves, and that they have some dignity left as well. Then, they would’ve been able to rest in peace.

People often talk about suicide as if it’s some sort of an escape designed for weak cowards.

They talk as if it’s the act of giving up every possible future opportunity just because you are unable to handle a tiny bit of temporary pressure.

But in reality, death offers a great rest for someone whose life has been put through horrifying conditions.

A person whose life has been put in those terrible conditions can’t shake themselves of the temptation of ending life and becoming free easily.

Surviving in a meaningless and equally worthless life is more anguishing than any temporary pain, and even the pain that comes through and after death.

I know this because I am a survivor myself who is still alive despite harming myself on multiple occasions.

Keeping yourself from committing suicide is not an easy thing to do.

Maybe that's the reason why the chimeras have created one definite goal to achieve instead, and started to become overly obsessive about it.

They are obsessed with their long-lost, now nonexistent humanity.

They must have put their lives on the line to achieve their dream.

That objective must be the one and only reason why they're still alive and breathing.

But humanity is something that is hard to maintain, even as a human.

Even though they somehow gain the ownership of the necklace and awaken its hidden powers, that wouldn't be enough to fully transform them back into humans.

The chimeras might think that the necklace will solve all their lives' problems and set them free, but I definitely do not agree with that.

Not even a God can do such thing for them; what makes them think a necklace can accomplish it?

They might gain some sort of human features on the outside, but they'd still be a monster hiding under imitation human skin.

Just like what the jaguar chimera has just said about the dwarfs, they themselves also carry a very meaningless desire.

"Wha, Wha, Why?"

"Why what?"

"Are we that disgusting? Do you despise us that much? Why are you humiliating us with such cruel words with such conviction, when you have just met us and barely even know who we are?"

I remained silent for a while after hearing this from the jaguar chimera.

And I had to admit it.

It was true that I disliked the chimeras and the dwarves equally.

It's because they shared one thing in common.

They both wanted to change who they were and how much they were worth, just through ownership over a dragon's inheritance.

Another thing they shared in common was the fact that their creator has set their limitation by birth, which limits their purposes in life as well.

The chimeras were created by black magicians to be used for warfare and destruction.

The dwarfs had been created by the dragon to do tedious work as minor laborers.

Now I've finally figured out why I highly dislike them, especially the dwarfs.

I stopped thinking.

I stopped myself from being distracted by all these irrelevant thoughts, clearing my mind.

Now is not the time to think about these unimportant things. I've got a battle to fight.

These are inappropriate thoughts to have right before the beginning of the battle.

"Name. What is your name. Human."

"Lee Ho-Jae."

Will he laugh at my name too?

Since he has a jaguar head, maybe he might laugh too.

Thankfully, he didn't.

Instead, he screeched with a voice loud enough to be echoed through the whole mountain like thunder.

“Lee Ho-Jae! I won't forget your god damn name! The name of a heartless human who humiliated us all!”

I almost lost my hearing, oh my gosh.

My ears were ringing.

Especially because I was paying him more attention to listen to what he was about to say.

“We will kill you, AND we will get our humanity back!”

Followed by his scream, millions of other Chimeras started to chant at the same time.

I felt the ground shaking as they were chanting.

As tension increased, I became more excited as well.

Their yelling and screaming weren't only meant to stir up their fervor for battle.

They actually created some sort of magical buff effect.

The jaguar chimera has furtively disappeared from the sight.

He no longer had such angry facial expression; instead, he seemed like he somehow managed to find his calm.

Among the chimeras that were forming the circle ring, the front line began attacking me.

The back line chimeras took one step forward, and stayed still in their positions.

I guess they were not just any normal monsters, but monsters designed specifically for warfare.

Either that or they were specifically trained to function in this way.

I activated my Soul Steal skill, Indomitability skill, coercion skills and changed each Thousand Arms into a long sword and a shield. I fought against the frontline chimeras that were readying their attacks.

While I was killing the Chimeras one by one very calmly, the second row of chimeras began their attack.

As soon as the second row started their attacks, the third row chimeras took one step forward, made another ring, and stayed in their positions until they were ready to jump at me.

I guess they're trying to attack me row by row, like this.

I guess it's not bad.

I like it like this as well.

The advantage of this fighting strategy was the fact that I can manipulate time to tire them out slowly without giving them time to rest; this way, I become closer to winning this battle.

“Kiiiiiiiiiek!”

One chimera jumped at me with his cut-up arms, I gave his head a nice slice.

The chimera lost its head and its balance, collapsing onto the ground motionlessly.

That's when I activated my Soul Steal skill.

If I activate this skill, my health and vitality will recharge back to normal.

As long as I have my soul steal skill and its health regeneration effect and plenty of enemies that I can cut into pieces, I won't be the one that dies of exhaustion first.

The chimeras continued to execute their enveloping attack seamlessly like well-trained war soldiers.

I need to draw a very clear perimeter.

I need to ensure that I have a wide enough perimeter to act in.

I need a perimeter I can protect myself in.

After continuing this battle for a while, the enemies had begun to grasp vague line I've set.

And then they had nevertheless begun to cross over that line daringly.

I mustn't prioritize certain enemies over others.

If I were to make moves against the ones who've crossed the line and are hesitantly stand and wait for me to come at them first, they will look for the moment I am defenseless and attack me in the moment.

So, I need to make a smart move.

I need to analyze their unique characteristics, skills, and objectives.

I need to be aware of each and every one of them and their movements; I need to fight against them all at the same time.

In the correct order.

I need to make quick decisions about who to defend myself against first, which one to stay away from first, and which ones to attack first.

I am trying to solve a problem without giving a wrong answer, not even once.

That's why it's very crucial to stay extremely focused on the battle around me, rather than focusing on maintaining an unscratched body.

And of course, I need to be wise enough to be able to save my mana and energy efficiently while battling them.

I am quite confident in a battle like this.

Very. Confident.

There was an incident once when I let one of the enemies successfully jump onto me.

In the past, there were several incidents where I wasn't able to completely defeat the enemy.

There were other incidents where my health was too low and I had to hide away momentarily.

But never have I ever, lost in a battle.

I am the living proof that such a defeat has never happened, not even once.

I swung my sword.

I slit the throat of one of the chimeras standing slightly outside my mental perimeter.

He was attempting to attack my blind side, but I killed him before he could do anything to me.

Someone was swinging an axe behind me.

Instead of turning my body backward to block the hammer, I opened Talaria's Wings and dodged the axe's swing.

At the same time, I sliced a chimera's body into two parts.

There was another axe coming from my right side.

I ignored that attack and positioned by shield to cover my left side.

Using my momentum from swinging my sword, I did a half-spin to greet the next chimera.

Blood spat out from the body of the chimera which I had just cut in half in a blink of an eye.

The giant chimeras began to collapse onto the ground one by one.

They became an obstacle that blocked the other chimeras from running towards me directly.

And an increased number of dead corpses laying around me became some sort of a trench for me unintentionally.

I was able to kill them one by one much more smoothly now that I had a trench that protected me from Chimeras vigorously jumping onto me from my blind side.

If they slow down their running speed in order not to stumble upon those corpses, I can jump on them before they can jump on me.

At one point, they finally began to realize their disadvantage, and finally stopped themselves from drawing any attacks all together.

“Keeeeeeeeek!”

“Kiiiiiek!”

They were only screeching weirdly now, outside of my attack range.

Are they waiting for their commanders' new order?

I screamed right back at them.

“AHHHHHHHHH!”

[Soul Cry]

I completely ignored the fact that my skill effect was dismantling the scrum, and I started laughing joyously at the chimeras, which began to jump at me again.

[PR: For all the people that are not fans of American football or rugby, a “scrum” is basically describing the line of players before they smash into each other.]

* * *

After the sunset, the chimeras had made their way back to their base, away from the mountain.

I sat down on the ground, watching them march back toward their base wherever it was.

My bum got wet.

It was mostly because of the blood of dead chimeras, but it was also mixed with some of my blood.

I opened a bottle of Elixir potion with shaking hands, and drank it all.

My body was full of wounds.

After I killed more than a thousand chimeras, their method of attack changed.

Their immature formation or traps didn't work on me as long as I had the Soul Cry skill.

Their new attacking method was to continue attacking without giving me a second to relax, while placing a few outstandingly talented fighters here and there.

Since they were hard to distinguish, I faced several near-death scenarios.

I stood up after the Elixir potion's healing took effect, and I was able to move my legs again finally.

I walked toward the mountain top, and as I stepped onto the dead corpses, they tumbled down.

The corpses rolled down to the bottom of the mountain, making a loud rolling stone noise.

Instead of stepping onto any more corpses, which would only destabilize the mountain of corpses and create unnecessarily loud noises, I decided to fly with Talaria's Wings.

When we look at today's result, it seems like I had unilaterally slaughtered them all, but that's not entirely true.

I experienced my limits today.

No, I was pushed over my limits.

I really had very close calls with death; I could've died, for real.

The enemies must have been able to analyze my power and strength fully today.

They will prepare a new battle plan for tomorrow.

And they still have so many chimeras left.

The number of chimeras is way beyond my prediction.

The battle tomorrow will be much more dangerous.

But I decided to look at this situation in a positive light.

What I felt while fighting against them wasn't a lack of improvement

on my part.

I only felt like I was lacking on some aspects, but only because I haven't been put into rigorous battles in the past stages and for that reason I wasn't completely used to battlefields anymore.

But I felt it all coming back very quickly, all thanks to this fierce battle against the chimeras.

Tomorrow's battle will definitely be more dangerous than today's, but I trust myself to overcome it as well.

Regardless, I can make this defense into guerrilla war anytime if I feel like I am not good enough.

I could return back to the fortress in a better mood.

I was very happy, since I faced and overcame such critical and dangerous situations. I was so proud of myself and it felt great indeed.

As soon as I got back to the fortress, one dwarf attempted to communicate with me, instantly ruining my mood.

“Big...”

“Big?”

“Pro...”

I waited patiently.

I waited patiently until the dwarf had managed to say until “Big problem. Liza-“ before I realized that it was about the lizardman, Iddy.

“D...”

“Idy what! What happened to...”

“Man...”

God damn it, please talk faster, please.

“Is...”

F*** this shit.

Chapter 146

Tutorial 20th Floor (6)

[TL Note: We're going to change up a few of the terms and we'd like to know whether or not we should keep the new terms or go back to the old ones. The new skill name will appear first and the term previously used will be in parentheses. Let us know in our Discord or in the comments section.]

**Changed Dragon Soldier --> Dragon Troopers*

**Changed Soul Steal --> Siphon Soul*

**Dead Summoning --> Summon Dead]*

"Da..."

Damn it.

I listened to the Dwarves until the end but it would have been better if I had just found out myself.

I flew with Talaria's Wings once more.

I spread my mana aggressively and located Idy.

First, I searched the graveyard that contained the Dragon's Inheritance, which Idy had been guarding.

Fortunately, Idy was in the vicinity.

I flew towards her after I ascertained her location.

A large group of dwarves was gathered at the entrance of the graveyard.

I pushed them out of my way, one by one, and went into the graveyard. In a corner of the cemetery, I saw a few dwarves whisper and lay out some thick gruel.

The runts had only been tasked with being on watch, so they were becoming impatient.

I used my Overpower (Coercion) skill.

The once bustling cemetery became silent as the dwarves fell onto the floor face down.

Now it was quiet, since the dwarves were on the floor. At least above the knees.

I could finally check on Idy.

She had a warm dressing tied onto her body and there were signs of medicine being applied here and there.

"Keruk. Captain, you're finally here?" Idy said.

"What... how did this happen?" I said, examining the area around the wound.

"Keruk, keruk. This is... I'm embarrassed."

After I finished looking over her injury, Idy told me the source of her embarrassment.

I lifted the bandage slightly and I saw a black "something" squirming around the wound.

A squirming black energy.

It was something I'd seen several times on the 9th, 10, and 12th floors.

This was Idy's skill.

"I guess if I were to give you an excuse, it'd be that I had too much on my mind. Keruk. Plus, the chimeras look repulsive. It was strange that they had four limbs, but they also used strange weapons as well."

"Strange weapons?"

"Keruk. They should be buried under Chimeras' bodies. Be careful if you have to fight them later. Keruk."

Amongst the Chimeras I had fought today, I hadn't encountered any that used unusual weapons.

The Chimeras mostly charged in barehanded or they simply used standard weapons.

The Elite Chimeras that appeared occasionally likewise did the same, even though they had superior skills

Seriously, I'm really exhausted. This wasn't really a battle, but an ambush.

"And..."

"And?"

"Keruk."

"Idy?"

"They said that they wouldn't have to live like beasts anymore if they get that necklace. I don't know if that's actually true, but that's what the Chimeras said. And... they said they were humanity's enemy. When I heard that... my hands slowed. Keruk."

So it was complicated.

At the same time, I felt dizzy.

They had hurt Idy this much over such a trifling issue.

By piecing together the Dragon Troops' complicated story, I figured out that the Chimeras and dwarves sought the necklace because it had the ability to evolve them.

However, that method was a problem.

It wouldn't simply grant superior strength, but advance their species to a higher level.

If that was possible...

What would a Dwarf, which had a higher class existence than a Chimera look like?

What would a Dragon Trooper, which had a lower class existence than a human look like?

Would they simply change into the form that they desired?

No, it was a pointless assumption.

They may gain even greater strength, deeper wisdom, or even a remarkable physical appearance, but in the end, their identity wouldn't change so easily.

Let's assume that a chimera regains their human body and blends into society.

It works at their appointed workplace and live a normal life, so nobody would be able to tell that that person used to be a chimera.

Everyone except for themselves.

They'll remember, deep down, that they used to be a Chimera and their own words will act as a painful reminder.

It's a task too difficult for one person to do, yet they claim that they'll accomplish the task tens of millions cannot?

That's impossible.

There are only two solutions.

They either accept that they're not monsters or they kill themselves.

The Chimeras laughed at the dwarves' desire to become Dragon Troopers.

It was pointless.

Even I agreed with them.

However, was there really a difference between the dwarves and the chimeras? One side wanted to become Dragon Troopers, while the other sought to become human.

If a god saw them, how would we he feel?

If a dragon saw the dwarves, it would likewise feel indifferent.

"Because of that, I got stabbed like an idiot. Maybe I saw myself in them," Idy said.

I restrained myself from saying what I really wanted to say.

Instead, I asked a different question.

"It's a skill, right?"

"Yep. Keruk."

I momentarily cleared my head.

"I'll remove the bandage now. I'll need to... examine it a bit."

I wrapped my fingertips with mana and cut off the bandage. I carefully took it off but Idy seemed to be in pain and groaned.

After that...

What do I do now?

First, I took out a bottle of elixir.

"Keruk. Keruk. Captain."

"What?"

"Isn't that expensive? Don't waste it," she said, embarrassed.

I felt like I had hit rock bottom.

This was Idy, who had first appeared on the 5th floor.

I had summoned her to the 20th floor and given her an important job because I trusted her.

If I were to give another reason, it would be because I wanted to see her.

She was with me from the start to the end of the stage. The person who was always with me was Idy.

I had cleared several stages with her and I had grown considerably since the 5th floor.

Although the 20th floor was extremely difficult, I thought Idy easily be able to deal with it easily.

Honestly, when she was on the 12th floor, she was pretty relaxed.

Idy had two skills.

One of them she used on the 5th floor; it changed her body into smoke, allowing her to avoid an enemy's attacks.

The other skill was one couldn't use on the 5th floor, though it was an attack that she could use on the 9th, 10th, and 12th floors.

She would be enclosed by a black, death energy that would attack her opponent.

However, there was a problem: if the death energy stuck to the body, there was nothing one could do.

While it had its limitations and it took some time compared to the nearly-invincible evasion skill, it had the potential to inflict fatal wounds.

I thought I would continue to get help from Idy even on the higher floors, not just the 20th floor.

But she had been hurt by her own skill.

Idy had already tested it on the 12th floor.

She cut her fingertip and the death energy remained in it.

Elixirs were useless.

I had to cut my own finger to shake off the death energy, but I drank an elixir and my finger grew back.

It might've been possible to treat Idy the same way, but it wasn't her fingertip this time.

She had a long injury that stretched from her heart to her stomach. The wound had definitely reached her inner organs as well.

I raised my hand and took a closer look.

The wound was too deep.

Even if the death energy wasn't there, it would still be a fatal injury.

An incision wasn't possible.

"Keruk.No matter how I look at it, there's no hope," Idy said.

That's also how I saw it.

I shook my head and cast out the thoughts deep in my head.

Some time ago, I began to think of only one thing when someone was dying.

Excessive bleeding, shock, difficulty breathing, ruptured inner organs. When I saw those symptoms, I knew the person was simply a corpse.

They'll die soon, they're nothing more than a corpse.

Get up and leave. There's nothing you can do, they're a corpse.

I swallowed down those thoughts from the depths of my mind.

As I stifled those thoughts, something else came out.

I roughly wiped my tears.

"Does it... hurt?" I asked.

"Keruk. Keruk. Are you worried? You know that this skill doesn't deliver any pain. I just feel the pain from the cut."

I went silent for a moment.

I opened my mouth to speak but nothing came out.

"Keruk. Anyway, there're always risks on the battlefield. It was fatal for me to get hit by my own ability like an idiot, but I have a lot of other injuries. It was really close. Then again, if that were true, I would've been able to get treatment. But starting tomorrow, I won't be of much help in the battle."

'Then again, if that were true, I would've been able to get treatment,' she had said.

I didn't just call Idy to fight.

Honestly, calling her for help was just an excuse.

It's just... when I came back, I thought it would be nice to have someone to eat with and talk to. That's all I really wanted.

"Keruk. Keruk. Actually, it went well."

I hid my shaking hands behind me.

"Idy... Idy. Don't worry too much. I'll immediately summon you..." I rambled.

Suddenly, my head turned to the side.

When I got ahold of myself, I saw Idy's rustling tail on the side of my face.

"Keruk. Get ahold of yourself, Captain. I can't help but worry."

Although I got smacked by Idy's tail, I couldn't understand her intentions.

"Captain. Why are you worrying about me?"

"...What?"

"Captain, are you possibly afraid of me dying?"

I was silent once again.

"Captain, don't you already know? We sometimes avoided the subject but it doesn't change the facts."

I remained silent.

"Captain, I'm already dead."

I really couldn't do anything but stay silent.

"How do you feel, Captain?"

* * *

During the long silence, Idy began speaking again.

"Keruk. First, take the unconscious dwarves outside. If we leave them like that, they might suffocate."

Just like she said, I moved the unconscious dwarves outside.

"I moved them all."

"Keruk. Come back after you put a blanket on the unconscious ones, at the bare minimum."

Like she said, I draped a blanket over the unconscious ones and laid them outside the cemetery before coming back.

"Keruk. Keruk."

"I'm done."

"Good job, Captain. Now... shall we talk? Also, I'll leave behind a request and some advice at the end of the talk. It looks like I don't have much time left, so let's start now."

I nodded.

"Keruk. How should I start... I kept thinking about it, but it's a difficult topic."

Idy 'keruked' for a moment, thought about it, and then began to speak.

"Let's continue our discussion. Keruk. I'm already dead."

Idy spoke calmly but her words slowly pierced my heart.

"One life, one soul. It's something that is said in our tribe. However, what about me? I have only one soul but I have many lives. Maybe I don't have a life or a soul. Keruk."

"Idy..."

"Captain, you always regretted killing me, even though I told you not to. Keruk. I never died to you. My death happened before then. Keruk."

It was something she had once talked about on the 10th floor.

"Of course, I don't know how I died. However, that..."

Idy's face froze.

Her face went blank.

The system disapproved of her words.

She grinded her teeth and bit on her blood.

"Keruk. I'll have to pass over that. Hoo."

She took a deep breath and continued.

"Captain, I know that you treat everything you meet in the Tutorial as if it were real. You even treat lifeless beings as if they were real and just brush past everything to clear, as if you were in a play. It's as if this has become the real world to you and we've become real people to you. That's why you feel happiness and sadness from the people you meet here. You feel anguished when you have to kill an enemy. Keruk. But if you were to challenge them again, they'd look exactly

the same. Keruk."

I was silent.

Idy, too, was silent for a moment.

It persisted to the point where we became self-aware of how much time had passed in silence. Then, Idy continued.

"It'll be easier if you ignore it all. They're not real, so don't think. Just cut them down, and pass them. It'll be easier for you. But you don't do that, do you, Captain? You feel uneasy, don't you? Keruk. Captain, you think that, just like us, you might have died, and only your soul is left roaming around."

She's right.

As time passed, my suspicions lessened somewhat, but lately, my suspicions have returned.

I also feel like I'm a puppet in some kind of play.

"I'll have the change the topic of discussion first. Keruk."

Idy raised her hand and grabbed mine.

My hands were still shaking a little.

"Keruk. Captain, I'm sorry to say this but you have to look at reality. I'm just an item."

An item.

When I heard that, I thought of the unconscious dwarves outside.

"The only Idy you know is me. But how many Idaltarus, who are killing challengers and conversely getting killed, do you think there are on the 5th floor, Captain?"

[PR Note: Just a reminder that Idaltaru is Idy's real name, or at least the name the system identifies her with. "Idaltarus" is the plural form referring to multiple "hers."]

I knew.

I thought about it countless times but it was a subject that troubled me.

Idy's face went blank again.

She would intentionally say things that were restricted and when she was reprimanded by the system, she would experience a piercing headache.

However, Idy didn't suppress her feelings.

"I was lucky, wasn't I? Because of you, Captain, I became self-aware of my condition and I was able to spend my time happily with you. I'm really thankful to you, Captain."

She let go of my hand and raised her own.

She wiped my tears as she 'keruked', and laughed.

"I'm sorry, but this is the end. It's really too bad that I can't talk to you anymore. Keruk."

The gods and the system didn't want her to talk anymore.

Idy couldn't even talk about the subject indirectly and couldn't remind me about it.

The only thing left for me to do is to find out what she wanted to say.

"Now it's time for me to be a bit shameless, huh. Keruk." She candidly laughed.

"Captain," she called.

"What?"

"Captain, I like you."

She 'keruked' and laughed.

"You probably do too. Though it might be a different form of affection, at least you like me as a friend, as a comrade."

I think of you as family.

"I have a request and some advice. It would seem like... I'll give you some advice first. I heard about your growth yesterday."

I nodded.

"Keruk. I think that your growth is lacking. Actually, I think it's being repressed."

"What?"

"Keruk. Keruk. Don't compare yourself to others, Captain. The only one that can compare to you is yourself. Do you think that your growth at its best right now?"

My growth rate is extremely fast.

It's to the point that the system can't keep up.

From the very beginning, I couldn't even be compared to the other challengers. I was at a level that they couldn't even comprehend.

However, I listened to Idy's words attentively.

Last night, I had told Idy, in fair detail, about the progress of my growth.

If she was the one saying my growth was lacking, it was definitely lacking.

"Next up is my request. Keruk."

"Ask me anything," I spoke calmly, after I had relaxed a bit.

"Sorry about this, but I have two."

"Don't be sorry. It's fine if there're more."

"Keruk.Keruk."

I didn't feel burdened by her requests. Rather, I hated the fact that she felt embarrassed about her requests.

"How many more times can you use the Summon Dead skill?"
(Summoning Dead)

"2 more times."

"You had less remaining than I thought. It looks like my request will be more shameless than I thought. Keruk."

"What's wrong?"

"Don't summon me anymore, Captain."

I've been shocked a lot today but nothing could've prepared me for this.

I couldn't help but ask. What did she mean?

"Idy. What are you talking about?"

Her eyes spun and she bowed her head furtively.

"Idy!"

"Instead, instead... When I become a single Idy, rather than those countless Idaltarus... When I'm freed of all my restraints. When I can

exist as just me, as just "Idy", can you summon me then?"

Now I could finally read her expression.

Due to the shape of their head, when a lizardman bows, it doesn't hide their face at first.

"Of course, I know it's impossible. I also know how useful the Summon Dead skill can be..." Idy rambled.

"I got it, Idy. I'll do as you ask. Don't worry," I replied.

Idy cleared her throat and stared at the plain ceiling.

"Keruk. Keruk. I'm not worried. I trust you. You'll definitely succeed. The only thing you needed, Captain was... No. no, it's nothing."

"What is it?"

Idy continuously moved her head side to side and slowly turned her head, avoiding my eyes.

She was really embarrassed.

Now that I think about it, it's the first time since the 5th floor she's asked me for a favor.

She had told me all about her tribe's characteristics, so it was definitely a rare case.

"Keruk. Keruk. I knew that my time was tight, but I still have a little bit of time left. My heart rate is slowing down, though. Captain."

"What?"

"Have you calmed down a bit?"

"Yeah."

"You sure are a strange boss. Keruk. So how about talking some more with the time I have left?

"All right, what do you want to talk about?"

"Keruk. Keruk. What do you mean? Anything. Do you not want to?"

"Sounds good."

It'd be great if we could talk while eating, but Idy wasn't capable of eating anything in her current condition.

It didn't matter.

Eating wasn't important right now.

* * *

It wasn't hard to figure out what Idy had wanted to say.

Because in the end, she had told me everything she wanted to.

It was obvious what Idy wanted.

Her condition to summon her again...

I needed to get her out of the tutorial system completely and free her of her restraints before I could summon her again.

She didn't simply want me to summon her after clearing the Tutorial.

If I did, then I'd just be summoning an Idaltaru from the 5th floor who was under the Tutorial's jurisdiction.

I had to completely pull her out of the system. If that doesn't work, I'll just have to free everyone in this Tutorial. With that, I satisfy all of her conditions.

But I don't know how to do it.

There's far too much I don't know about the system.

Even if I learned all I could about the system, I still wouldn't be even be able to comprehend the basics of the system and how it works.

But now, I knew the path that I needed to take.

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

Idy said my growth was lacking.

My growth certainly isn't lacking.

I had already surpassed the system's guidelines and I didn't face many difficulties in the party stages.

It's probably going to be easy to clear the Tutorial.

However, if I want more, then my growth is definitely lacking.

I expected nothing less of Idy. She knew me well.

Idy's trial was much more interesting than the Tutorial.

I saw the necklace floating in the center of the cemetery.

I snatched the floating necklace and put it around my neck.

I didn't have any reason to hide the necklace or face off against any enemies right now.

Besides, it's safest here. After all, I'm here.

If I take the necklace, I won't have to continue the mission. I won't have to split the single necklace and I can draw out the remaining chimeras.

When I went outside, I was met with the confused faces of the dwarves.

As always, I don't like them.

But when I put myself in their shoes, I don't feel unpleasant anymore.

I've been told many times as to why the gods brought me here.

To become a disciple of a god.

That was all.

That wasn't my intent.

I was reborn here.

The tutorial revitalized me and brought me new life.

It was a misfortune but at the same time, it brought me happiness.

I was thankful for the Tutorial.

I didn't worry about getting out quickly. Rather, I worried about what I would do after I got out.

I secretly wished that the Tutorial would go on forever.

I hadn't become self-aware until I had my talk with Idy.

Now there was another common feature between the dwarves and me.

But there was also a clear difference now.

Instead of listening to the dwarves' stuttering, I flew around with Talaria's Wings.

I flew away from the mountains and towards the plains.

I flew above the chimeras that filled up the plains.

I wonder how many there are...

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

I received a message from the gods and descended onto the ground.

I fell towards the ground at full speed.

I don't know what my full power is.

I've never tested it before.

That's why I've always felt so uneasy, like I was suffocating.

I never met a suitable opponent and I've never been able to wield my full strength.

However, I could gauge my strength in a different way.

[Indomitable]

[Iron wall]

[Heightened Senses]

[Battle Concentration]

I used my skills and drew out mana to protect my body.

Kwang!

When I crashed onto the ground, the landscape around me erupted in a cloud of dirt.

I monitored the situation.

My arms and legs, head, inner organs, and magic circuits were all functioning optimally.

Even the durable Talaria's Wings in my body felt a shock when I exceeded its max speed.

The chimeras around the impact point looked as though they were about to faint from shock.

The other chimeras further away from the impact point couldn't get a hold of themselves and merely looked on vacantly.

We can't have that, now can we?

"Uah!"

[Soul Cry]

[Siphon Soul] (Soul Steal)

[Overpower] (Coercion)

Soul Cry aggravated the half-awake chimeras and they started to dash towards me.

Of course, they wouldn't be able to tell how dangerous I was.

I coated my sword with the largest amount of aura I was capable of.

It was two times longer than even a swordmaster's aura.

I surrounded my shield and armor with aura as well.

I should discard my previous fighting style.

I fiercely dashed forward.

The chimeras crashed against my shield.

The chimeras attacked me one after another and I was pushed back.

I swung my sword in the largest, longest arcs possible.

I formed an Aura on my longsword three to four times longer than before and immediately severed the chimeras' huge bodies.

I advanced forward. Only forward.

The chimeras charged at me and I followed suit.

I should save as much mana and stamina as possible and calmly and carefully maintain my distance... I threw away this approach.

I charged boldly without holding back.

I had already prepared plenty of defensive measures.

There's no way that I'd run out of mana or stamina.

As long as I dealt with my enemies, Siphon Soul would allow me to recover faster than I would expend my mana and stamina.

"Uah!"

I relentlessly used Soul Cry in order to call all the chimeras towards me.

Blood spurted out.

The highly compressed Aura at the edge of my armor and my sword started to swell.

The aura blazed on my bloodied sword.

The burnt smell of flesh stunk.

Amidst the horrid stench of blood and the enemy's screams of agony...

"Uah!"

...I'm still alive.

* * *

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 20th Floor, Clear.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 4000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 4000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 3700 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 6300 points have been deducted.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[The God of Slowness is satisfied.]

[The God of Adventure is cheering for you.]

[The God of Dueling is satisfied.]

[The God of Death is pleased.]

[The God of Devotion pities someone.]

[The God of Life is displeased with you.]

[The God of Pain is delighted.]

[The God of the Sky is disgusted by you.]

[Based on your play records, additional rewards will be given.]

[The God of Dueling would like to gift you some of his power instead of an additional reward. Would you like to accept?]

[The God of Dueling would like you to become his disciple.]

[The God of Adventure is worried.]

* * *

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 21th Floor, Perfect Clear.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[The God of Death would like you to become his disciple.]

[The God of Adventure is panicking.]

[The God of Slowness is making fun of someone.]

* * *

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 22th Floor, Perfect Clear.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[The God of the Sky is showing an interest in you.]

[The God of Balance is looking at you again.]

[The God of Adventure is really panicking.]

[The God of Slowness snorted.]

* * *

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 23th Floor, Clear.]

* * *

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 24th Floor, Perfect Clear.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 9400 points.]

[Many gods show a react negatively to you. 600 points have been deducted.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple have agreed to a few promises regarding you.]

[The God of Adventure is restless.]

[The God of Slowness is slightly anxious.]

Chapter 147

Tutorial 60th Floor (12)

In the kitchen preparing dinner, the plates rattle and clatter. At the front of the door, the bell goes jingle, jingle," Yong Yong hummed while he sat in front of a floor table.

When did I teach him that song again?

I don't remember.

Maybe that clone bastard taught him.

Yong Yong continued to hum the tune and color on drawing paper with a crayon.

Not too long ago, I sketched Disney animation characters on some drawing paper and made a coloring book for Yong Yong.

Since I had finished teaching Yong Yong magic, I'd teach him whatever he wanted now.

Yong Yong likes coloring books.

He *really* likes coloring princess characters like the Little Mermaid or Cinderella.

Also, he uses the pink crayon a lot.

I secretly felt anxious, even while petting his head.

You're a boy, Yong Yong.

I checked everything.

I changed my mind.

It doesn't matter what my son's tastes are.

Yong Yong is my son regardless of his tastes.

Don't become as uptight as your dad.

I lifted the newspaper instead of groaning and moaning about my problems alone.

This month, the newspaper was shocking starting from the first page.

[Lee Joon Seok has been judged as the first G-Rank Awakened.]

It's definitely been a long time since Lee Joon Seok got out, but it likewise took just as long to decide his rank.

He finally received a G-Rank designation.

It must be considerably shocking even to the outside.

No, it's just as shocking on the inside since the community's making a fuss.

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: Does this make any sense? Was this fabricated?]

[Lee Gook , 99th floor: This is a ranking from the Association. What do you mean by fabricated? Say something that makes sense. Seriously.]

[Jung So Rim, 85th floor: What level was he when he came out, to be G-Rank? From what I remember, the highest Awakened rank is SSS-Rank.]

Nowadays, the Awakened's rank is generally determined by level.

In the beginning, clear difficulty determined ranks.

However, as the difference between the highest Normal-Difficulty Awakened and the lowest Hard-Difficulty Awakened continued to narrow, one's rank would be readjusted based on the Awakened's individual ability.

So now, the Awakeneds' abilities vary continuously. Though it may be difficult to distinguish between the ranks, that's how it is now.

When I was consulted by the government, I also agreed to it.

Truthfully, the Tutorial System also uses levels as its standard and adjusts the difficulty based on level.

The average level of Normal and Hard Difficulty Awakened who make it out of the Tutorial is 40 - 50. Awakened who are level 40 - 50 are considered S-Rank.

If they pass level 51, they're recognized as SS-Rank.

The prominent members of the Hard Difficulty were all SS-Rank.

Amongst the members of the Hard Difficulty, there was a small special minority.

They progressed through the same stages and would perhaps discover a Hidden Piece. They were people with a strange fate.

These people were born with exceptional abilities.

Only those minority were assigned SSS-Rank.

You become SSS-Rank at level 101.

But people widely believed that it was impossible to cross over the wall to SSS-Rank.

There were many people who were SS-Rank, since it encompassed a wide level range of 51 - 91. However, the problem was that you had to start from level 100 for SSS-Rank.

Of course, there was no one who was above level 110 amongst them.

Of course, there'd sometimes be people who expected me to break it when I clear the Hell Difficulty.

However, in the midst of all that, a monster from the Hard Difficulty showed up.

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: They say he's level 201.]

[Kim Myung Min, 90th floor: Did you... say level 201? Is he human?]

[Jung So Rim, 85th floor: That's crazy.]

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: I told you that I don't make things up.]

[Park Joon, 90th floor: In any case, I've decided to leave next year. Even if I leave this year, I'm still old news.]

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: What's your level right now?]

[Park Joon, 90th floor: Me? Well, I guess I'm level 93.]

If you're level 93, say that you're level 93. What the hell do you mean by, 'I guess'.

In the community, Hard Difficulty challengers would converse amongst themselves regarding this or that.

Challengers who were at similar levels usually left the Tutorial at the same time and were typically friendly with one another.

Hard Difficulty, in particular, felt like a club.

[Kim Myung Min, 90th floor: What level was Ho Jae back in day? It might have been several years ago but I think he was over level 200.]

[Lee Gook, 99th floor:... I thought you were just making stuff up but I feel like you're telling the truth.]

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: What level was he? Why haven't I heard about this?]

[Jung So Rim, 85th floor: I remember.]

[Choi Min Hwan, 81st floor: I also remember that he was over level 200.]

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: Even if there's a difference, aren't those two on a similar level? They're both over level 200.]

[Choi Min Hwan, 81st floor: But that was several years ago.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: I'm level 351 right now, kids.]

I drove the community into chaos and let them go at it.

Now that I think about, I remember telling the community that I was level 251.

Lee Joon Seok might've made that his goal. I don't know.

If that 'monster' to level 201 without leveling up but by modifying his level, it meant his actual level was around level 250.

I thought they might've caught up by now.

Until they heard my level.

They were more shocked than Lee Joon Seok thought.

Even so, there's nothing I can do about it.

Let's just finish reading the newspaper.

The next headline was about Lee Joon Seok.

He had joined up with Kim Min Hyuk's clan.

It looks like Korea will go crazy over this.

Kim Min Hyuk is acting contrary to my expectations.

I didn't expect him to enter politics.

Yeah... I'm sure he'll do fine.

There's nothing that a person can do inside but stay still and wait, even if there's something massive happening on the outside.

On the contrary, there was something outside the 60th floor. Its' presence was even stronger this time.

I felt a small hand poke my side.

It was Yong Yong.

"Hm? What's wrong, Yong Yong?"

At some point, he had finished coloring and covered up his drawing paper.

Yong Yong looked at me, lifted my arm, and snuggled into my chest. He sat on one side of my lap and hugged me.

"What's wrong?"

"Dad, when will uncle come back?"

He was talking about my clone bastard.

That guy went to the 61th floor, running away from home like a little girl, and still hadn't come back.

"I wonder. Shouldn't he be back soon?"

Although there hadn't been any word yet, I wasn't really concerned.

In any case, I created that bastard using myself as a model.

He was in the process of developing his own personality, so he was different from me and liked different things, but his very nature didn't change.

I soothed Yong Yong but I detected a strong magical shockwave.

Someone was trying to enter the 60th floor against my will.

An unwelcome guest.

It's really surprising.

Lee Yeon Hee hasn't even come close yet.

Most of the Gods can't enter inside the Tutorial.

The Gods were shackled by several restraints, so they couldn't just do whatever they wanted with the Tutorial.

If one of them wanted to act directly, they'd need the consent of all 100 Gods.

Not too long ago, the Earth Server had over 3000 Gods watching over it.

But now, no God could thoughtlessly take part in the Earth's server.

Therefore, the uninvited guest wasn't a God or their disciples.

There was only one thing it could possibly be.

"Let's go, Yong Yong. I think your uncle is back."

"Really?"

I carried Yong Yong and arrived in the vicinity of the portal.

When I got near, the space started to distort.

My defense mechanisms and my clone bastard's strength were clashing.

You shitty bastard.

I told you to train your magic.

It looks like Yong Yong will catch up soon.

I drew on my magic and lifted some of the barriers.

The distortion in the room ceased and the portal began to activate.

"Uncle!"

My clone bastard appeared above the portal.

He seemed like he was the same as he always was.

Anyway, now I know why the barriers activated.

What could he have been doing until now? He came covered with the Gods' power.

My clone bastard didn't even greet or say anything to Yong Yong. He just strutted over.

I'm feeling uneasy.

That guy's not just some normal crazy bastard.

In the future, I expect a grave situation to occur.

I wondered whether I should block Yong Yong's eyes and ears or whether I should stop my clone bastard from walking.

In the end, I couldn't come to any decision and the clone bastard stopped right in front of Yong Yong and me.

Since his uncle didn't respond, Yong Yong looked taken aback and looked back and forth between me and the clone.

The clone bastard looked a little flushed.

His eye were shining brightly, so it looks what I had feared had come to pass.

"I felt the sunlight on my ears until sunset, a joyous trip"

You crazy fucking bastard.

That's what you say when you're parting ways.

"...C'mon, just do it.They're my favorites lines. "

I should've covered Yong Yong's ears earlier.

Damn it. Damn it. Damn it.

Hey, do you *really* need to do this?

[Please.]

"...I laughed and with a smile just like when I had departed, I returned and found peace."

...I felt like my organs had just been gouged out.

Truthfully, I had already experienced it a few times, so I knew exactly what it felt like.

My mood soured while the clone bastard rejoiced.

"Did you really want to try that that badly?"

The clone bastard nodded and took Yong Yong, who was nestled in my arm, and lifted him up.

"Yong Yong, were you well?"

"Yep!"

I left them to converse between them.

I confirmed that the gods' lingering presence couldn't communicate through the 60th floor.

You have to be meticulous in situations like this.

Also...

"Hey, what could you have possibly been doing in the 61st floor that you'd be so thickly covered with the gods' power?"

I wanted to let him have some more alone time with Yong Yong but I couldn't help asking him.

The way the clone bastard laughed was far too triumphant.

It rubs me the wrong way.

"Well, not much happened."

"Put down Yong Yong for a minute."

I want to sock him once.

Rather than putting him down, he cuddled him instead.

"Nothing really happened. Yep. As soon as I got to the 61st floor, they all began to observe me."

"Watching you? It shouldn't be possible since you're not a challenger."

"Well, I got a message that they seemed to be in agreement on something and it seems that even I could see it."

"And?"

"And it seemed like I had gained the rights of a challenger, and I went in front of the Boss Room and checked."

"What was the result?"

"I didn't."

"...You aren't even a challenger, but they sent you a message that they're curious?"

"Yeah. I don't have any idea either."

I had something that I had to have Park Jung-Ah figure out.

Could a non-challenger progress this way?

Could it be a unique case?

"Also, well... Since they were interested, I took a little bit of their power. I moved silently and nabbed some. That's why I was bit late. Hoohoo."

"How much?"

"1263."

I was momentarily speechless and stared at the clone bastard.

This guy said that he'd messed with over 1200 gods?

"What did they want?"

"They wanted me to become their disciple."

There was no way the clone bastard would accept their request.

I said this before, but his nature is similar to mine.

He rejected my offer to become my disciple so there was no way he'd become a disciple some other God.

"I did well, right? Right? Say something. Main body bastard! Hurry up and bow your head and say thank you."

You did well.

Congratulations on becoming a cosmic swindler.

"Louder. Even sweeter! Say it out loud!"

"Good job, Lee Ho Chi."

The man whose face looked like a blooming flower was no more... Lee Ho Chi's face turned dark.

[If you call me that name again...]

"Let's go."

I ignored his warning and walked back.

For a while, the clone bastard droned on about something and followed behind me.

"Where are we going?"

"What do you mean by 'where'? We're going to the lab."

A god's power isn't simply a high-ranking skill.

Through the process of becoming a God, they gain an 'authority.'

Their authority is their identity as well as their core.

Just by digging them up one by one, I can raise greatly raise my level.

I had already dissected the authority skills and I succeeded in modifying them.

That's why, the general magic I created had been able to advance to the next level.

However, I can't create authorities on my own yet.

My limit was modifying authorities that already existed.

When I was blocked by a wall, I needed new ideas or new materials and the clone bastard had brought me some materials just in time.

There were more than 1200 authorities inside.

Therefore, we obviously had to go to the lab.

"Hey, I just came back. Can't we start tomorrow?"

"Nope. We're working through the night starting today."

Chapter 148

Author's Notes

< Author's Words >

Finally the second part has finished.

Second part had total of 91 episodes; from episode 56 to episode 147.

Part 1 was about how Lee Ho Jae has survived the tutorial, and his journey through all the tutorial stages, just as it was mentioned on 60th floor where Lee Ho Jae is mentioning something about the past-on the part 1, end of second episode.

And unlike the part 1 which was focused on stage clearance and adventures, part 2 talked more about Lee Ho Jae's inner personal changes.

In more details, Part 1 was all about new adventure and survival, and Part 2 was about the adaptation and the life in Tutorials.

Lee Ho Jae used to be a person who only drank water and ate beef jerky while putting all his energy into creating stage clear strategies for survivor, has now changed ever since he entered a solo stages.

Since Ho Jae has been able to ensure his survival through his past progressive processes and achievements, he turns his eyes onto something else other than just stage clearing strategies.

Ho Jae who has started a new life in Tutorial has begun to blend in to the life of Tutorial itself while meeting many new relationships.

And he changes little by little through his new life, and feels various happiness here and there.

Of course in the end... yes, something bad happens. But he is happy until the middle part.

Well to be honest I tried to fill in the blank hole existing inside Ho Jae.

Lee Ho Jae who was slowly dying in his small room had always desired a new life filled with exciting tasks and achievements, but he also wanted a happy and not lonely life at the same time.

That's why Lee Ho Jae is clinging onto his relationships, unlike before. And he even began to chat with the enemies.

Whenever he confronts a new enemy, instead of going right into the battle, he tries to communicate first.

And he suffers from new loneliness and self destructing thoughts which he never felt before the Part 2.

But in the end of Part 2, Ho Jae starts to be thirsty for new stimulation.

And since Idy realized this, Idy has assigned him a new thrilling task, and ends the part 2, bringing the part 3 into the picture.

Now that I look at it, Part 2 has started with Idy and ended with Idy.

When I first started writing this story I didn't expect myself to come this far.

Not to mention the paid chapters, but I thought if I could write up to 20 episodes, that'd be enough for me and my goal.

Maybe that's why it all feels unreal to me still, even after finishing the Part 2.

Fortunately I could finish the part 2 as I've planned originally, and I'm really thankful for that.

If I were to pick something I was very dissatisfied with, was the episode where it had the second competition.

I ended up skipping the half of the final part.

If I could excuse myself a little,

There were lots of reasons why, but it was mainly because I wanted to emphasize Ho Jae's emotions that he felt when he returned to the waiting room after finishing the competition.

I wanted all of you to sympathize with the feeling that he felt when he finally returned home from a long long journey, to an empty room without lights, that loneliness, that emptiness, I wanted to convey that feelings to you guys.

If possible, I want you all to feel 'wow, it was a really long journey, but I've finally made my way back here' this sort of returning home feeling.

That's why I purposely extended the length of the story.

Yes. It wasn't a nice try to perform on paid chapters.

Maybe it would've worked if I had written them more entertainingly.

Part 3 will feel something in between Part 1 and 2.

To be exact, it will be more similar to Part 1.

In the meantime,

I wanted to do Q&A.

There seem to be lots of parts that caused your curiosity.

And since it was always in first person's perspective, there were lots of stuff that got overlooked or got skipped.

But there are lots of other stuff that's coming soon, and since I don't want to spoil them, I won't be able to answer any questions that requires me to include the spoilers.

If there's anything you want to ask regarding any matters from the past chapters, comment below.

I'll try my best to answer them without spoiling anything.

Lastly, thank you all for reading Tutorial up until now.

Also thanks to all readers who've not read my novel yet, but decided to read this. Thanks for your interest.



PbF by: traitor/SEN



THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- VOLUME 6 -

**-AUTHOR-
Gandara**

[Light Novel Bastion]

GANDARA 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



Chapter 149

Tutorial 25th Floor

[Round 22, 2nd day. 12:20]

I heard the sonorous sound of trumpets and saw humans from afar, appearing as ants from a distance, lining up and preparing their battle formations.

In the vast plains, the two opposing armies prepare for their battle at noon.

It looks like it's finally begun.

The 25th floor was the first solo stage in the last five stages.

The theme revolved around choosing between two armies of similar strength and attaining victory for the army of your choice.

You would have to not only battle, but command, interact with the army, and exert your influence on them.

You'd need the ability to grasp people's' hearts, whether it be by a silver tongue or through acting.

They're skills I don't have.

They're skills I never really needed.

I went to the two armies and rather than get involved, I chose one and sat atop the rocky mountains that had a great view of the plains and passed time.

Even if I'm not there, the two armies will clash anyway.

The two armies each had a flag: a blue and a red flag.

The two conflicting colors divided the two armies and I just arbitrarily chose the red flag.

I heard the sound of the trumpets once more and the sound of rolling drums followed by battle cries.

The two armies' battle lines began to move.

Since the plains were so vast, it seemed like they would need more time before they fully began their conflict.

Rather than pointlessly watching them, I answered a message.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Hey, why won't you respond? If you're busy, should I contact you later?]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: No. What's wrong?]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Amongst the newbies that just entered this round, one of them had some interesting info.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: What kind of information?]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: There're 3 people in China who have cleared the Tutorial. 3.]

It certainly was interesting.

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: What floor is Park Min on?]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: 90th floor.]

In the Korean server, Park Min was the challenger who had reached the highest floor on the Easy Difficulty.

In order to clear safely, he had intentionally delayed his progression, so he still had more than 10 floors left.

[Kang Min Hyuk, 30th floor: To be honest, there's no proof that those people have cleared the Tutorial yet. It's just that apparently, three supermen appeared that fought barehanded against monsters in China. But yeah... I heard a bit of the interview. After hearing them talk about their weapons or their tips about hunting monsters, it seems like they really were challengers who cleared the Tutorial. It looks like the Chinese government is treating them like war heroes and using them for propaganda.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: They're lucky, it seems like they got the government to acknowledge them. Normally, they'd fly to straight to either a torture chamber or a lab.]

There may be challengers in other countries who have cleared the tutorial. We don't know.

They just weren't apparent at a moment's glance or perhaps the country is hiding them.

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: Well, it's not bad. Now there's less work for us to do.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Yeah. Since we became the second movers, we don't have to explain the role of the Tutorial anymore.]

Through competition, we became aware of the existence of foreign servers, but people expected the first graduates of the Tutorial to come out of Korea.

Korea's progress, compared to other countries, was overwhelming, and since the beginning, Korea had created a stable system that would allow challengers to develop more quickly.

I thought we were definitely ahead compared to challengers from other countries.

That might be true.

Even before I had cleared the 12th floor, the Order of Vigilance had already been preparing for the Tutorial's aftermath.

They made plans to persuade the Korean government and they were collecting letters to send to their families.

The Order of Vigilance had supported Lee Chan Yong, who had been the top player at the time. However, in the meantime, his clear speed had been conversely getting slower compared to other challengers.

Lee Chan Yong was resolute in clearing the Tutorial so the Order of Vigilance had wanted to get him out quickly. Even if the other challengers' progress was somewhat slow, the Order of Vigilance wanted them to clear safely.

At the same time, several people wanted to clear the Tutorial and go back to the outside world.

In many ways, it wasn't a bad plan and the plan seemed to be progressing smoothly.

However, within a few rounds, Lee Chan Yong, the one they expected to clear the Tutorial, just stopped and their plan went awry.

There were a lot of Easy difficulty challengers who could replace Lee Chan Yong. These challengers only lagged behind him by around 10 floors.

What's worse, because of Lee Chan Yong's disastrous failure, his clear speed slowed exponentially.

Because of that, the other top player, Park Min also remained on the 90th floor.

[Kang Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Now that it's become like this, they'll just wait for the challengers behind them to catch up to the 90th floor and they'll all work together to clear it and get out together.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: That'd probably be good. Well, do you as please.]

I listened closely, but it wasn't something I could decide on from the start.

Honestly, it wasn't really the kind of talk I would be interested in...

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor:... I will do as I please. How about you? When do you think you'll clear the 25th floor?]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: Today.]

* * *

The infantry clashed as arrows and magic flew above their heads.

I could see the cavalry tearing through the battlefield.

Although the battle was far away, I could feel its intensity from here.

I could hear their battle cries and their feet tapping on the ground from this faraway on the summit of the rocky mountain.

[Soul Siphon]

[Overpower] (Coercion)

It was enough for me to just use these two skills.

I invoked Soul Siphon across a wide area and the enemy soldiers' physical prowess declined.

They experienced a feeling of helplessness and they cowered.

It's easy to think about how deadly this skill is when I see the scene in front of me.

The front line is collapsing.

Even though the soldiers had similar abilities, the red soldiers won one-sidedly when they were pitted against the blue soldiers...

This phenomena was simultaneously occurring all over the battlefield.

[PR Note: "Coercion" skill will now be known as "Overpower"].

Plus, I'm also using the Overpower skill.

Unlike the Soul Siphon skill, Overpower uses my mana, though the enemies afflicted by Soul Siphon were quickly dying off anyway.

In this large scale battle, I'll never run out of mana.

[Talaria's Wings]

Since I'm already using two skills, one more wouldn't hurt.

Talaria's Wings doesn't simply afflict enemies. It was the God of Adventure's skill that affected allies and synergistically improved their fighting abilities.

Moreover, the red flag soldiers were fighting against a weakened and intimidated enemy, cutting them down with greater ease than before.

They wouldn't even need to capture the battle line. Soon enough, the battle line started to crumble.

I could roughly see that before a single red flag soldier went down, they took at least 5 blue flag soldiers with them.

Even from afar, I could clearly see the front line collapsing.

It looked like the red army commander was authenticating it as well, since both of the armies were huge.

But there's no commander in the world that wouldn't want to ensure his victory, especially when the balance had abnormally tipped like now.

He watched their movements and turned his attention to the sword in his hand.

Kiri Kiri had once said that if my level reaches a certain point, I'll be

able to get rewarded with level ups again.

However, Kiri Kiri withdrew her advice.

Due to my growth rate, she said that I wouldn't be able to get any level-up rewards from now on.

Also, she told me to stop being interested in levels and just concentrate on my own growth.

My methods of growth are limited.

First, I can raise my resistances.

It's something I've done up till now.

The other is to study and master what I don't know.

One example is magic.

However, Kiri Kiri said I'd have to be at least at the 30th floor before I get anything regarding magic.

Therefore, I started train myself in swordsmanship.

My swordsmanship was definitely a limiting factor to my combat style.

Up till now, I had used my extreme speed and reflexes to cut down my opponents but technically, there weren't many strong opponents.

If I exclude my fights with fellow challengers, my weapon skills always lagged behind my opponents.

The fact that I got my sword skills to the intermediate level without any sort of study is amazing.

Even when comparing myself to the community, there aren't a lot of people with intermediate-level swordsmanship.

And there wasn't anyone with a higher swordsmanship level than me.

However, now I could see the limit to my swordsmanship.

Should I say that I see a wall?

Similar to how I didn't have a definite form for my swordsmanship, I also didn't know how to improve my swordsmanship itself. Based on the situation and on my condition, I would slightly alter my swordsmanship style during battle.

It could become an advantage, but there was certainly a limit to it because I couldn't progress any further with that style.

Therefore, I diligently studied the swordsmanship of the knight from the 16th floor.

It was a passive style designed for defense.

It occasionally employed feints but the feints were simply used to buy time for the final deathblow.

The young knight's swordsmanship was definitely untried in real combat.

That's how I assessed his swordsmanship.

Even so, there were a few useful things, like the three moves leading up to the final lethal technique.

Because of that, I was able to learn the method of storing my mana into my sword and ejecting it out in front of me. I also learned how to handle aura.

As I got better at handling aura, I decided that there was nothing more that I could learn from the knight's swordsmanship.

However, on the 19th floor, when I just mindlessly tried the techniques, I realized they were fairly useful techniques.

My sword skill level improved to a higher level.

Perhaps I just hadn't realized the true value of this swordsmanship until now.

Whenever I thought that way, I would practice my swordsmanship diligently.

I swung my Thousand Arms in the form of a longsword, and started with the basic movements.

Of course, it was a defensive style that didn't match my style at all.

Whenever I practiced the knight's swordsmanship, I didn't feel like my skill improved. Rather, I just felt that I wouldn't be able to use his swordsmanship in a real fight.

In no time at all, the battle was finishing up.

The red flag army was now one-sidedly slaughtering the enemy.

Unusually, the quickly crumbling blue flag army wasn't retreating but still holding their positions.

Of course, because they were being pushed back, there were a lot of deserters breaking away from the battlefield but the army's military headquarters stayed in the same place.

Also, in front of those headquarters, an iron giant rose.

Guoh.

The giant's horrible shriek echoed all the way to the mountains.

The attacking red flag army simply stopped.

Even if I catch a glimpse from here, it was big enough to be over five or six meters tall.

It wasn't something that could be taken on by just normal soldiers.

Based on Kiri Kiri's information, she said the that golem, no matter what side the challenger chooses, appears on the side that the challenger didn't pick.

Then, that golem might be the actual challenge for the 25th floor.

I flew with Talaria's wings.

I flew with my maximum speed towards the golem and thought.

The style of swordsmanship I learned from the knight had a finishing move that ended at the sequence of three corresponding moves.

The final three moves could be called the core of the style, but the actual explanation on the final technique was far too general.

Because of that, I fumbled through his teachings and I hadn't been able to properly manifest aura, and sometimes my mana would even wildly eject from my sword.

I thought that the final technique was to simply manifest an aura blade and that I just needed to swing my sword at the right timing.

Because of that, I heard about the 11-19 forms related to the three final forms from the knight, but I hadn't listened attentively.

I just thought he was just telling me the method to use aura.

Since it had splendid movements and had really technical names.

That was what I thought when I saw the knight try to act all cool.

But I could trust the knight now.

The several techniques he had taught me were all in preparation for the final technique. Future swordsmen would have to use their own methods to interpret the skills in a way appropriate for them.

It was really a relief, because even though I told the talkative swordsman that I didn't need to hear his explanation, he still told me all about the techniques in detail.

At some point, I had flown into the vicinity of the golem.

Seeing the battlefield up close, it felt a bit different from when I looked at it from the mountaintop.

I had seen this many times; people tangled in a war, fighting on the battlefield.

There would always be chaos in the center of the battlefield but this was a first.

The majority of the two armies remained and continued to fight. I guess I just had to accept that this was really happening.

There wasn't anything really unusual.

The red flag soldiers that had advanced towards the golem were quickly being torn down.

The blue flag soldiers, at some point, had reorganized their ranks and matched the golem's steps and slowly advanced forward.

I didn't slow down my flight speed and rotated vertically, aiming for the golem's head.

Before I collided with it, I swung my sword.

It wasn't difficult.

There wasn't much of a difference from the moment I swung my sword and the moments my blows landed, light glinting off its edges.

Fire blazed along the trajectory of my sword but a protective coating formed on the golem, blocking my sword.

However, the protective coating couldn't slow my sword for even a second.

My sword split the protective coating, and fell upon the golem's head unimpeded.

I adjusted my falling speed and cut straight down from the head down to the its abdomen.

I cut the golem into a smooth cross section like I was cutting tofu, and the golem crumbled as both of its pieces collapsed onto the ground.

When the enormous golem fell, it let out a deafening roar along with a huge dust cloud from the impact of the collapsed parts on the earth...

The two armies retreated quickly so they wouldn't be buried by its remains.

During that time, I examined the golem's body.

Tiny flames were stuck to the cross-section.

I relaxed a bit after I scrutinized the flames on the surface of the metal golem.

Still, I had gotten a lot better.

It felt like I had been rewarded for my hard work for weeks.

I felt lighthearted and turned my head, to meet the dazed faces of the blue flag soldiers.

* * *

It was simple to take care of the remnants.

Before the golem appeared, the blue flag army was being helplessly pushed back.

As soon as I entered the battlefield, the golem was split into 2 pieces and the golem collapsed just like that.

Rather, it took longer to finish off the deserters from the beginning of the battle.

I took care of the last soldier hiding under a corpse and a message appeared.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 25th Floor, Clear.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 5000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 5000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 2300 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 700 points have been deducted.]

[Based on your play records, additional rewards will be given.]

[You have acquired the skill, Time Confinement Lv. Max.]

[Battle Concentration Lv. 28 and Time Confinement Lv. Max have been integrated.]

This stage was much easier than I had expected.

Perhaps because of that, there weren't many extreme reactions from the gods.

From the start, from the mountaintop alone, I practiced my swordsmanship and then I swung my sword a few times before the stage ended.

The unusual point was the skill I had received from the clear.

Time Confinement.

Looking at the level of the skill, it was a skill given to me by the gods.

Let's take a look.

[Time Confinement (Lv. Max)]

Explanation: A god who wouldn't say his/her name has given you this skill as a present.

If you don't figure out her name, she may get angry at you.

This is a skill from the God of Slowness.

She didn't explain how the skill works, but it said that she'd get angry or something, so it was definitely her.

The God of Slowness had given me a skill on the 2nd floor and had offered an opportunity for me to become her disciple on the 6th floor. Including this, she had given me two skills as presents.

The God of Slowness had used all her chances to give a challenger a skill, so it looked like she had used a trick and hid her name to give me an extra skill.

Whenever a god showed interest in me, the God of Slowness would sometimes get anxious. I bet I'm right.

This skill is, just as the name implies, based on time.

If we look at the fact that Battle Concentration was integrated into it, it looks like it has a connection to my level of focus.

I'll ask Kiri Kiri for a more in-depth explanation.

[The God of Slowness is satisfied.]

It looks like it was definitely a skill gifted to me by the God of

Slowness.

In any case, I attained another skill from a god.

You're the best, God of Slowness.

[The God of Adventure grumbled.]

Besides the sound of someone grumbling, a portal appeared from the ground and I stepped onto the portal.

“Transport.”

From a loud and chaotic battlefield, I was transported to a quiet and peaceful field.

I saw Kiri Kiri squatting down in the middle of the green field.

Unlike the usual Kiri Kiri, she turned her back halfway towards me and was sitting down.

Kiri Kiri turned her head and stared at me.

She looked like she was sulking.

“Heng!”

Kiri Kiri, who momentarily locked her gaze with mine, snorted and turned her head around.

Chapter 150

Tutorial 26th Floor (1)

“Kiri Kiri.”

“What?” Kiri Kiri asked curtly, with her back turned.

Her response was quite terse, cold, and sharp.

But how sharp could Kiri Kiri's voice be? I mean, c'mon, it's Kiri Kiri.

It just sounds like a little kid sulking at me.

That's actually how it is anyway.

“How many days did you say it would take to clear the 25th floor again?” I asked, turning her body to face me and looking squarely at her face.

Kiri Kiri and I made a simple bet.

It didn't really have much meaning behind it.

But there was a problem: what we bet.

If Kiri Kiri won, I would buy her as many cakes as she wanted.

Conversely, if I won, I wouldn't buy her anything.

“5 days.”

“How many days have passed since? From the day that I started 25th floor?”

“2 days! Heung!”

When she finished speaking, she turned her head away from me.

Doesn't your neck hurt?

I moved in front of her and she once again turned her back on me.

She turned away again, so instead of speaking to her face, I just spoke to her back.

“How long do you think the next floor will take? Let's try and get it right this time.”

“Heng. The next floor should be tough for Hooooojae. It should take at least more than a month. 33 days,” she said, laughing sardonically.

33 days, huh...

One round will pass after 30 days.

“Starting from the 26th floor, even if one round passes, you won't fail the stage. It's just that when the round is over, you'll be forced back into the waiting room, and you'll start off at the place where you ended the last round.”

To put it simply, you don't start over when the round is over, but you continue from where you left off.

“Exactly.”

It looks like the difficulty went up.

When the round is over, you wouldn't start all the way from the beginning. So it wasn't bad from the challenger's perspective.

I had experienced the past rounds and now, I could conquer these stages more safely and comfortably.

Of course, starting over from the beginning of the round was annoying, but in the Tutorial, safety was paramount.

What would it be like if it truly was like that, where when the round finishes, the next round starts up where you left off?

If you're conquering the stage with relatively little difficulty, then you can just continue on in the same way.

However, what if you messed up?

You wouldn't get a chance to go back from the beginning and you'd have to continue the chosen route.

There's never a reset, so there's a chance that you could be stuck on one stage forever.

That danger had already been proven by Lee Chan Yong.

You won't be able to fix the mistakes of your attempt and you'll fall into hell.

“Is it a party stage?”

“The 25th floor is normal. Even if you gathered the 25 challengers, it would take about 2-3 months. There's no way you can clear it within 33 days,” Kiri Kiri finished, laughing.

She laughed like a childish Disney villain.

She looked happy; it's probably because she doesn't expect me to clear the stage on time, so she'll get free cake from the bet.

“I won't be able to buy you any cakes for about a month then, huh?”

Her back turned, the sitting shoulders of Kiri Kiri's flinched.

[Welcome to the 26th floor waiting room.]

[Round 22, Day 2. 10:20 P.M. (22:20)]

I got information on the next stage and information on my Time Confinement skill from Kiri Kiri, and went into the waiting room.

Kiri Kiri was distressed because if my clear time was too slow, she wouldn't be able to eat cake during that long period of time I was on the stage, but if I was too fast in clearing the stage, she still wouldn't be able to eat cake because of the bet.

However, in the end, she was swayed by my sweet talk and she affably explained the next stage.

I also actually gave her some candy.

Now, let's look at the explanation for my Time Confinement skill.

[Time Confinement (Lv.Max)]

Explanation: Stops the flow of time.

During the frozen time, only the user's thoughts can move freely.

The speed at which thoughts are processed depends on the user's ability.

A god who wouldn't say her name has given you this skill as a present.

If you don't figure out her name, she may get angry at you.

It wasn't a really detailed explanation but I got the gist of it.

It stops time, and during that time, only the user's thoughts can act.

Also, during the paused time, how fast the thoughts are processed depends on the user's concentration.

If you lack concentration, you may not even be cognizant during the frozen time.

Even though it's a skill that doesn't require the caster's mana or stamina, it stresses the user's natural ability.

I remembered something that Kiri Kiri had said about the God of Slowness some time ago.

Then, let's test the skill first.

I transformed the Thousand Arms into a sphere and threw the Thousand Arms as high as the eye could see.

When the Thousand Arms began to descend to the ground, I watched the Thousand Arms closely and activated my skill.

[Time Confinement]

When I activated the skill, the Thousands Arms stopped in place.

Rather than just slowing down time, it actually froze time.

I calmly surveyed the area for any signs of movement and then...

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6...

* * *

10832. 10833. 108...

While I was counting, I heard a ringing noise in my head, and the frozen Thousand Arms resumed falling.

I quickly positioned my hands and caught the falling Thousand Arms.

10800 seconds.

If we take into account the margin of error, the Time Confinement skill can last for roughly 3 hours.

Next up, I needed to see if the Thousand Arms actually moved.

While Time Confinement was active, the Thousand Arms wasn't still.

It moved little by little.

Within 3 hours, the Thousand Arms fell by 1 cm.

It seemed like it didn't move at all, but it wasn't a complete freezing of time.

Three hours...

Hm...

In the past, Kiri Kiri said that a human shouldn't become a disciple to the God of Slowness.

Now I understand that statement a little.

How could it be 3 hours...

Honestly, this skill was closer to an instrument of torture.

Time stop.

What an attractive term.

The problem is, that even I would be frozen in that stopped world.

Only my thoughts would remain, and I would be locked in the frozen world.

I suffered immensely on the 13th floor, so I knew exactly the fearsome power this skill contained.

Someone who is losing their mind wouldn't be able to last for three hours under this skill. You even lose your sense of time and only your thoughts would be able to scream out in the frozen world.

If a human being is locked away in solitary confinement for even a few days, they'd go crazy.

The Time Confinement skill, if used carelessly, wouldn't simply leave you with one or two mental diseases, but could even drive you to attempt suicide.

Of course, this is the case for the average human.

For me, it's a pretty good skill.

During the three hours of the skill, I could maintain my concentration.

I could match the timing of the skill, starting my next move right as the Time Confinement skill ends.

I got a really good skill.

Lately, my concentration has improved immensely, to the point where the Battle Concentration skill was meaningless to me now.

Even if I didn't use the skill, I could maintain the same level of concentration that the skill granted whenever I wanted.

If I wanted to, I could concentrate on a higher level than with the Battle Concentration skill activated.

However, it wasn't on the level of the Time Confinement skill.

The fact that I could use the Time Confinement skill to artificially stop time and allow me to process my thoughts during a pressing battle was a tremendous advantage.

[The God of Adventure is grumbling.]

I got the skill from the God of Slowness, so why do I keep getting messages from the God of Adventure?

I turned the Thousand Arms in my hand back into the form of a longsword.

The Time Confinement skill seemed not only useful as a tool for combat but also useful as a tool for training.

Actually, the skill isn't really different from the Hyperbolic Time Chamber.

Though I can't move my body, I can improve my abilities with just my thoughts.

What's worse, since it's a god skill, it doesn't cost any mana or or anything else, for the matter.

[Time Confinement]

* * *

[Round 22, Day 6. 3:30 (15:30)]

[Welcome to the 26th floor stage.]

I spent a few days using Time Confinement to finish off my training and proceeded to the 26th floor stage.

I could've spent some more time on my training but I thought it was more important to attempt the stage and grow.

During my attempt on the stage, I could also use Time Confinement to train too.

I passed through a room with a bonfire. The stage was quite a bit different compared to the usual stages.

Lights shined in front of my eyes.

I looked at the ceiling and saw a giant chandelier up on the high ceiling.

I haven't even seen a chandelier that large in the outside world.

The interior of the building was made of marble.

From the ceiling, to the walls, the columns, and even the floor.

The interior stuck out since it was decorated here and there with gold and jewels.

There was a soft, red carpet over the floor.

Besides me, there were more than 100 men gathered and standing on the carpet.

Each of them had sparkling weapons and armor readied.

On both sides of the carpet, soldiers wearing armor were lined up. Beyond them, I saw old men wearing long, baggy clothes.

I turned around.

There was a giant gate at the end of the carpet. It looked like it was the entrance to the building. The gate was large enough such that the 25th floor golem could pass through it.

I turned around, looking at the direction opposite of the gate.

The carpet continued on towards a platform.

At the top of the platform, there was a splendid throne.

Also, a man, wearing clothes of the same splendor as the throne, sat upon it.

He's either a king or an emperor. Well, he must be one of the two.

He looked like one of those kind old men who ran the neighborhood bakery.

Firstly, there were a lot of people in my surroundings, but there wasn't any signs of danger.

There wasn't any killing intent or fighting spirit; plus, there wasn't anyone strong enough to post a threat to me.

I was quietly analyzing out the situation and waited for the message that would tell me the stage's objective, but I saw the old bakery man looking embarrassed.

[PR Note: If you haven't noticed, Hojae adopts the emperor's name as the "old bakery man."]

"You... why were you summoned alone?"

Summoned?

The surrounding whispers got louder after he asked his question.

It looks like they're talking about me.

A mix of the words "warrior," "summoning," "failure," "god," "qualification," and "demon king" from the surrounding crowd were overpowering my ears.

Ah, I see what they're talking about.

It's that.

It's this world's story of the hero versus the demon king.

This world's natives would summon a warrior to oppose the demon king, requesting for him to defeat the Demon King. That kind of cliché.

It was palace so grand and magnificent that I could spend spend all

the wealth I wanted to and still have money to spare, but what was actually important was that they would summon completely unrelated people to solve their problems.

After they kill the Demon King, they'll try to kill the hero or he'll be married to some unimportant, alienated princess to end their agreement. It was that kind of story.

It might be different if the princess was at least pretty, but if the hero didn't like the princess, the hero, from the reader's perspective, would've been nothing but a scapegoat; someone who they push all their problems to.

It was so cliché that I could figure out this situation immediately.

I could even understand why the 100 people were gathered below the platform.

The stage recommended a 25-person party, so it seems like it was set up so that 25 warriors were summoned in order to form a party.

“Wa-Warrior. Where are your colleagues? Were you truly the only one summoned?”

I wanted to say something back to the old man who kept repeating himself, but a message popped up in front of my eyes.

[The 26th floor challenge is starting.]

Explanation: Half of the Heiog continent has been conquered by the demons, and it has been 35 years since the Humans declared war on them.

Sometimes, the demons would acquire victory, and sometimes the humans would.

The long, protracted war has devastated the continent as both human and demon casualties rose astronomically.

2 years ago, the demons found a way to end the war.

They summoned a being their distant ancestors worshipped: the one who rules hell, the Demon King.

Because the ceremony had been active over the past two years, there isn't much time until the Demon King descends on the world.

The empire would take care of the Demon King, but in order for them to defeat the demons, they summoned a warrior from another world.

Of the summoned warriors, only the qualified individual may awaken the sealed holy sword and use its power to defeat the Demon King.

Warrior.

As a warrior that will save this world, prove your worthiness, and lift the holy sword's seal.

Only that way, can you defeat the Demon King.

[Clear conditions]

1. Acquire the unsealed Holy Sword.

2. Defeat the Demon King.

“Open your mouth. Say something, Warrior. Were you truly summoned by yourself?”

Chapter 151

Tutorial 26th Floor (2)

[They ignored me because I'm a woman, or they laughed in front of my face. I couldn't believe it. Was it the same for you, mister?]

[I wonder. I don't really remember that kind of thing that well. Rather, regarding the Demon King that emerges on that stage...]

[You're really just ignoring me. You're making me feel bad by just differentiating treatment of the trivial things like your accommodations or your food.]

[I see, so that's how it was. So about that Demon King.]

[Mister, do you know what happened just a moment ago? You see, I...]

[...]

* * *

“Warrior, were you truly summoned by yourself?”

“Yeah, so?”

I roughly answered the old man's persistent question that he'd been asking me for some time.

So where's the holy sword?

It doesn't look like it's here in this brilliant place.

The conditions for clearing the 26th floor were to acquire the holy

sword and defeat the Demon King.

The prerequisites for defeating the Demon King aren't complete just by acquiring the holy sword.

In any case, I need to acquire the holy sword to defeat the Demon King, and then I'll be able to clear the stage.

However, there's been a continuous uproar in the background.

As I look at my surroundings, I saw the flushed faces of the old men on the two ends, asking each other 'what happened'.

They weren't women and they were really old grandpas, yet their faces were so flushed that it wasn't really a good sight for my eyes.

Let's ask them why they're acting like that.

“Even though he's a summoned warrior, to be so rude and flippant...”

“There was definitely an issue with the summoning. If that wasn't the case, there's no way that only one person would be summoned. In fact, he looks like a troublemaker...”

Yep. I don't need to hear this.

It would be best if I just ignore them and find the holy sword.

Firstly, it doesn't look like it's in this palace.

I'll disperse a little bit of my mana and see if I can detect the holy sword.

With that thought in mind, I drew out some of my mana.

“Look here, enough of that.”

While I was activating my magic circuits, someone to my side spoke to me.

He was 190 cm tall, had a greatsword tied to his back, and wore armor from head to toe. He also had a great deal of mana in his body.

Considering that he's also standing atop the carpet like me, he must also be one of the summoned warriors.

"If you recklessly draw out your mana here, then..."

Kwang!

I ignored the man's words and continued to spread my mana, creating an explosive sound from the ground.

A faint, bright magic circle activated but suddenly stopped.

So it seems there was a magic circle drawn on the floor that suppressed the activation of magic.

Though, it was a pretty poor magic circle.

I spread out my mana and waited for a minute, and was able to determine the holy sword's location.

It was located deep beneath the castle, where the palace was located on top of.

It's there.

The holy sword was easy to find since it not only emitted powerful mana, but I could also feel the distinct presence of a god's power.

Whatever the case, I succeeded in finding the location of the holy sword.

I felt proud since I could sense improvement in my handling of mana.

I liked that I had achieved my primary objective, but I felt like the surrounding mood had changed a little.

The old men, who had been yelling for some time, all together closed their mouths, and the soldiers on the sides of the carpet put their hands to their swords, and advanced one step forward.

Also, the summoned warriors, who were standing atop the carpet, paled in fear.

All their attention was on me.

What is this?

“Why? What's wrong?”

I asked the man who had warned me just a moment ago.

I had only asked him since he was the closest one to me, but the man shook his head and stepped back.

“No, no, it's nothing.”

At the end of his words, a heavy silence dropped onto the palace.

I felt bad because I realized too late that they were silent because I had destroyed the magic circle below my feet.

I was just awkwardly standing there and the old man rose from his throne.

“Warrior, thank you for accepting the empire's summon. I welcome you as the representative of the empire. We had originally intended to summon 25 warriors, but because you were summoned alone, there was a brief error. I apologize for not trusting you immediately. However, in this palace of the sky, the rule is that all use of magic is forbidden. Please refrain from using magic here.”

I responded to the old man who had sincerely apologized first.

“Yes. Thank you for welcoming me. I apologize for hastily using magic here. Although it was defective, I destroyed the installed magic circle,

so I apologize.”

“...There's no way that that magic circle was defective but...” he trailed off and cleared his throat.

The old man put strength in his stomach and began speaking in a resounding voice.

“The five groups of heroes have finally been summoned here, to this Kuranubus. I am this empire's Emperor and as the sole ruler of this continent, I once again, welcome you. Just today, the great god accepted our desperate request from all the citizens of our empire and responded to us here, in the center of the empire, Kuranubus. Not for those barbaric, crafty demons, but for the empire's righteous cause...”

In contrast to his loud voice, he had an odd accent, and spoke very slowly.

Old man... No, the emperor. As I stood still and listened to the emperor, I felt a sense of déjà vu.

“I solemnly declare under the azure sky. The evil demons and the demon (Demon King) that they summoned, will fall to the holy sword which contains the great god's will. This is because the empire's will is the same as the god's will...”

That's strange. This sounds like something I've heard before.

His self-indulgence was written all over his face.

It wasn't any different from a principal's speech.

It seemed like he was talking about something really important, but the contents didn't go into my head, and his speech made me tired for no special reason.

He kept on delivering a list of pointless words.

Instead of continuing to listen to him ramble on, I sent a message to Park Jung Ah.

[Lee Ho Jae, 26th floor: What's up?]

[Park Jung Ah, 47th floor: Clearing now.]

Clearing?

[Park Jung Ah, 47th floor: I'm in the middle of clearing a floor.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 26th floor: Ah, I see. I'll talk to you later then.]

[Park Jung Ah, 47th floor: Ok.]

It looks like she's busy.

Seeing as how she hung up, she might've actually been in the middle of a fight.

If that's truly the case, she didn't really need to respond to my message immediately.

She must be busy with her work with the Order of Vigilance, but Park Jung Ah is also clearing the Tutorial at the same time.

Currently, she's gotten up to the 47th floor.

If we consider the fact that she allots most of her time to her work for the Order of Vigilance, Park Jung Ah and her party member's speed in clearing the Tutorial is on the faster side.

“From the castle in the sky, past the oceans and to the barren desert, all the citizens of the empire who live on this world...”

His speech is still going on.

It's kind of uncomfortable.

Is it because I continually used Time Confinement to train for a few days?

I had trained whilst maintaining a high degree of concentration, yet I had been alone.

There was nothing moving in my surroundings besides me and I pretty much couldn't move either.

But now, since I've come to such a bright, populated, and very noisy place, I felt uncomfortable and my attention was scattered.

What's worse is that even if I pay attention, the only thing I can hear is a useless speech.

“Once again, to all the warriors who accepted the empire's summons...”

“If it's the holy sword that contains the great god's power, even that wicked Demon King's plans...”

His speech still didn't end.

So... when exactly are you going to give us the holy sword?

* * *

After the boring speech in the palace, there was an even more tedious declaration ceremony that followed.

The summoned warriors altogether recited their script and repeatedly said how they received the blessing from the god.

The bestowment ceremony was next.

They conferred upon me a weird post and a medal, pointlessly wasting valuable time. Next, I received clothes befitting my new post and was told that I got some territory somewhere on this continent.

After I attentively listened to the long history of that land, they declared that I would be conferred the aforementioned land, and soon it was time to express thanks for the land.

The more-than 100 warriors all finished the conferment ceremony and it quickly became very late in the afternoon.

After the emperor announced the end of the bestowment ceremony, I read my schedule and it said that it was now time for a simple dinner, accompanied by a social party for grandiose events.

Aristocratic-looking people began endlessly pouring into the palace from somewhere, and I got sick and tired of them, so I escaped to the outside of the palace.

I, who had escaped outside, was guided to my lodgings inside of the castle.

It was already late at night, so we would proceed with the rest of the events in my schedule tomorrow.

Would tomorrow's schedule be similar to today's? I felt really anxious.

I was guided to my lodging, a separate three floor building which resided inside the castle.

Perhaps it was meant as a place to stay for the group of 25 warriors, because it was far too big for me to use by myself.

I momentarily stopped in front of the main door.

I don't really like spaces like this that are humongous while also completely empty.

I'd have preferred it if they had given me a small single room instead.

While I thought that, I heard a knock from behind me and the doors opened.

“Excuse me.”

The person who had entered was an armorclad woman.

“Hello, how are you? I am Seregia Cromwell, head of the Kunon Knight Order.”

“Yes. I am Lee Ho Jae. Nice to meet you.”

“You can speak more comfortably around me, Warrior.”

“Yes. Of course.”

It would still be kind of strange to speak so informally with her.

She had introduced herself as the head of the knight order, and she looked a few years older than me.

“From now on, our Kunon Knight Order will be responsible for guiding and protecting you, Warrior. Until the day your mission is over, Warrior, we'll work together with you. If you're perhaps curious about something or have something you need, just tell me anytime.”

Listening to her, it sounded like she would act like a manager for me.

She would be responsible for both guiding me and protecting me.

It would also double as keeping a close eye on me.

“Then about that Kulon Knight Order.”

“It's the Kunon Knight Order, Warrior.”

“How many knights of the Kunon Knight Order are responsible for me?”

“Just me.”

How strange.

Just a moment ago, Seregia, the female knight, had introduced herself as the head of the Kunon Knight Order.

So only she, the head of the knight order, is responsible for me?

And of all the things she was assigned to do, she had to clean up after me?

Seregia must've seen doubt on my face so she followed up with an explanation.

“The truth is... The only member of the Kunon Knight Order is me.”

So what you're saying is that you're the only member of the Kunon Knight Order and at the same time, you're its leader.

I wondered whether they could really attach the word 'order' to 'knight' when there was only one member.

“...Can you still call that an order of knights?”

“Yes, I can.”

Seregia replied firmly.

It was a little ridiculous that she responded so confidently.

“I wasn't alone at the beginning. After the previous head of the knight order passed away, the ranks remained empty, that's all.”

Wait a minute. Then you're saying that the entire knight order only consisted of you and the previous head?

So this knight order was a lot more amazing than I thought.

“So how did the previous knight leader die?”

“He passed away from old age.”

“...That's unfortunate.”

“He was over 90 years old when he died. That's quite the luxury.”

“Yes. You're right.”

Strangely, it seems like all the knights I've met all have a screw loose somewhere.

Is this a coincidence?

“No, I don't have a loose screw somewhere.”

Seregia said, clearly and proudly.

So why are you responding so confidently?

I don't understand at all.

Honestly, the fact that she's the only one in the Kunon Knight Order is good news for me.

It means that there's only one piece of baggage that I have to lug around.

“Usually, the number of knights responsible for the group of warriors is at minimum, over 30. However, in your case, Warrior, because you were uniquely summoned alone, it looks like I was assigned to you. Because of you, Warrior, I have gotten my first mission since entering the knight order. It's truly an honor.”

What? Did you just say your first mission?

“...Pardon me, but when did you first join the knight order?

“I joined four years ago.”

“...If you didn't do anything for four years, it sounds like rather than being a knight, you were closer to being unemployed.”

“I think so too.”

That was when I started thinking that Seregia might be hurting under all that outward confidence.

I set aside my questions about the solitary knight order that she belonged to and rather, decided to ask her about more important matters.

“Then... For now, please tell me about my future schedule.”

“Yes. I understand.”

* * *

“So what you're saying is that from now on, for three days continuously, I have pretty much the same schedule as today, and then we start our real work?”

“Yes. Beginning on the fourth day, you will start your mission in earnest. Also, of the ten missions, the Warrior with the highest results will become the representative of the warrior group. They will be preferentially granted the qualification to be able to go through the holy sword's test.”

“What's the holy sword's test?”

“Yes. There is a legend that not just anyone can draw the holy sword. Pulling out the sword barehanded is the holy sword's test.”

If it's a holy sword, that's naturally the kind of test it would be.

“Then, in order to be tested by the holy sword, what about the missions that we have to carry out?”

“I also do not know the details. Perhaps the missions haven't been decided yet, but it is probably a mission related to the war with the demons, suppressing the monsters in our territory, or perhaps it will be a mission about pursuing the witches' forces.

So, the empire is going to first make us do this and that in order to suck us dry while taking all credit.

If they were to just pick the strongest warrior, there wouldn't be a need to do the inconvenient ten tasks.

They could just use duels or a competition in order to pick the strongest.

I don't like it at all.

You want me to just do as I'm told, but it's too much of a hassle.

Chapter 152

Tutorial 26th Floor (3)

No matter how I plan it, there's no way I'll move according to the schedule Seregia told me about. It was cumbersome and it took too long, but that wasn't the main problem. I just wouldn't be able to take it.

Before the three days are up, I'll explode and start arguing with someone or I might even run away somewhere.

Ultimately, even when the mission starts, there would be no guarantee that it doesn't include empty formalities.

“Do you have a map?”

“Did you need a map? There should be one here. Please, come this way.”

I followed Seregia, and we reached the living quarters. There was a huge map stuck to the wall.

This place seems to be a conference room, since there's a huge table in front of the wall with chairs arranged around it.

“Please wait for a moment. I need to first light a candle...”

I could see the map without light, but Seregia wouldn't be able to.

I heard her rummage for something in the dim room, so she must be looking for flint or a magical tool with similar uses.

But it's never easy to find something in the dark, especially when you didn't know where it was to begin with.

I spoke to Seregia, who was hurriedly looking through the drawer.

“It's fine. I'll do it.”

I went up to the candle and used my magic.

“Fire.”

I brought my finger that was emitting a tiny flame to the wick of the candle and lit it.

I lit up around five candles and managed to illuminate the room.

“So you could use magic as well. You're truly amazing,” Seregia complimented, with a somewhat embarrassed expression.

I've been steadily practicing magic, so I can use a little bit now.

I've only gotten to the point of using Fire, and Wind Arrow, but I'll only be able to master the rest once I get past the 30th floor and receive a new book about magic.

“Yes, well, that's how it is.”

Honestly speaking, it felt great to be complimented but I acted indifferent.

“I didn't think you would be a Magic Swordsman. I heard that in order to become a Magic Swordsman, you need to be naturally talented and put in a lot of effort...”

“Wait. One second, please.”

Seregia stopped and I asked.

“How did you know I was an swordsman?”

“Are you not?” she replied.

“You're right.”

Seregia just inadvertently revealed that I was a swordsman. But how? There's nothing sticking out that says 'I'm an swordsman!'.

I don't have a sword. I don't have a sheath or a sword rack either. Besides my light armor, I'm completely unarmed.

After seeing my appearance and my magic just now, she should've assumed that I was a Magician, rather than a Magic Swordsman.

Even after I pointed that out, I stubbornly asked how she knew that I was an swordsman.

“Yes... well, I just knew. I knew when I saw the magic at your fingertips, and even by just looking at how your hands hang normally. You're right-handed, right? With a longsword about yay big,” Seregia explained, stretching out her arms to indicate her assumed length of his longsword.

It was the length of the Thousand Arms longsword form that I often used.

“How do you know the length of my sword?” I asked.

“I saw it in the palace,” Seregia said.

I don't remember drawing my sword in the palace.

“Could you please explain in greater detail?”

“I was also in the palace, so I was able to observe you, Warrior. I realized that you have three ‘intervals.’”

[PR Note: These “intervals” are actually attack ranges or the distance between him and his enemies. Think about 3 concentric circles with Ho Jae at the center. The three different “zones” represent his attack “intervals.” Depending on which ring the enemy is in, Ho Jae’s reaction will differ. slightly.]

“What ‘intervals’ are you talking about?”

“I'm talking about the intervals of your attack ranges. Firstly, from this short distance, within that interval, when another warrior has closed in, you would have immediately reacted. As your left foot stepped back this way, you would be able to react immediately. The next interval is about the distance between me and you right now. Say another warrior is about this far away. I'd say it's a range where you would be able to swing your sword after taking a single step. Then, based on your stance and the fact that you're right-handed, it'd be a sword, about this long.”

After I listened to Seregia's in-depth explanation, I saw her differently.

When we had first entered the estate, she had conversed with me but had never once stepped into the range of my sword.

She had accurately measured my effective range and she had always maintained a half-step away from it. Even now, she kept her distance.

She's a genius.

Seregia's physical strength or her mana capacity may fall short to the warriors in the palace, but the level of her natural ability wasn't lacking compared to theirs; it might actually be far superior.

Her genius-like ability wasn't something just anyone could attain.

She was born with that ability.

It doesn't simply end with a detective-like observational ability.

That ability could be used on herself as well as against an opponent that she's fighting against.

“Okay, then what is my third effective range?” I asked.

“I felt it when you spread out your mana, Warrior. Because I'm not strong enough, I don't know for certain, but it easily includes everything within the Emperor's vicinity at the bare minimum.”

I thought she'd just be a burden, but it turns out she has abilities.

“You're quite amazing,” I said.

* * *

“This mountaintop will be the place where the Demon King awakens,” Seregia said.

“How long will it take to go from here to the top of the mountain?” I asked.

“Even if we go by horseback, it should take at least four months.”

It was much farther than I thought.

“Once you acquire the holy sword, you should be able to use the teleport magic circle to travel to the Bulut Fort. The Bulut Fortress is close to the frontlines and is also the closest teleportable location from here.”

“Then how long will it take if we go from the fort?”

“It should take a bit more than half a month.”

Kiri Kiri had assured me that I would never be able to clear the 26th floor within a month. Now I understood why. There were too many empty formalities and procedures to go through.

The stage's setting was much too large.

I didn't think it would take this much time just getting there.

“Can I freely use that teleportation circle?”

“Yes, you can, but it's not in your schedule.”

So I can use it.

It seems like I'll have to skip parts of the story.

Supposedly, I'll acquire the holy sword after I finish the missions, and defeat the Demon King. Yeah, no. Rather than following that storyline, I'll just defeat the Demon King myself. Yeah, that'd be better.

Acquiring the holy sword and defeating the Demon King should be enough to clear the stage.

"Knight Leader," I said.

"You can use my name," Seregia said.

"Then may I call you the Lady Cromwell?"

"You can call me Seri."

"...Lady Seregia."

"Yes, Warrior?"

It's strangely difficult to maintain a conversation with this woman. She's fickle and she oddly seems to miss the point.

"For the next few days, I really don't think I'll need my schedule," I said.

"Yes, I agree," Seregia replied.

"So for the next three days, I'll visit the Bulut Fort. I'll go reconnoiter our enemies and prepare for the upcoming battle. I believe that would be more useful to us."

"Yes, I understand. Then I'll prepare the teleportation magic circle for you. Will you leave tomorrow morning?" she responded naturally, maintaining her characteristic poker face.

I was a bit taken aback since she was so straightforward.

Strangely, there were a lot of events that agitated me today.

“Isn't it against the rules to go off-schedule?”

“Of course it's not allowed.”

“Then shouldn't you be stopping me, Lady Seregia?”

I had thought she would stop me, so I had formulated various excuses and I had even thought about threatening her if that didn't work out, but...

“I'll report that I had tried my best to stop you, but that I failed,” Seregia said.

“...Ok, do as you wish.”

It turned out for the best. Her actions wouldn't harm me, either.

She said she would make the preparations herself, so what is there to complain about?

Although it felt awkward, I decided to ask for another favor.

She said she would fulfill all of my requests, so let's see if she was telling the truth.

“Lady Seregia, then can you teach me some swordsmanship?” I asked.

“Did you say swordsmanship?”

“Yes, I'd like to see this world's swordsmanship.”

Seregia briefly pondered on it before responding.

“I'm sorry, but I don't think I can. Because the Kunon Knight Order belongs to the royal family, it is forbidden for me to teach an outsider our swordsmanship,” Seregia replied.

I recollected the knight on the 16th floor.

The knight had eagerly taught him the essence of the royal swordsmanship as if he was passing out snacks.

“Teaching our swordsmanship to outsiders is such a grave offense that if others were to find out, there would be severe punishments, like being exiled to the Kunon Knight Order. Since I'm the only member of the Kunon Knight Order, they may confiscate my wealth, so it would be difficult to just hand over the kingdom's swordsmanship.”

[PR Note: Apparently, being sent to the Kunon Knight Order is implied as a PUNISHMENT.]

...Were you exiled to the Kunon Knight Order?

I didn't think it was such a severe punishment.

Since I gave her an unreasonable request, I apologized.

Also, I thought that it was quite unfortunate that she had been exiled to the Kunon Knight Order.

“It's alright. I get paid each month.”

“I see... Then I'll see you tomorrow morning?”

“Yes. I'll finish the preparations and come pick you up tomorrow morning. Good night.”

Seregia finished her goodbyes and left the residence.

She was a complex person in many ways. That had been our confounding first encounter.

* * *

After I had parted with Seregia, I used my Sneak skill and left the residence.

There didn't seem to be anyone with the ability to sense my presence in the vicinity.

Plus, I had used my Sneak skill, so I wasn't worried that anyone would find me.

I arrived in the castle's basement without interference. The castle's basement contained the sleeping holy sword.

There were soldiers guarding the center passageway, but when they briefly turned their attention elsewhere, I seized the opportunity and passed by them.

The holy sword was at the end of the passageway. It was stuck inside of a magic circle on the floor.

It was wildly spurting out mana and within that mana, I could feel a small trace of a God. It was definitely the holy sword.

As I got close, the holy sword hummed and began vibrating. The surrounding mana vibrated as well.

It's just a sword... how could this be happening?

I felt an overwhelming amount of mana coming from the sword.

If this was a person rather than a sword, I wouldn't think twice before fighting him.

I grabbed the continuously humming holy sword with my right hand and drew it.

It didn't really feel like a holy sword and I just drew it from the floor.

I think I passed the holy sword's test?

[Warrior.]

A voice rang out in my head. It was the voice of a big, middle-aged

man. He sounded like a narrator from a documentary.

[Warrior, can you hear me?]

It must be this sword's voice.

[Warrior, can you hear me?]

The dignified, middle-aged voice continuously asked.

If it could talk, they should've made it a girl's voice.

[Warrior, please listen to me. Please. Please...]

“I'm listening.”

[Oh! Dear God, thank you very much! Warrior, why didn't you respond immediately? Did you know how surprised I was?]

What a talkative sword. Should I say that it's a sword with an ego?

“You're the holy sword, right?”

[Yes, of course. I am truly the holy sword. To be exact, I am a magic sword imbued with the sword spirit, Ahoubuch. I am a sword with a blessing from the great god of the blue skies. Wow. It feels great to talk after such a long time!]

“Ahoubuch?”

[That's my name, Warrior. You have my respect, Warrior. I love you, Warrior.]

It was quite the affable sword.

It did have one flaw, though.

It said it loved me with a man's voice... when I heard that, I felt

goosebumps.

“By the way, don't most of the spirits in swords have a female voice?”

[...My apologies. When I was still a human, I was born as a man.]

So he was a human before.

I wonder how he became a sword spirit.

[I'll try harder, Warrior. Like this, or like this. Shall I try to make my voice cuter?]

“No, don't, before I stick you back into the ground.”

[Yes. I'm sorry, Warrior. Please don't put me back, Warrior. This is the first time I'm speaking to someone in 200 years, Warrior. Please.]

It seems like he wasn't normal even when he was a human.

The holy sword suddenly became serious, speaking calmly.

[Warrior, could you please tell me your name?]

“Lee Ho Jae.”

[Yes. Warrior Lee Ho Jae, you should now be able to handle the holy sword's power. If we're together, we can defeat any wicked foe. Normally, whenever you're in danger, I'm supposed to tell you my hidden abilities one by one, but since you're the warrior who pulled me out after no less than 200 years, I'll specially tell you all my abilities from the start. First...”

While the holy sword told me about its abilities, I thought about the stage's difficulty.

The first mission, acquiring the holy sword was so... boring.

Perhaps acquiring the holy sword is supposed to be difficult.

If that's true, it's somewhat regrettable that I passed the mission this easily.

[...Next, justice! Love! Friendship! Cry out those words and I will shine light. With that, the magic will be invoked.]

“What would happen to an unqualified person who tried to draw you?” I asked, cutting off the holy sword.

[I'm sorry? An unqualified person? They just wouldn't be able to pull me out. And they would feel a little pain in their grip. That's all.]

“How do you determine who's qualified?”

[I determine who is qualified by their fundamental abilities. You must also be acknowledged by many gods and you must be able to handle your mana in various ways. That's because I'm fundamentally a magic sword. Of course, you must also have a certain mastery of swordsmanship.]

They're terribly specific conditions: basic abilities, being acknowledged by the gods, handling mana, and swordsmanship.

The holy sword had somewhat explained the criteria for drawing it, but it couldn't be that simple.

All those skills must be extraordinary.

Amongst them, the most difficult condition was knowing swordsmanship.

What if a challenger for the 26th floor didn't know how to use a sword? What are they supposed to do?

Of course, it's supposed to be a party stage with a 25 person party, so at least one of them should be able to handle a sword. Maybe it's purposely set up like that.

But using common sense...

How the hell are 25 people going to get up to the 26th floor on Hell Difficulty?

The next challenger will definitely have to take on the 26th floor alone.

And if they're not proficient with a sword, they'll have to stay on the 26th floor and practice their swordsmanship.

What's worse, there's no reset on this stage.

Seriously, the difficulty is way too damn high.

Lee Hyung Jin only focuses on daggers, so even if I wanted to warn him now...

He might barely be able to use swords, but a dagger was his main weapon.

I'll tell him to start practicing with a longsword starting tomorrow.

The holy sword's conditions were terribly specific, so it wasn't easy to get its approval. The ten missions were even worse.

The difficulty was certainly hard enough.

Next, let's think about taking down the Demon King.

[Warrior? May I continue explaining?]

“No, let me organize my thoughts.”

[Yes. I understand, Warrior. Take your time.]

The holy sword is definitely really powerful.

If I take into account the sword's magic spells, I'll become even stronger. If I master those and use them well, I'll be able to exert overwhelming power.

Also, the warrior who holds the holy sword becomes the leader of the five groups of warriors, and plays a pivotal role in defeating the demon king.

Theoretically, the five groups of warriors should number 125. Add to that the Empire's knights.

When we attack the Demon King, they'll probably send soldiers as well.

I tried to estimate the Demon King's strength.

“It sounds like fun.”

[I'm sorry? Shall I continue explaining, Warrior?]

“No, I'm really sorry, but I think I'll have to put you back. Since it'd be theft if I just took you. I'll take down the Demon King first and then I'll come back.”

I'd finally found a strong opponent, so I didn't want to borrow the sword's strength to take on the Demon King.

I want to test my growing strength.

I'll fight him once and if it doesn't work out, it wouldn't be too late to fight him with the holy sword after.

[What are you... Warrior? Warrior, please don't. Please.]

The holy sword pleaded, but I flipped the holy sword around and stuck it into the ground.

[Warrior, please. You can just keep me with you. Don't put me back into the ground... Warrior, wait a moment. Seriously, just wait a minute!]

I put the sword deep into the ground.

[Seriously, give me a minute... You asshole...!]

I pushed the sword all the way down until I couldn't hear the sword's voice anymore.

Its last words sounded like curses directed at me.

Was I imagining it?

Chapter 153

Tutorial 26th Floor (4)

The next morning, I followed Seregia, who came by the lodge to pick me up, and we went to the magic circle located within the castle.

There were several magicians at the location of the magic circle as well as dozens of guards, but when she showed them some sort of identification, they authorized the use of the magic circle without much fuss.

“Please take this, Warrior,” Seregia said, giving me a paper bag.

“This is for you to throw up into.”

“Throw up into this?”

“Yes. If you use the teleportation magic circle to travel, you'll lose your sense of balance and feel extremely dizzy. At that time, if you feel nauseous, vomit into this.”

I didn't think I'd feel dizzy and vomit, but I said that I understood.

In the past, on a trip on a cruise ship, they had given me a plastic bag. It was the same kind of feeling.

It just so happened to have rained that day, accompanied by high waves, so there was the ceaseless sound of vomiting in the auditorium.

My nephew had held onto his plastic bag and vomited like crazy.

Because of the unpleasantly sour smell filling the cruise ship, I had almost gotten motion sickness...

Let's stop it with the nauseating thoughts.

“Please don't be so tense and do not resist against it by drawing from your mana pool.”

Seregia's additional request was simultaneously accompanied by the activation of the magic circle.

The mana started to move, shone, and I was transported.

It wasn't much different from the portal in the stage's waiting room.

It was a little different in terms of comfort, but it was a feeling I had become accustomed to.

The transported location's weather was a bit gloomy.

It was a complete contrast to the clear and bright weather from before.

Also...

Retch.

Seregia was vomiting heavily.

She had turned her head, but the vomiting sounds that she was making were so graphic that I could picture them in my head.

I felt a few goosebumps.

After Seregia had calmed down a little and gargled some water in her mouth, she approached me and started talking.

“Hoo, I heard that citrus tea definitely helps with motion sickness.”

That was the first time I had heard something like that.

“Those are groundless rumors,” I said.

Of course, that's probably the case.

“As a result, I got to see the sparsely dappled white citron flowers mixed in the yellow gastric fluid. It was really unpleasant.”

“Why exactly are you explaining that to me?”

“Let's, let's go, Warrior. It's this way.”

I followed Seregia's lead.

Beyond the walls, there was a battle going on, so it was noisy; inside of the walls, there were soldiers busily running around while we were going towards the watchtower, but no one restrained Seregia.

“You seem to know the geography of the area quite well.”

Seregia hadn't stopped even once, hadn't wavered, and continued walking.

“Yes. That's because when I was on vacation, I would occasionally come here.”

“Why would you come here?”

“I came to watch the battle.”

She talked about it like she was going to the movie theaters on the weekend.

“Because of that, we were permitted to use the teleportation magic circle without any misgivings. The soldiers probably won't even bat an eye if they see me,” Seregia said, laughing amusingly.

I felt that her words were odd.

So she didn't make a formal request to come here.

“Ah, in your case, Warrior, I will just tell them that you're my valet, so

they will let you pass easily. Of course, there's no way that someone of the Kunon Knight Order would have a valet, but people don't know much about the Kunon Knight Order.”

“Is that so? Rather, don't they know well that the Kunon Knight Order is a peculiar knight order?”

“No. In general, they aren't even aware of its existence. My identification only has a mark stating that I am a knight belonging to the royal family, but there's no mark for the Kunon Knight Order. The Kunon Knight Order is pretty much an invisible man socially.”

“I suppose. Depending on the situation that can be an advantage.”

She meant that nobody paid attention to them and nobody would touch them. Although they were considered invisible men, for some reason, I felt completely fine with that.

“Yes. As long as we don't make any noticeable mistakes, nobody will care about what we do. Because of that, my wallet is always full.”

Yes... how nice.

It was the same when she had talked about her wealth being seized, but Seregia looks like she doesn't have any interest in worldly affairs and seems quite snobbish.

Seregia had led me through the fortress, arriving at the watchtower above the rampart.

Seregia spoke whilst hanging up a 'no trespassing' sign at the entrance of the watchtower.

“This is my secret spot. The watchtower isn't used because it's far too forward and it's within range of enemy magicians. The entrance is also in a corner. It's just the thing for looking around unnoticed.”

The watchtower does indeed have a panoramic view of the surrounding area.

The battle was in full swing beyond the walls.

“I didn't know a battle was going on. Should we go and help?”

“It's fine, Warrior. You see our forces over there? Those are all golems.”

Taking a closer look, the soldiers on the walls that were fighting the demons weren't humans, but golems.

The golems were around 2 meters tall and had sturdy builds. Although their movements looked a bit slow, they wouldn't stop moving until they were completely destroyed.

Although the Demons' soldiers seemed both wild and ferocious, the golems weren't pushed back and continued to hold their own.

“Those golems are summoned and managed by magicians. We don't lose much if they're destroyed, so you don't have to worry about it too much.”

So, they aren't guarding the fort from atop the wall, but rather, they're summoning and controlling the golems from up there.

“They don't normally get pushed back to the front of the fort. But in the case that that happens, we cannot stay in this watchtower, since it would be dangerous.”

Seregia finished explaining and took something out from under the platform in the corner.

They were snacks.

“Would you like some?”

Seregia calmly offered the hidden snacks to me.

I have a hunch that she might've hidden alcohol somewhere too.

“...No, I'll just continue to watch.”

After I refused her offer, Seregia calmly started to eat her snacks alone.

What an unusual person.

It might be strange for me of all people to call her that, but Seregia was really strange.

The battle was progressing smoothly.

The golems were on the offensive, but they were being noticeably pushed back. After hearing that it wasn't much of a loss even if they were destroyed, I saw the progress of the battle differently.

At any rate, the humans with mana to spare used it to hold back the enemy.

With that much, I could say that it was an effective harassment.

While the golems put up a good fight against the Demons' soldiers, they were being steadily brought down one by one.

“Do they not have any defense against magic?”

“Yes. Since they're golems, even if the enemy magicians only cast Dispel on them, the golems will easily crumble. They're also weak to large-scale magic. However, from the start, magicians can't be too far from the golems, and they'll eventually turn back into a pile of rocks when their time is up. They're just low-rank golems, so I think they're doing plenty enough.”

But if you just intercept the magicians, I think you'll have much more significant results.

The Demons' soldiers alone wouldn't be able to take on the golems and they'll be pushed back. Then, they'll naturally have to abandon their position and they might even have to retreat.

I don't know much about the battle, but their retreat would definitely be a favorable outcome.

I organized my thoughts and called the snack-eating Seregia.

“Lady Seregia, could you explain to me where the Demon King is located again, please?”

Seregia took out a map from her bag and started explaining.

“There is a ceremony being performed to summon the Demon King at the top of this mountain. It's west of here, so... it's that mountain over there.”

There was a ghastly energy surging into the sky from the mountaintop that Seregia had mentioned.

It would be difficult to notice it immediately since it was so far away, but once I concentrated I could feel that ominous energy.

“This is the fort's current location. And here and here are the strategic points for the Demons. And here, there's an occupied fort. Also, beyond that fort, there are the plains where we've gotten reports that several new villages have been created. There are at least 20 of them.”

Seregia briefly caught her breath and continued her explanation.

“The Demons' reproductive rate is extremely fast. That's why they're capable of doing something crazy like summoning the Demon King. There are probably soldiers that have just been birthed from those new villages stationed around here. We haven't gotten any reports on their exact location, so we don't really know. Also, if you follow this river, there might be a few guard posts. We haven't gotten any reports, but I think I heard that they're transporting their supplies down the river.”

Seregia explained the important points around the fort and the mountains using the map.

While I only honestly needed to know where the mountaintop where

the Demon King was being summoned was, the contents were very detailed so I listened attentively.

Although I felt bad for Seregia, I didn't come here to sight-see.

I think I should just take care of the Demon King while I'm here.

And take care of all the demons that get in my way.

“Lady Seregia.”

I stood up and called for Seregia.

“Yes. Do you want some snacks?”

“...No. I'm sorry, but please wait here, Lady Seregia.”

“Where are you going?”

“I'm going up to the mountaintop where the Demon King is being summoned.”

“That's reckless.”

She left the crevice in the watchtower and responded.

“I personally don't think so.”

I launched myself out of the watchtower and dropped to the ground.

On the way, I activated my Talaria's Wings and flew towards the battlefield.

Originally, I had planned to use Soul Cry to gather up all the enemies in the surrounding area and killing them before heading to the Demon King.

However, contrary to my expectations, Seregia had, without any prior

notice, brought me here.

In this situation, if I used Soul Cry rashly, allies would be caught in it as well.

Invoking the Soul Cry, Soul Siphon, Talaria's Wings, and Indomitable skills had one weakness: they didn't differentiate between friend and foe.

Soul Cry affects who I perceive as my enemy and the person who perceives me as an enemy. If I used it improperly, the commander here might send his troops to attack me.

So, there were two methods available for me to use all my strength.

One was using Seregia to tell the commander about my existence.

This seems like it'd be a real hassle.

He'd start with asking why I'm here and then he'd lecture me about how I'd messed with the schedule and talk about how I can't move arbitrarily or maybe even talk about how I can't just secretly hide in the watchtower.

That plan had more than just one or two problems.

It would waste a lot of time too.

The second method was much simpler.

Just make all the battlefield's commanders and soldiers aware of me, that I'm on their side.

At the very least, that I'm an enemy of the Demons.

I flew in the air and I verified the Demon Magicians' location.

They still hadn't noticed me flying above them.

When one of the magicians uttered an incantation, I quickly descended and tore through him.

My fingertips had pierced through his chest, killing him, and I leapt back into the air once more.

I found my next target and ambushed him.

This time, while I was flying around, I struck the side of a magician's face.

The magician's head violently twisted, breaking his neck, and killing him.

I flew back into the sky again.

I repeated this a few times and cut down their numbers one by one, so the enemy should notice me soon.

I descended again and aimed for my next target.

Perhaps the enemy commander became aware of me since the magic flew towards me all at once.

However, the magic projectiles weren't really that fast.

There weren't that many of them either.

I easily evaded them one by one and approached my target.

“Flame Strike.”

The magician right in front of me cast his magic.

Since we were really close, instead of evading it, I roughly blocked it with my wings. After, I reached my hand out and grabbed his neck.

I once again flew up into the air.

The Demons' soldiers attempted to catch me, their magic constantly flying at me.

I stopped rising up into the air when I got out of the range of their magic.

I broke the neck of the magician I was holding onto and dropped his body to the ground.

This should be enough.

The magicians, which were the ones deciding the battle, were no more.

I killed the enemy's key force, their magicians, the ones deciding the battle.

In just a short time, I had killed 10 enemy magicians.

It's definitely a result that could turn the tides of the battle.

Also, there was the magic that the enemy magicians had fired at me simultaneously to intercept me.

I had definitely caught both sides' soldiers attention.

Above the fortress, the commanders on the human side who were watching over the battlefield must've seen the magicians.

Now, rather than them perhaps seeing me as an enemy, they will no longer be caught up in my skills.

I felt that this too was bothersome but it turned out better than I had expected.

Against the large amount of enemies, I continuously dropped from the sky and attacked like a bird of prey. Picking off their forces from a long-distance was a totally new experience.

However, now it was time for my style.

The ceremonies from yesterday morning to now were just one day but it was difficult to endure.

I descended once more.

This time, I didn't aim for the magician. I simply landed onto the ground.

As I landed, Demon soldiers from all around crowded around me.

“Uah!”

[Soul Cry]

I used Soul Cry and started the fight.

My destination: the mountaintop where the Demon King is being summoned.

My target: everything around the Demon King's location.

Chapter 154

Tutorial 26th Floor (5)

I sat atop a pile of rocks to briefly catch my breath.

I didn't really need to take a break, though.

Due to corpses strewn around and the accompanying blood scattered throughout the surrounding area, the pile of rocks looked like a tiny island in the sea.

While I sat upon the pile of rocks, I gazed at the sky and heard rustling footsteps in the distance.

I saw a shadow cast by the sun's light amongst the trees.

I waited quietly.

There weren't any remaining enemies in my vicinity.

The only ones still alive were Seregia and I.

Seregia avoided the strewn corpses and walked towards the mound of rocks... No, she crawled over to me.

Wheeze.

I can easily discern her condition just by hearing her heavy breathing.

It was obvious when one considered the distance we had travelled today.

“That's why I told you to stay at the fort. Why did you follow me?” I asked.

“Just a minute, I... Pant. My breath. I need a second to catch... my breath... Hoo. I'm a little dizzy.”

“Yes. Please catch your breath.”

Seregia climbed up the pile of rocks. I briefly waited so that Seregia could catch her breath.

I wonder why she had followed me this far?

That was the question.

It would've been fine if she had just stayed at the fort.

Of course, she could choose to follow me.

She might have followed me due to her sense of responsibility, or even because of her curiosity.

Or perhaps there was an entirely different reason that I'm unaware of.

However, she had to witness countless people die right before her eyes. Someone who disregards all that death and recklessly follows someone isn't normal. At least, it's not something a normal human would do.

Most people would turn back. They would run away.

After Seregia had calmed down a bit, I asked her again.

I asked her why she had followed me.

“I'm regretting it right now.”

Of course you are.

Her hair was disheveled and her sweat had caused her clothes and hair to stick, so she seemed quite uncomfortable.

Her lungs wheezed, her breath emitted a stuffy smell, and her legs trembled.

Her clothes and her shoes were stained with blood and her hands and face were dusty.

It would be difficult to traverse that distance even if she had a horse, yet she had just chased after me with her own two legs; it was obvious that she would be tired.

What's worse, she had followed me through the recesses of the dark mountain.

“Hoo. I thought I was going to die. I couldn't get any closer no matter how fast I ran. Plus, the mountain's getting more and more rugged. And there's the bodies scattered beneath my feet. The smell is disgusting as well. Not to mention, there's the occasional attack from the Demon soldiers.”

There was one thing that she said that was bothering me.

“What do you mean by demon attacks? There shouldn't be any demons left.”

I had definitely drawn all of the enemies in the area to me and killed them.

And there weren't any remaining enemies on the route I was on.

“Yes. That was a lie,” Seregia said confidently, with her peculiar outspokenness.

Once again, I felt like her confidence was absurd.

“Why are you going so far as to lie?”

“I just wanted to try bluffing. Do you have a problem with that?” she said bitterly.

“...No. Well.”

Seregia quickly apologized for her bitter response.

“I'm sorry. It's become a habit.”

“A habit?”

“Yes. Everyone I meet and talk to just say 'yes, yes' and agree to everything I say. I don't know when it started, but maybe that's why I started to get into the habit of bluffing.”

“Ah... I see. Even so, please don't do that.”

“Yes. I understand.”

Even so, I appreciated that she was honest, even here.

Somehow, I think I've started to understand her situation, especially since it was a type of problem that I had experienced.

In general, differences in status can create a gap in communication.

She's shunned within the royal family's knight order.

It's likely that most of the people around her ignore her and ostracize her, so the only people she can talk to are people who occupy a lower status than her.

She couldn't even look someone directly in the eye, unlike most knights who belonged to the royal family.

It seems like that's the situation she's in.

She's isolated from other people.

She might not even have family or friends.

In cases like hers, a close friend would be really beneficial to her.

I wanted to ask her if she had a friend, but if she really didn't have any it would end up as an extremely rude question.

“Ah. Then by any chance, was your analysis of my swordsmanship also a bluff?”

“In part. I predicted that you would be to handle a sword, Warrior.”

“How?”

“If you want to wield the holy sword, you have to be a swordsman.”

Ah... that's right.

In general, the warriors are summoned in groups of twenty-five, but in my case, I was summoned alone.

It was highly likely that a warrior that was summoned alone would have the capabilities of a swordsman, since they needed to be able to wield the holy sword.

“But my statements regarding the ‘intervals’ of your sword weren't lies.”

I knew that.

She had already proven her talent by correctly identifying the ‘intervals’ of my swordsmanship.

Although she had deduced things in a somewhat backwards manner, even so, it was still enough to say that her innate abilities were amazing.

I relayed my appreciation, and told her not to worry about it.

Also, I told her once again that she was amazing.

Seregia laughed awkwardly.

“Thank you.”

When I had complimented her inside of my lodgings, she had laughed with the same awkward expression.

Seregia's face wouldn't change with most work, so I found her current expression to be quite unusual.

“I'm very happy,” Seregia added.

She hadn't calmed down yet, so she caught her breath before opening her mouth again.

“I don't know how you'll take this, but you're the strongest person that I've ever seen, Warrior.”

“Yes. That sounds about right,” I responded, speaking in a way similar to Sergia's.

That's obvious.

There's no way you've seen someone stronger than me.

“Maybe that's why I feel like I'm being rewarded as time passes. I'm talking about when you first complimented me, saying that I was amazing. I was truly happy... and I was really touched.”

Seregia's talking for a long time.

It's unlike her.

She's reacting differently from when I had complimented her the other day.

It was easy to understand why.

It's because she had been fiercely exercising continuously for a long

time, so she's secreting hormones.

TL Note: He's basically saying that she's not in her right mind, and is being overly specific as to why he thinks this. He's socially inept, remember?

Right now, it must feel as though her brain is slightly tipsy.

I'll say it again, but this isn't very different from a drunken confession.

It wasn't bad.

Since I had also wanted to hear what she had to say.

It seems like Seregia had been much happier than I had thought from that small praise.

That might be why she decided to bring me to the fort without asking any questions.

Maybe that's why she followed me up until now too.

“So is that why you followed me?”

I might've been wrong, but I just wanted to hear her reason for following me.

“At first, I came with you because I thought you might get lost. At the time, I had thought you would fight in the area for about one or two hours. After that, I tried to stop you to tell you that it was dangerous. However, I couldn't catch you with my own two feet.”

In any case, she's just saying that she was worried, so she followed me.

Rather, I appreciated her intentions.

“Warrior, I didn't think you would come this far. Are you truly planning on going all the way up to the summit where the Demon King is being summoned?”

“Yes. That's why I came here.”

“Without the holy sword?”

“Yes.”

“That's reckless. The holy sword is not a normal sword. Of course, I've seen how amazing you are, Warrior. I've seen you kill plenty of Demons today to know that. However, the power of the holy sword isn't simply at the level of a mere precious sword. Also, if you don't have the power of the holy sword, you cannot repel the Demon King. It's too reckless.”

“That's what I'd like to say to you, Lady Seregia. Now, what would you like to do? I'm going to start moving again,” I said, standing up from my spot.

“How about we turn back?”

“If I was going to do that, I wouldn't have come this far.”

“Go back and at least get the holy sword. Warrior, you should have more than enough qualifications to wield the holy sword.”

“I don't want a holy sword that groans in a man's voice.”

“I'm sorry?”

I dusted off my pants.

Before I continued, I stretched and warmed up.

“I think I have to set off now.”

“...Shouldn't you rest a little more before you go? While you're at it, what about leaving after the morning sun comes up?”

“I've rested enough.”

“What about eating some snacks before you go?” she said, taking off the bag from her back and pulling out some snacks.

The snacks were all crushed.

I giggled after seeing her forlorn expression.

“Unfortunately, there aren't any snacks to eat.”

“Warrior,” Seregia sighed.

“Yes.”

“How far are you going to go?”

“As I said, I'm going all the way up to the summit where the Demon King is being summoned.”

“No. That's not what I'm saying... Where are you planning to rest tomorrow?”

To be honest, my plan was to just to burst straight to the place where the Demon King is being summoned without any rest.

There's no way I'd lack the stamina to get there and I couldn't even sleep due to my insomnia.

However, Seregia stuck onto me.

[TL Note: The literal translation is as follows: The luggage known as Seregia stuck onto me.]

“Ok... Then, shall we rest at that fort you see over there? Like we're doing right now.”

“...It'll take a couple of days to get to that fort.”

“Eh, if we go fast, we can get there by tomorrow afternoon.”

“The route will be swarming with demons.”

“That's exactly what I want.”

After saying that, I dashed forward.

It wasn't really running, rather it was more like I was an arrow that was piercing through the air.

I wonder what decision Seregia will make, in that deserted place behind me.

I sensed that Seregia had stood up.

Would she decide to follow me again?

It was a really quick break.

That girl should need to eat and sleep...

Does she really plan to follow me?

The more deeply I advanced into enemy territory, the more demons appeared.

The demons that weren't in range of my skill might ambush Seregia.

There was no need for any calculations; it was certain that she'd face danger on her journey.

I sensed Seregia moving behind me.

* * *

“Why are you doing this?”

I put a wet towel over my face and asked Seregia, who was sprawled on the earthen floor.

She really followed me, though she looked like she was dying.

She looked like a marathon runner who had overexerted herself. It seemed like it had been too much for her heart.

Thus, she had arrived at the fort before sunset.

“...Pardon?”

“Why are you risking your life to follow me?”

“...Really, I'd like to say the same to you. Please answer me first.”

I had insisted that I had asked her first, but I pondered the subject briefly and changed my mind. I would answer her first.

“It's to defeat the Demon King.”

Seregia flinched slightly.

It was unfortunate that I couldn't see her expression because of the wet towel.

I wonder what kind of expression she has on right now?

“Then my reason is to watch you defeat the Demon King, Warrior.”

I had to think about what she said for a second.

And I accepted it.

I couldn't figure out the reason she followed me.

“Is there a reason you want to do that?”

“Assisting you, Warrior, is the first mission I received. If it's possible, I want to complete my mission properly. Also, if by any chance you defeat the Demon King by yourself, shouldn't I at least be there to

watch you accomplish that great feat?"

I felt as though her reason was based on her sense of responsibility, but that's only if I ignore that one thing that's missing.

Seregia hadn't even mentioned anything regarding her own safety.

"It's dangerous. You could die."

"Couldn't I say the same to you, Warrior?"

No.

It's not dangerous for me.

I won't even die.

"If that's not the case, then I won't die as well."

I couldn't understand her as always, so I gave up talking to her.

Also, after fifteen minutes, I revised my schedule to depart immediately.

If I maintain this speed, Seregia will die of either exhaustion or a heart attack.

"Please drink this. It's a potion."

"Yes. Thank you."

I took out a health potion from my inventory and gave it to Seregia.

Seregia didn't reject the potion and drank it wholeheartedly.

After she drank the health potion, she stood up, and examined the surrounding area.

“Are you perhaps departing immediately again?”

“No. I'm thinking of staying for a couple of hours before leaving.”

“A couple of hours... I should take that as a relief. Warrior. Did you perhaps pack any food? If you don't have any, should I find something to eat in the storehouse?”

Truthfully, food didn't really have much of an effect on my body anymore.

If you don't eat for too long, there'll definitely be some issues. However, when I cleared a past stage and returned to the waiting room, I was fine without eating.

That's why I haven't purchased any food lately.

I thought that there might be something to eat in my inventory, and I looked around.

There was some beef jerky.

I took out the beef jerky and some bottled water, and shared it with Seregia.

“Thank you. This is great because it has its own flavor.”

“The beef jerky we're eating inside of a fort filled with bodies?”

“Yes,” Seregia said firmly, and roughly tore the beef jerky.

It's hard to tell who's the Warrior when she's like this.

“Ah, Lady Seregia. Would it be rude of me to ask about your life before you were exiled to the knight order?”

“Not at all. There's not much to talk about.”

“Then, can you tell me about it?”

“Yes. Before I joined the knight order, I was an academy instructor. I was a swordsmanship instructor.”

“You were an instructor?”

“Yes. The story is kind of long. If I were to shortly sum it up, an academy graduate whose family had been ruined decided to take up a position as an academy instructor rather than go back to her hometown.”

I think you've summed it up far too simply.

She acts like it wasn't a big deal, but since she didn't seem to want to talk about it in detail and only told me the simplified version, I decided to move on.

“Then how were you exiled to the knight order?”

“It wasn't exile. Rather, I joined the knight order, Warrior. That too, isn't a big deal. I just entered a swordsmanship competition that was hosted by the royal family using my qualifications as an academy instructor. Thanks to my refined swordsmanship, I won the competition.”

“You won the competition, but you were exiled?”

“Yes. There were several reasons. I'm a commoner, my family was ruined, I'm a woman, and I was an instructor, even though I wasn't a knight. There were a few trifling problems. But when I think about them one by one, there are actually quite a lot of them.”

I sketched a picture in my head.

As I thought, the conversation didn't have a bright atmosphere.

“You're still amazing. You won the swordsmanship competition that even knights enter.”

Seregia briefly smiled bashfully, but suddenly straightened her face and spoke.

“Of course. I was the best at swordsmanship.”

It seemed like she actually did have some pride in her abilities.

She was a swordsmanship instructor, huh... She's exactly the person I need.

“Then how was my swordsmanship?”

“Your swordsmanship, Warrior?”

“Yes. You saw me fight from afar, didn't you? I'm simply curious.”

Seregia pondered briefly and responded.

“Honestly, I could only see flashing lights and the death of the swarming enemies from afar. There weren't many traces on the enemies' bodies, either. Ah, but there is something that comes to mind.”

“Something that comes to mind?”

“Yes. I'm talking about the bodies that occasionally look burnt. I've seen traces like that in the past. I remember that the previous head of the knight order had shown me a fallen kingdom's swordsmanship known as arcane swordsmanship.

A kingdom's arcane swordsmanship.

That phrase briefly reminded me of a man's face.

“Lady Seregia. Who was the previous head of the knight order?”

“Based on what I've heard, he was forced to enter the knight order because of a mistake he made in the past.”

“A past mistake?”

“Yes. It's likely that an illegitimate child showed up.”

“Ah, I see... Lady Seregia. Was he by any chance a really talkative person?”

“No. He was a taciturn person who would barely speak one or two words a day.”

I guess not.

Chapter 155

Tutorial 26th Floor (6)

“What do you plan on doing now?”

Seregia and I were hiding on the mountainside, watching the summoning process proceed at the top of the mountain.

I had departed from the fort only five days ago and had arrived here six days after entering the stage.

And right before my very eyes, I saw the scene of a demon killing other demons.

“What exactly are they doing over there?”

“It seems to be a living sacrifice for the summoning ceremony.”

I didn't know that this Demon King summoning thing involved living sacrifices.

It was entirely reasonable, cause of the Demons having a quick reproduction rate.

But it was pretty uncomfortable to watch.

I had killed around the same amount of demons that they're using as living sacrifices, so it's not something that I of all people should say.

It was ironic.

“I don't believe that it's usually this kind of ceremony. However...”

“However?”

“They may be rushing the ceremony because of you, Warrior.”

There is some truth in that.

The condition for clearing the 26th floor stage was to defeat the Demon King.

When you start the stage, the Demon King wouldn't have been completely summoned yet, so the clear conditions would usually be to defeat the Demon King or to interfere with the summoning ritual.

However, the fact that the clear conditions showed up as defeating the Demon King may mean that no matter when I got here, the Demon King would be summoned without fail.

“However such a haphazard method will certainly have side effects.”

“What kind of side effects?”

“For example, the summoned object may be unable to fully cross over, or it may restrict the Demon King. Those kind of side effects.”

It may be a modification for someone like me who discarded the holy sword and rushed here as fast as I could.

You didn't have to.

“You seem to know quite a bit.”

I hadn't expected Seregia to know about something like a summoning ceremony.

“It's on the level of common sense.”

After the brief explanation, Seregia called me again.

“Warrior, I asked you this before. No, I had already asked you this several times on the way here, but what do you plan on doing now?” Seregia asked, sounding slightly annoyed.

I was really surprised about her annoyance.

An ominous mana surged wildly at the site of the living sacrifices.

Furthermore, the Demon King will be summoned here soon.

Yet, Seregia didn't feel fear or dread. Instead, she was concerned about the fact that I was ignoring her.

Does she have a few extra lives or something?

“I wonder. Shall we wait a little? It looks like the ceremony will wrap up soon. Now that it's already like this, let's wait a little longer, and then take down the Demon King.”

Seregia responded with rapidly changing expressions.

Her expressions changed constantly from this to that; Seregia looked to be pondering something and after sighing, said, “Fine. Do you as wish.”

Rather than say 'ok, I understand', she seemed to have resigned herself.

I took out some beef jerky from my inventory.

“Would you like some?”

“Of course.”

Seregia took the beef jerky as if it were the obvious thing to do.

How could she be so calm?

It was strange.

“It is strange,” Seregia said, chewing on the beef jerky.

I was shocked for a moment; Seregia's sudden response made it seem like she could hear what I was thinking...

"I can't believe you thought of eating beef jerky in a place like this. The enemy will swarm us if they notice us. Aren't you worried at all?"

You're the one who's eating the beef jerky.

"Honestly, our enemies have already noticed us," I said.

"I'm sorry?"

"A few of them have already noticed that we're hiding here," I said.

Hearing this, Seregia furrowed her eyebrows.

"Should we run away? Or should we prepare for battle?"

"You just need to eat the beef jerky. It seems like they won't move an inch because of the summoning ceremony. As long as we don't provoke them, nothing should happen."

If I fight, it'll definitely cause enough of a disturbance to disrupt the summoning ceremony.

Our enemies knew that fact well.

They also knew that they wouldn't be able to stop me, nor would they be able to catch me.

If I decide to act, enemies from all sides will probably attack me. But if they don't, the battle will end as they watch.

Probably.

I was bored since I was sitting still, just chewing on beef jerky.

It would be nice if I could swing my sword.

For the past few days, Seregia had taught me swordplay.

Seregia had said that she couldn't reveal to me her own style of swordsmanship. However, she said that there wasn't much of a problem if she observed my swordsmanship and gave me tips or pointed out flaws.

Therefore, on the way here, I would demonstrate my style of swordsmanship in order to get some advice.

When she inspected my swordsmanship, she didn't actually teach me but discussed it with me.

She would grasp the intent behind each of my movements, one by one, and told me to figure out how to better accomplish the goal behind the action.

Seregia was definitely the most knowledgeable person on the subject of swordsmanship that I had ever met.

She was especially talented in the theoretical side of things.

Seregia scrutinized and interpreted my sword techniques one by one, as if she were solving a math problem.

She dissected my strokes breath by breath and pondered on whether there was anything I could improve on.

This had been a helpful experience for me, since it had been the first time I had ever analyzed my formless swordsmanship.

That's why I didn't feel like coming here together with her was a waste of my time.

“Lady Seregia.”

The words came out before my mind had even processed them, probably because I was bored.

I didn't really have anything to say, so I just started off by calling her.

“Yes, Warrior?”

What should I say?

“What will you do, Lady Seregia, when I defeat the Demon King?”

“I'm curious as to why you ask, Warrior. Are you asking me what I'll do after you defeat the Demon King and I barely survive?”

“No. I'm talking about when you return to the capital.”

“I'll disappear or I'll prepare for my exile.”

“...I'm sorry?”

“It'd definitely be a great ending if you defeat the Demon King and safely return. They'll probably ignore the minor mistakes I've committed because of it. Even so...”

“Even so?”

“It'll really become troublesome. You're an outsider Warrior, while I'm affiliated with the royal family. When the news spreads that we defeated the Demon King by ourselves, it'll become a great story. Rather than be a spectacle, it'd be better to get the reward and disappear.”

I watched as the expressionless Seregia spoke, but as per usual, I couldn't tell whether she was being serious or if she was joking.

I briefly displayed a vacant expression, but then I felt mana starting to run amok from the top of the mountain.

“Just as you wanted, it seems like the Demon King is being summoned, Warrior. Hm... this is... a little... serious. I had expected it, but...”

Just as Seregia said, it was indeed quite severe.

On the mountaintop, the space above the altar ripped apart, and out came an entity with a seriously nonsensical amount of mana.

Rather than a single entity, it felt like nature itself was moving.

It was like if you compressed a huge mountain of mana into a walking three-meter-tall person.

The Demon King was slightly shorter than three meters.

He had giant bat wings behind his back, and an ominous energy lingered within the glare of his red eyes.

There was one other thing that was peculiar. That guy had already noticed me.

When the summoning ceremony was completed, and the Demon King had fully crossed over to this world, he looked like he would immediately dash over to me.

His fighting spirit and his killing intent plainly revealed his desire.

I stood up.

I transformed one of my Thousand Arms into a long sword and grasped it in my right hand. I transformed my other Thousand Arms into a dagger and strapped it onto my belt.

As I stretched my body, I asked Seregia, “What are my chances against the Demon King?”

“It looks like you have around a 2% chance.”

You're too stingy.

I wanted to fly over to the Demon King, who was yet to be fully summoned, but Seregia spoke from behind me.

“Warrior. If at all possible, please don't die.”

If at all possible.

As always, she chose some new words.

“Yes. Please don't move and wait here, Lady Seregia. I'll put on a good show for you.”

* * *

I could accurately measure my enemy's strength.

Indomitable was a skill that would increase my strength based on how strong my opponent is. With this skill's effect, I could easily tell gauge my opponent's strength.

Right now, my Indomitable skill was enhancing my strength more than ever before.

What's worse, that buff was constantly getting stronger.

I felt an empowering feeling surge within my body, and at the same time, I felt a feeling of satisfaction.

After the Godmother from the 19th floor, this is my strongest foe yet.

After the 20th floor, most of the enemies that appeared fought while relying on their overwhelming numbers.

This was probably because they were stages that required 5 or 10 people parties, rather than solo play.

However, the 26th floor required a party of 25.

They call it party play, but with 25 party members it's more like a raid.

Also, there was an adversary that the group of 25 challengers had to

defeat in order to clear the stage. That single entity was right in front of me.

There was no way I wouldn't be excited.

I activated my Talaria's Wings and soared into the sky, watching the Demon King's summoning.

I smirked.

As soon as the Demon King's summoning was complete, and he had fully crossed over to this world, he roared at the sky.

[.....!!]

I didn't hear it.

A loud noise had definitely rung in my ears, but I couldn't hear the exact sound.

That's strange.

Next, the Demon King, who had screamed into the sky, watched me.

Then, he yelled again.

[.....!]

Simultaneously, the Demon King discharged a black energy at me.

Is it a type of magic attack?

I enveloped my long sword in mana and hurled it forward.

It instantly flew onward.

The Demon King's magic and my mana clashed right before my eyes and exploded.

I used the flight ability of Talaria's Wings and fluttered the wings.

Talara's Wing's doesn't "fly" by physically fluttering the wings.

They just work.

Although there had been an explosion, I ignored it and maintained my speed, flying forward.

Due to the explosion, I was hit by a sizable wave of fire, and was shaken because of the swirling mana.

As soon as I made it out of the explosion radius, I used my magic.

"Wind Arrow."

When compared to the Demon King's magic, it was a weak, trifling magic.

The Demon King didn't even need to evade it and raised his hand, negligently defending against it.

The Wind Arrow was deflected with the back of his hand and was helplessly destroyed.

That was all it needed to do.

I targeted the Demon King's chest right under his raised arm.

[Blink]

I had continuously used this skill in the past, and I had never found its strength lacking: Blink Slash.

I slashed downwards with the added speed of my blink, and the Demon King's body spurted blood.

However, that was it.

I had precisely cut through the left side of his chest, but my attack had ended with only a little bit of blood flowing from his sturdy body.

I had already attacked, so now it was the Demon King's turn.

The Demon King's eyes shined red.

I urgently turned, and escaped to the periphery of the Demon King's sight.

The Demon King immediately shot a beam where I had been standing.

After I dodged the beam, I had closed the distance in order to counterattack, but the Demon King's attack wasn't finished.

I had narrowly dodged the Demon King's fist that was enveloped with black energy.

As soon as I dodged his fist, magic flew at me.

If I dodged his magic, he would attack with his arms or his legs next.

Without any warning, he would either shoot beams out of his eyes or use his magic, so it was extremely difficult to take back the initiative to attack.

The Demon King just kept on attacking me continuously.

He definitely had greater mana and stamina than me, and I would lose the fight if it kept going on like this.

I dodged the unexpected spear-like objects that shot out from behind me.

Behind the Demon King's back, a tail unexpectedly shot out like a spear. I dodged the Demon King's tail attack and the Demon King used magic again.

A black magic flew right toward my face.

If I dodge this, I give up my opportunity to attack to the Demon King.

I transformed the Thousand Arms in my right hand and altered my long sword into an explosion sword.

[PR Note: This explosion sword thing is more like a flaming sword that causes explosions when the blade comes into contact with the enemy/ other blades. It is further explained later in the text.]

And rather than unreasonably trying to dodge the magic, I quickly shielded myself with Talaria's Wings and let the magic collide.

Before I could even see the strength of his magic, I blinked from my position.

I prevented myself from flying backwards from the magic by using Blink's effect to erase the kinetic energy.

The force of the magic would've certainly crushed my body.

However, in exchange, I took advantage of the opening between the Demon King's attacks.

I pierced the Demon King's chest with the explosion sword that I had transformed the Thousands Arms into.

It was like I was cutting through metal rather than flesh; the sword couldn't pierce deeply into the Demon King's chest.

It could pierce a depth as deep as the length of a single finger.

However, that much was enough.

I had figured out more of the Thousand Arms transformations through Park Jung Ah's help. One of them was the explosion sword.

The explosion sword, as the name might imply, explodes.

The blade of the explosion sword lodged in the Demon King's chest,

exploded.

The force of the explosion sword's explosion wasn't that great.

The fire probably wouldn't do any damage to the Demon King's heart.

However, the only thing that I had wanted from the explosion sword was to deepen the already-open wound in the Demon King's chest.

And the explosion sword had delivered on my expectations.

Next, the Demon King's attack flew towards me.

His right hand, enclosed with a blackish-red energy, flew towards me.

His forearm, and even his nails were covered in that heinous energy.

I can't evade this.

I had stabbed the Demon King with my explosion sword and detonated the blade, but I had used up more time than the gap allocated.

I went for that unreasonable attack even though it hadn't been my turn to attack. Rather, it had been the Demon King's turn.

From the start, the time that I had to attack was too short.

Along with that, I had sustained a lot of injuries from his magic attacks in order to create that opportunity.

I have to make a decision.

Right now, the Demon King's attacks are flying towards me by the moment.

From the start, it was an unfavorable fight.

The difference is huge in our fundamental stats.

Even though I had attacked the Demon King in the same spot several times, he wasn't really damaged much.

But the single attack that I had endured was a severe wound.

There's also a difference between the range of our attacks.

I had to continuously close in on him in order to attack, even if it was risky.

However, there was something even more fatal than that: the order of our attacks. The Demon King could attack whenever.

If the Demon King started to attack, he wouldn't give me an opportunity to counterattack.

Through his magic, his beam, his wings, his tail, or other methods of attack that he hasn't shown yet, he dictates the flow of battle by ceaselessly attacking me.

However, when I attack, he would have several opportunities to counterattack.

I have to make a decision.

Amongst the things that I had gained from discussing swordsmanship with Seregia, the most valuable had definitely been this.

A new idea.

Seregia's swordsmanship was based on theory.

It was delicate and systematic, but it also had its fair share of weaknesses.

Amongst those, there was a fatal weakness.

Since it focused so much on theory, it would underperform in a real fight.

For example, sacrificing an arm in order to secure temporary dominance or in order to secure an advantageous space or position.

It's a method that someone would come up with from a desk.

It sounded like crap, but Seregia had insisted that this could theoretically work.

[TL and PR Note: The next part is kind of like a list. There wasn't really a good way to rephrase these in complete sentences without heavily adjusting the style, so there are only minor edits in the following section.]

Even if you give up an arm, if you maintain your mobility, and occupy a superior position.

And you can perfectly ignore the enemy's attack and the pain. And if you have the mental capacity to continue the battle.

And if you have the ability to judge when it's right to give up an arm for the sake of getting an upper hand in the battle.

Lastly, if you have the skills to apply all this so that the chance that you've painstakingly made doesn't go to waste.

I made my decision.

Scarlet blood spurted out and my right shoulder flew up into the air.

In exchange, I got another chance to attack.

Chapter 156

Tutorial 26th Floor (7)

By sacrificing an arm, I created an opportunity to attack.

If I don't take advantage of this opportunity, it'll spell my defeat.

My life rests on this single strike.

I have to land the finishing blow with that attack.

I have to pierce through the Demon King's maelstrom of mana, as well as his sturdy body.

However, I'm confident.

I'm confident that I can pierce through the Demon King's defense.

I drew the dagger that was strapped onto my belt.

I was more familiar with a shorter weapon than a longsword-styled weapon, even more so when considering that my left hand was relatively clumsy compared to my right hand.

I raised my left hand that grasped the dagger and the dagger flew towards the Demon King's left chest, the area of his injury.

The dagger instantly pierced through the Demon King's protective barrier and the blade continued to fly, unperturbed by any obstacles.

On the 16th floor, the knight had taught me a key factor to his swordsmanship that led to a killing blow: the finishing blow wasn't a technique that required the sword or the feet to move.

Instead, you would manipulate your mana to manifest an explosive aura.

That was the finishing move of his swordsmanship.

Immediately after I had lost my right arm, I took an ambiguous stance.

There was only a moment of time to attack.

Everything was unfavorable for me, but I succeeded.

The blade of my dagger which was filled with my blazing aura, precisely lodged itself into the prior wound on the Demon King's left chest.

It only went as deep as finger.

However, that was enough.

It had been a injury that I had dug deeper into, bit by bit; it had all been for this one opportunity.

The dagger definitely pierced the Demon King's heart.

After I confirmed the sensation that I felt in my hand, I used my skill.

[Blink]

I used my blink to move backwards and widen the distance.

I saw the Demon King's beam as well as an attack from his tail pass by the space I had previously occupied.

Along with my dagger that had lodged into the Demon King's left chest, the standing Demon King's appearance was...

The Demon King's chest was on fire.

I don't know how much resistance to the fire attribute the Demon King has, but the injury was definitely fatal.

Since the dagger, the source of those flames, should have pierced all the way to the central part of the Demon King's heart.

[.....!!]

I heard the Demon King's inaudible scream and confirmed once more.

I won.

* * *

I lifted my right arm that had dropped onto the ground.

I roughly put it to my shoulder.

I swallowed down the elixir that I had held in my mouth.

I wonder how long it will take before it all reattaches.

It shouldn't take longer than a minute.

I looked at the enemies in the surroundings that had been watching the fight between myself and the Demon King.

Seregia was still hiding in the same place.

Conversely, the demons were descending the mountain.

I was pondering whether I should chase the monsters that were scared out of their wits.

I decided not to.

I turned my head and looked at the Demon King.

The Demon King was dying whilst standing.

The dagger was still lodged inside his left chest and from there, the flames were burning the Demon King's body and slowly spreading.

Despite that, the Demon King didn't look like he was stricken with grief.

Is he thinking that he'll just be unsummoned?

Since he'd received plenty of living sacrifices already, he had a peaceful attitude.

[...]

The Demon King suddenly opened his mouth and said something.

I didn't hear anything in my ears this time either.

However, the Demon King continued to move its mouth.

“Human.”

The Demon King said.

“What?”

I responded flatly.

“Why are you feeling malice right now?”

“Did you say malice?”

“I can feel a human's emotions. Since the energy from their emotions is great raw energy. However, I can feel dark emotions right now.”

Is that so.

That may be the case.

“It was right after you defeated this body, and achieved a heroic deed. To feel malice at that very moment, I'm surprised. Human. Shall I tell you the reason? The reason that you're frustrated?”

Frustration you say.

I don't think it's to the point of frustration.

“It's definitely towards the human bastards with their unique and dirty competition for positions. They will praise you but also be envious of you. They will create and cover the streets with false stories in order to defame you. It'll probably be accompanied by threats as well. With your strength, you'll be free, but what about the people around you?”

The Demon King was talking excitingly.

This bastard doesn't just fight with martial arts; he's the type of demon that deceives others through words, a type common in fairy tale books.

“Hoh. You seem to be feeling a bit better. It's really just as I say. Human. Hehehehe.”

“It's not, though.”

Of course, I did feel disappointed.

“It's not, you say? If that's the case, then why are you feeling so down? Go ahead and speak. Speak out that reason and deny my words, Human.”

“Compared to my expectations, this was kind of boring.”

“...What?”

“I'm saying you were too weak. You were spoon-fed so many live sacrifices. Don't you feel sorry for all the demons who sacrificed

themselves for you?”

After I finished speaking, I rotated my right shoulder.

It's fully attached.

As expected of a high-rank elixir.

It was expensive, so its effects were top-notch.

I picked up the Thousand Arms in the form of a longsword from the ground.

My shoulder's fully attached, so let's finish this and go.

“Human.”

“What?”

“Human!”

“Ah, what is it?”

“You mere dirty and vulgar human! You dare look down upon me!”

Oh, he's mad, he's really mad.

Is he starting to reveal his hot-bloodedness?

Is this the part where the villain provokes the protagonist despicably and the furious protagonist awakens?

Keep it up.

“You were lucky to escape with your life, you fly! You don't even know your place!”

His monologue is long.

Normally, this is the part where the protagonist awakens in one go.

While the Demon King continues to talk on and on.

From the villain's perspective, a sense of crisis would be felt, which might make them wish to immediately kill the protagonist.

I briefly ignored the Demon King's chatter.

I scratched the back of my neck with the blade of my longsword and waited; the Demon King suddenly put up a serious expression, and spoke in calm voice.

“Human.”

“What?”

“Run away.”

“What?”

“Run away and live! I'll give you a day! Within that time, try to run as far away from me as you can! I'll chase you and burn everything on this continent; I'll definitely catch you and show you hell right before your very eyes!”

When he was done talking, the Demon King lifted his head towards the sky and yelled loudly.

“I, as Sacrifice [.....], [...], offer up all of my kin under my control to the God of Harvest in exchange for bringing out my full power here!”

The Demon King announced to the sky and suddenly the Demon King's body was engulfed in black smoke.

And I started to feel a tremendous concentration of mana from the smoke.

The Demon King had a tremendous amount of mana before, but right now, the amount of mana I felt from inside the smoke was almost incomparable.

This is the start of the 2nd phase.

My fingers quivered with anticipation for the second time.

My heart throbbed and my body became hot.

“Wind Arrow.”

I tried launching my magic at the black smoke, but the wind arrow just pierced through the smoke.

Is it an attack nullifier?

It seemed like it had a similar effect to Idy's skill.

I briefly closed my eyes and I focused on sensing the mana.

My body trembled just from feeling the mana inside that smoke.

Motionlessly, I felt it.

They're completing one bowl.

[TL Note: It's a Korean expression meaning that they're combining to create one thing.]

It's not simply drawing up mana.

Something's being consolidated.

I had to guess the time when that thing would be finished.

The Demon King said he would give me a day.

However, based on the mana I feel, it seemed like it would only take a few minutes until the Demon King's completely regained his strength rather than one day.

I opened my eyes and opened my inventory.

I started to drink all of the strengthening medicine I had.

I didn't need to drink them until now and whenever Kiri Kiri had recommended that I get them, I would buy and collect them one by one; and now, I'm drinking the ability strengthening medicine.

Next, I brought my longsword forward and concentrated.

[Designate Opponent]

It was the skill that the God of Dueling had gifted to me in his offer to become his disciple.

The effect would be that it would designate my foe.

Also, when I confront that foe, it would sharpen my combat abilities and my concentration.

The enhancement would fluctuate based on how strong my opponent was, as well as how threatening the enemy is to me.

Enemy targeting will change according to how I define the concept of an 'enemy'.

Therefore, it was a skill I hadn't been able to use until now.

That's because I hadn't met someone that I truly considered an enemy until now.

I used both Indomitable and Designate Opponent simultaneously because their effects stacked.

I started to feel strength surge into my body.

The excessive mana oozed from my body and shook my surroundings.

I felt like I could destroy everything with just a shake of my hand.

Once I got control over it, it wasn't easy to sit still and wait with all of this power ready.

Kiri Kiri had explained Designate Opponent like this.

It was a really useful skill for me.

Also, amongst its abilities, she said the most useful one was the fact that it would increase my concentration on the enemy.

I didn't understand it back then, but after using it, I think I understand it now.

I was fully concentrating into that black smoke.

My growth, the stage, clearing, or even other people or the gods instantly became irrelevant.

It would erase all those distracting thoughts and I would focus entirely and solely on the Demon King.

With my mind entirely focused on the Demon King, I waited for him to finish.

I also used my other skills, which not only included Talaria's Wings, which would complement my combat abilities, but also Soul Siphon and all the other skills that I could currently use.

[Time Confinement]

After a small amount of time passed, I used Time Confinement.

I confirmed it within the world that seemed frozen.

Just as I had predicted, the moment the duration of Time Confinement

is over, the Demon King's transformation will be complete.

If that's the case, what I need to do is simple.

I need to match that timing and prepare my best attack.

The knight on the 16th floor had revealed several possibilities for me.

Originally, the knight had tried to tell me about the fundamentals of the swordsmanship, to a really high degree at that.

However, from what I listened to, his stories were the most valuable.

They told of his swordsmanship and the tales of the knight's past.

The connecting link between his tales that were like a children's story and the swordsmanship that the knight self-taught himself.

That was what was most valuable.

The knight's swordsmanship was defensive.

You would move less than your opponent and use less mana than them.

As you continued, you would aim at the opponent's blind spot and manifest your aura, turning things around and attaining victory at the last moment possible.

This straightforward strategy was studied and developed for centuries by the swordsmen of that world.

Also, the great swordsmen who left their names in history each possessed unique skills.

Everyone could share the defensive method of fighting, but each person's manifestation of aura would appear differently.

The techniques that manifested aura all had grandiose names.

They were filled with jargon and old names that couldn't be interpreted even with the knowledge of the time before Babel.

If you literally translate them, they generally have this kind of meaning:

Sun fall. Flame that starts from the ground and touches the sky. Lava rain that covers the sky. The flames of hell that won't extinguish for 7 days and nights.

Just by listening to them, you could tell how cringy the names were.

Also, the knight told me about those cringy techniques.

The knight himself didn't know how to use those techniques but he told me about their forms, their features, and their destructive power.

He also told me what the knights who created these techniques were like.

Using his stories as a foundation, I tried to recreate those techniques one by one.

And I had discovered a common point amongst all these techniques.

This simple swordsmanship that those great swordsmen had made, the thing that they had studied for centuries was the very thing that they couldn't complete.

The feat that the person who first invented the swordsmanship had performed was a sword that when swung once saved the empire and when swung a second time, saved the world, based on what the talkative knight said.

In his later years, when he swung his sword for the third time, a mere human was able to move a god and became a disciple to that god. The sword of that legendary swordsman.

The records had become too unreliable so no one earnestly believed in them and only the great swordsmen who had reached the stage of

swordmaster obsessed over that delusion of that sword.

At the end of my long concentration, I felt my Time Confinement being undone.

Perfect timing. To add to that, I'm in perfect condition.

At this moment, I'm in the perfect position.

As soon as the Time Confinement was released, I stepped one step forward and pulled my sword back.

At the next moment, I stabbed with my sword with the entirety of my strength.

I thought it was difficult for even I, who had swung the sword, to cope with the strength that had been thrust forward.

No great swordsman could've even imitated it and ultimately, I succeeded in perfectly recreating that lost swordsmanship.

Light Sword, Type 1. Pierce.

Following the sword's straightforward movement, the world was illuminated.

The sudden thunderous sound burst forth, making my ears ring briefly before silence enveloped me.

I could barely narrow my eyes from the light piercing them, but I endured it.

With this much light, even if you close your eyelids, you'd go blind.

Rather than close my eyes, I kept my eyes open until the end, and watched as my attack struck.

It plowed through the black smoke and the blade was aimed straight at the Demon King; the blade stretched forth and towards the end, my

sight which was completely focused on the blade went white.

My hearing, my sight, and my sense of touch were paralyzed, and thanks to that, I couldn't even witness the aftermath of my attack.

In my surroundings, the mana that I had discharged was still jolting around, so I couldn't even use a sensing skill to check anything.

I pushed down my curiosity regarding the state of the Demon King and myself and fainted peacefully.

[The God of Light is moved by you.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

Chapter 157

Tutorial 26th Floor (8)

[The God of Light is really moved by you.]

[The God of Light seems to be favoring you.]

[The God of the Sky acknowledges you.]

[The God of Harvest is flustered.]

I regained consciousness.

I don't know when I regained consciousness.

This is a problem that happens when your senses become dulled.

Everything was hazy, as if I was submerged in water.

First, I need to check if my senses have remained intact.

I rubbed my fingertips together.

My senses weren't all dead.

Plus, I could move my hands and arms.

Only the left side, however.

'Inventory.'

I had always had a high opinion of it; the inventory is definitely a great function.

It was comparable to a god's skill.

Because of its accessibility, even though my sight and my hearing were destroyed, I could pull out what I wanted.

I roughly popped off the top of the elixir bottle.

And I poured it about where I believed my mouth would be.

If my neck hasn't been twisted in a strange way, it should've gone down properly.

I poured down the entire bottle that way and waited.

I could feel all the senses in my body returning to normal.

Fortunately, the elixir had properly gone into my mouth.

About half of the elixir had spilled from the corners of my mouth, though.

I took out another elixir from my inventory and drank it.

This time, I drank it without spilling a single drop.

My ears, which hadn't been able to hear anything until now, started to pick up a ringing sound.

Beyond the ringing that sounded as if glass was being scratched, there followed a humming sound of something great.

My eyes, which had been blinded by the strong light, were also restored.

Beyond my closed eyelids, I saw a red light.

As I waited a little longer, I became fully aware of the state of my body.

I tried moving my arms and legs, and I probed every nook and cranny of my joints and muscles.

After I was certain that I was okay, now I opened my eyes.

I felt a slight pain in my eyes.

There wasn't anything that I saw with my hazy eyes that would give me a clue to my circumstances.

I waited a little longer for my vision to clarify.

My surroundings were burning.

The flames lingered on the barren ground and blazed on.

I felt a strong heat coming from the ground.

Flames also lingered on my body and armor as well.

I roughly stubbed the fire out.

The Demon King's summoning altar had disappeared without a trace.

The entire surrounding mountain area had transformed into a flat plateau.

Also, the landscape's changes only reached as far as his attack traveled.

It looked as if the landscape had been artificially erased over by an eraser.

The Light Sword had been so powerful that the aftermath managed to decimate the previous topography.

I had done it. There was a renewed sense of amazement.

I felt proud of my accomplishment.

The Demon King was definitely dead.

There were two reasons for that:

First, my attack had destroyed this entire area and the Demon King had been defenselessly exposed, so I don't think he would've been able to withstand my attack.

I had definitely sensed a tremendous amount of strength coming from the Demon King, but he wasn't so strong that he would be able to survive the aftermath of the Light Sword.

The next reason was a little more clear-cut.

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

I received five levels at the same time.

Recently, it has been difficult to level up even once in a single round.

It was an amount of experience points that I wouldn't have been able to attain if I hadn't defeated the Demon King.

Ah, now that I think about it.

I should be over level 51 now.

I opened my status window and checked.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv. 52

I had definitely surpassed level 51.

However, there was no visible growth in my stats or my skills.

It meant that I won't be rewarded for my level ups, even though I had surpassed level 51.

As things are I won't be able to receive level up rewards until at least level 101.

Looking at my current growth rate, it was highly likely that I wouldn't be able to get rewards even after level 101.

As Kiri Kiri said, it would be for the best to forget about level up rewards now.

After I finished checking my status, I analyzed my circumstances.

The Demon King was dead.

His ominous mana was drifting into the air, but it was just a vestige of the skill he had used.

The demons were... it seems like there was some sort of accident.

I don't know for sure, but as they urgently stampeded down the mountain slope, it seems that the group had tumbled down.

The aftermath of my technique might've created a landslide.

Lastly, I looked at Seregia.

She was dying.

That was surprising.

My back was facing her.

Also, I had aimed my technique in front of me and it thundered straight forward.

She, who had been in the rear, wasn't at a distance where she should be so seriously wounded.

I approached the girl that was collapsed on the ground.

I got close.

The woods that she had hid in had been so thoroughly incinerated that I hadn't noticed immediately.

She was at a much closer place than her original hiding place.

At last, I understood why she was hurt.

Before I had used my technique, that girl had been approaching me.

Since she had closed the distance by that much, she had become incredibly vulnerable to my technique.

She had moved hastily, so she couldn't even protect her body.

It was that kind of reason.

Seregia's whole body was speckled with burns.

The flames had even permeated through her body.

Because of that, the mana inside of her body was also a mess.

Her breathing was erratic and a part of her limbs twitched spasmodically. The other part was like a corpse or a block of wood; it

didn't seem like there was any life in it.

To repeat, it was right before she would die.

I took out another elixir bottle from my inventory and poured it down her lips.

I'm using a lot of elixirs today, though I still have a lot left over.

While I waited for her to wake up, I took out a burn ointment and applied it to her face.

I didn't save any and used the entire container.

It was medicine that I wouldn't use any more and scars might form on her face from this experience; I wanted to prevent that.

As I finished the treatment, I felt pressed by hunger.

I took out beef jerky from my inventory and chewed on it.

It has been a really long time since I'd eaten something due to hunger.

I definitely couldn't use the 'Light Sword' technique freely yet.

I have the skill to use it, but I didn't have the strength to handle it.

It was the same for the Demon King who possessed a tremendous amount of strength, but it was a strong technique that had destroyed the mountain and the altar in an instant.

It had destroyed the mountain and the altar, as well as the Demon King who wielded tremendous strength just like that. It may have been a strong technique, but I'm also at its mercy as well.

If I didn't have a stupidly sturdy body and strong willpower, as well as a tolerance to fire, I wouldn't be able to call it a Light Sword attack; rather, it would be a suicidal attack.

Compared to the Demon King's strength, if it weren't for the likes of the skills Designate Opponent, Indomitable, and Talaria's Wings boosting my strength, I wouldn't have been able to endure it.

Rather than enduring the technique, I might've not even been able to successfully pull it off.

[The God of Dueling is proud.]

[The God of Adventure is happy.]

[The God of Slowness is disappointed.]

Ah, the skill that the God of Slowness gifted me, Time Confinement, also played a huge role in this fight.

[The God of Slowness snorted.]

She's sulking.

The God of Slowness also sulks more than I had expected.

If there was something that differentiated her from the God of Adventure, it would be that the God of Adventure lets things go easily while the God of Slowness holds on to her feelings for awhile.

Is it because she's the God of Slowness?

In any case, I set aside my thoughts on the timid gods and continued to ruminate about my Light Sword technique.

The first time I had attempted the Light Sword was in the 24th floor waiting room.

At the time, I had failed at performing the Light Sword and my right arm, as well as my abdomen had ruptured violently.

If I hadn't been inside the waiting room, I may have just died right there.

This time too, it had been plenty dangerous.

When I had used the technique, I had an abundance of confidence and my mind had become feverish, so I had used it without any hesitation. However, when I think back on it, it had been an excessively dangerous course of action.

Let's reflect on it.

No matter how loosely in regards to how I hold my life, I can't afford to die.

That would also mean my defeat.

It seems that I had been overly excited from the Demon King's strength.

During that time, I moved at full speed beating down all I could that I encountered.

However, he was the first enemy that even if I gave everything I had, I didn't know if I could win.

Before I had used the Light Sword, the strength that I had sensed from the Demon King had been double that of the Great Mother that I met on the 19th floor.

[TL and PR Note: M (the previous translator) translated it as the "Great Mother" but it's not the way I would interpret it. I would translate it as "godmother" and have confirmed it with other translators as well. It would make even more sense considering that it's the literal translation of the word and she was also something like a deity. Pyrenose thinks its more towards English sensibilities, but we're just going to go with the previous translation to avoid confusion.]

That's why I had been excited.

On the contrary, right now, I was more calm than usual.

It's as if... it was a wise man's time.

[PR Note: A “wise man’s time” is a Japanese and Korean saying referring to the period after an orgasm when a man is free from sexual desire and is able to think clearly. Sort of like having an epiphany after sex.

After a giant feeling of satisfaction, I felt a sense of calmness, mixed with a little bit of shame and regret.

I still have a long way to go.

Thinking that way, I felt a little bitter.

She looked completely recovered now, so I checked Seregia once again.

She's breathing evenly now.

Her pulse is also normal.

No abnormalities in her brain.

Her mana is circulating normally.

She seems to have just fallen asleep though.

I just sighed before lifting Seregia and carrying her on my back.

And I descended the now-deserted mountain.

* * *

I returned slowly on purpose.

There wasn't really any reason to rush back.

I had already defeated the Demon King and it would be over once I return to the castle and acquire the holy sword.

There was still a lot of time left before the 33 days that Kiri Kiri had bet were up.

Also, if you were to ask if I really had a reason to return slowly, I did.

The Light Sword that I had used to defeat the Demon King.

It hadn't been very long since I'd successfully used that Light Sword, so I wanted to make it completely my own.

I couldn't withstand the technique yet, but I wanted to be able to freely use the technique.

I would continue to maintain my senses after using the Light Sword, and I would repeatedly recollect that memory to improve upon myself in order to use it a little more easily as well as more efficiently.

Occasionally, after I ate, I would sit down on the road and I would repeatedly meditate for a few hours at a time.

Since I had Time Confinement, if I gave up just five minutes I could calmly meditate for several hours.

Three days passed that way before Seregia woke up.

At that time, I was sitting in the middle of a field, eating beef jerky and chocolate.

In general, I don't eat this often, but since I had consumed so much stamina in the battle the other day, I had to ingest food periodically.

Because the stamina potions didn't properly treat my fatigue, I would stop walking once every few hours and eat and rest.

What's worse, I was still exhausted even after leveling up.

I might have ended up using that life force or whatever they call it in wuxia novels.

It felt something like that.

I decided to ask Kiri Kiri about it later.

While I had those thoughts, the laid down Seregia regained consciousness.

I told Seregia, who had regained consciousness, what had happened until now.

I had defeated the Demon King, descended the mountain, and was on my way back to the Empire's fort.

Seregia, who had listened to my explanation, abruptly kneeled down.

“Please take me as your disciple,” Seregia expressionlessly requested with her peculiar confidence.

And I obviously rejected her.

“I don't want to.”

“Why?”

“That's my line. Why?”

“I saw that sword, so it's obvious. I want to see that sword, even if it's just once more in my lifetime.”

“...So you can be caught in it again and almost die?”

“Once. No, if I can see it twice more, it's alright if I die.”

Seregia spoke so confidently, as if it were obvious that she'd be alright with dying and I was getting a little tired of it.

The world is vast and crazy... well in any case, that's what she said.

“Rather than that, why did you not stay put in your place and approach so closely? Lady Seregia, do you know you were really close to death?”

“At the start, I noticed that the Demon King's strength was unusual, so I was going to take you with me and run, Warrior. It looked like you were going to continue fighting, so I tried to stop you.”

“...Is that so? What about what happened next?”

“I judged that there was no reason to stop you when I saw the power that you had gathered in your sword. Instead, I stealthily got closer in order to see it from up close.”

“And because of that, you almost died.”

“As a result, I saw that sword up close and I also survived, so it paid off.”

A payoff. What are you talking about?

If I think about the cost of the consumed elixir, it's definitely a loss.

I sighed and raised my head.

Seregia, who was by my side, peeked her head forward.

“Warrior, your reaction seems a bit strange.”

“What about it?”

“Were you perhaps moved?”

“I'm sorry?”

“Were you moved by my words that I was worried about you so I had tried to go to you, Warrior?”

No.

That's definitely not it.

I'm at the point where all of my feelings of empathy are dissolving.

“If you by any chance, were moved by that, please take me as your disciple.”

“I really don't want to.”

“Why? I don't want much, Warrior. You just need to give me a chance to see your sword within your vicinity, Warrior. In exchange, I'll do anything I can for you.”

I had nothing to say in response to Seregia's shameless reason.

What do you mean by 'why'?

You obviously can't.

Since she can't leave this stage.

“I'm good at doing the laundry and cleaning, Warrior.”

“What about cooking?”

“...If I try my best, won't I get better someday?”

It seems like she can't cook.

I stood up.

“It seems that your body's well again, so let's slowly depart. Lady Seregia.”

“Is it truly impossible?”

“Yes.”

“May I ask the reason why?”

“I'll leave this place shortly and it wouldn't be possible to bring you with me at that time, Lady Seregia.”

I moved my legs and started to walk.

Soon, the sun went down and the stars glittered in the black sky.

Those countless worlds that are spread out through the cosmos.

The Tutorial System that uses the vestiges of those worlds as a stage.

My feelings were strange.

I knew there were new worlds beyond the cosmos and that those worlds are roaming around out there, so whenever I see the night sky on Earth, I would have a completely different feeling.

“Lady Seregia, so long as you don't die, it's impossible.”

I muttered something unnecessarily and advanced forward.

Chapter 158

Tutorial 26th Floor (9)

“Then rather than warriors, they're more like mercenaries.”

“Yes. That's true. They're closer to mercenaries, who move between dimensions, and some among them hide behind the righteous mask of the Warrior group.”

TL Note: The Warrior group is comprised of mercenaries that the Empire just calls 'Warriors'.

So that's how it was.

I had thought that the Empire thoughtlessly giving them tasks for this and that was abnormal after summoning them. Instead, in exchange for their summons, the Empire would promise to pay the mercenaries upon the request's completion.

I can understand why they were so flustered when I was summoned by myself.

Since the 'ordered' item had been incorrectly sent.

“Then why does the empire cover them up under the position of a Warrior? Can't they just work as mercenaries?”

It seemed that Seregia herself didn't really understand and scratched her head.

“I also don't understand, but it probably has something to do with honor or fame. Wouldn't the royal family which makes the request, just do it to look admirable? These kinds of stories remain as legends or tales and are passed down to the future generations. If they complete their task well, they'll be given plenty of hospitable

treatment and they'll be given a heavy responsibility by the Empire or they'll get the support of the subjects in the capital that may even involve a parade. If you're the type of person that likes that sort of thing..."

I thought it was likely that they'd do something like that, but I couldn't relate to it.

If you wanted to do that, you should be a celebrity instead.

Ah, would celebrities in this world not be given preferential treatment?

I conversed with Seregia about this and that along our way back to the fort that we used the portal to travel to.

It was valuable time where I could learn about this world's sensibilities and knowledge.

I also learned a lot more regarding swordsmanship.

Seregia voluntarily revealed the movements she used as well as her stances in theory and explained them to me, maybe because it would just be more comfortable or maybe because it would be better.

She explained why they were efficient, what were their pros and cons, and also in what situations you could apply them to.

It wasn't the way I trained my swordsmanship but this was also of great help to me.

From the start, I was also confident in studying theory.

Except, I just never had the opportunity to study combat theory before.

Seregia even explained the contents of what she taught to the academy students.

Since she had been a teacher in the past, I could learn some points even from the most basic content.

“Here you move swing your sword diagonally and take a step back. Then, you just need to swing your sword, stopping it right beside their waist. The reason for this movement is...”

[TL Note: To visualize, she's explaining a technique where you slash with your sword. You actually take a step back with her style; normally, you'd take a step forward, putting your weight on the front leg.]

“Then, the opponent will push into you, aiming for that gap after a large movement, so they'll rob you of the time spent on the diagonal sword swing. But in the next moment, you'd respond with a stabbing attack or you would take another step back.”

“Yes. You're right. The movements are just as you see and it looks like there's nothing special to it, but this style's distinct feature is its footwork.”

“Are you talking about the steps?”

“No. Honestly, the steps aren't special either. It's just your foot should be aimed in this direction. It's unusual, isn't it?”

“Yes it is. Normally, the stance makes the foot in front bear the weight as the center of balance. That's more efficient and more comfortable. Even if you thoughtlessly land and stand in this direction...”

“Yes, that's normally the case, but if you turn your foot in this direction...”

“It seems you'd be able to kick the enemy who's pushed in and prepared for a sword strike. You may fall, but if you push them enough with your kick, even if you fall, it seems that you'd have bought enough time to stand before they can rush back at you again.”

“Yes, you're correct.”

In my case, I wouldn't fall after pushing them away with a kick.

It's definitely great.

“But it's not normally a technique that the knights use.”

The move itself was devised under the assumption that they're being attacked from both sides and while countering this, they must roll on the floor.

“Yes. I studied existing swordsmanship as a basis to create it. But I've honestly never tested it in actual combat.”

“If they're at this level, these movements can definitely be used in actual combat. You're amazing.”

Of course, I couldn't just apply her teachings directly into my fights.

I, as well as my opponents, weren't fooled by normal swordsmanship that fit inside a mold.

However, if I theoretically understand the process and the result, the cause and the effect, I could utilize its techniques into other fights or other situations as much as I want to.

It was a worthwhile experience.

At the same time, it was also pretty fun.

At least, our personalities didn't clash and since our area of interest coincided, our trip back to the fort was both valuable and fun.

That's how one week passed and we had arrived in front of the fort.

* * *

Kwang!!

I heard a deafening sound before me and I muttered when I saw the fortress gate close.

“They must have caught onto the fact that you were illicitly accumulating money, Lady Seregia.”

[TL Note: Remember how she said earlier that her pockets were always full? Yeah, it's probably that.]

“No way. I don't take more than my fair share, Warrior.”

So you're saying you did do it.

If they hadn't uncovered Seregia's past crimes, why are the fort's soldiers so hostile?

Just a little while ago, the soldiers that had seen us approach the fortress gate exchanged words noisily and hurriedly entered inside the fort.

Now, suddenly the fortress gate had been closed.

No matter how I think about it, it looks like they're denying our entrance.

Of course, there were a lot of things that stuck out.

Seregia and I had left unannounced and our arrival to the fort was no different.

In the process, we had even secretly used the magic teleportation circle.

We had hid in the fort, watched the battle unfold, and I had even trespassed into the battlefield.

However, I don't think those are issues that they'd lock the fortress gate over.

“What do you think?”

“I also don't really know what's going on. It seems like the

commander's up there, so let's hear what he has to say.”

Like Seregia said, there was a man wearing a fancy military uniform above the fortress gate.

The man who looked to be the commander yelled at his soldiers.

“Open the gate!”

Just as he ordered, the closed gates started to reopen.

“It seems like there was some sort of mistake, Warrior.”

“It seems that way.”

It seemed that it was some sort of mistake, but just as I had my hopes up the commander shouted again.

“Get him! Catch the thief who tried to steal the holy sword and failed!”

Huh? A thief?

Soldiers were pouring out of the reopened gate.

Seregia saw that sight and calmly asked, “Warrior. Did you try to steal the holy sword and fail?”

“No. I pulled it out and then put it back into the ground.”

“Why did you try to pull out the sword?”

“I was just... curious.”

To be exact, I used the holy sword's power to take a peek at the difficulty of the stage and estimate the Demon King's strength.

There was a little bit of curiosity mixed in there as well.

Seregia seemed to look at me, dumbfounded.

And rather than admonish me with that expression, she asked, “When did you draw the holy sword?”

“The morning of my first day here.”

“Did you receive permission before you drew it?”

“I obviously just snuck in.”

“I see. Did you take care of the surveillance crystal?”

“What's a surveillance crystal?”

“It's a magic crystal that allows someone to observe a restricted space from another location.”

It seems like a magical tool that has a similar function to a CCTV camera.

I didn't even think they'd have something like that.

“No.”

“So that was the problem. When you commit a crime, you have to first think about destroying evidence first, Warrior.”

“Yes. I'll keep that in mind next time. Do you think it'll be alright if I just say that I had drawn it out of curiosity and put it back?”

“Probably not. Just the fact that you trespassed into the room that seals the holy sword is a serious offense. Above all, if you want to convince them with your words, you'll be arrested and have to go all the way to the capital to meet the ruling authority. And then the transfer and imprisonment process will be considerably rough. You made a mistake, so obediently following them may be correct, but I don't want to.”

“Then?”

“Let's just run away. I had already considered disappearing, so everything works out in the end.”

It doesn't seem like everything will work out in the end.

I wonder what I should do.

In any case, I have to attain the holy sword in order to clear the stage.

Should I just go right through them?

Just blindly charging through them requires the magic teleportation circle.

I don't know how to use it.

I also don't really know the location of the capital, so I can't just fly there.

While I was pondering, the soldiers that had been rushing towards me stopped in their place.

The stopped soldiers split into two columns and opened up the path.

There appeared some faces that I thought I'd seen before in that gap.

A group of around a hundred men, wearing fancy armor and equipped with weapons that looked like ornaments approached.

“Hoo hoo. We meet again,” the man at the head said.

It seems they are people I've seen somewhere before, considering that he's saying that we're meeting again.

“Lady Seregia. Do you know who they are?”

“They're the warriors, Warrior.”

Ah? Ahhh. They're the guys I met on the first day.

It seems that the warrior in front was the one nearby me back then.

There were two points that were surprising.

“You tried to steal the holy sword and failed, and ran away. Aren't you ashamed to be called a Warrior? Lee Ho Jae?” the leading warrior asked.

The number of surprising points went up to three.

“Lady Seregia. How do you think they know my name?”

“During the ceremony, there was a time you told us your name, Warrior. Don't you remember?”

“Did I?”

Since I had just solved one of those surprising points, it's gone back down to two.

“Hm. So what's a fugitive doing at this fortress? Did you perhaps know that we would be coming? Our glorious Warrior group has finished all the Emperor's tests and we're on our way to defeat the Demon King that is being summoned on that mountain range.”

The first surprising point was that the guy who calls himself a warrior has the holy sword.

Just because you have the holy sword, it doesn't make you a warrior.

“If you're thinking of asking for forgiveness and taking a spot within our group, then give up. We've already finished all our preparations to defeat the Demon King and we don't need help from the likes of you. Though you showed something at the capital that day...”

The second surprising point was that the prattling Warrior had acquired the holy sword and had appeared here in only fourteen days since the stage started.

It had only taken fourteen days for the contest for the holy sword to be over.

That's surprising.

I had thought it would take around the 33 days like Kiri Kiri had mentioned.

It might've finished quicker because I, the challenger wasn't there.

Let's sort this out.

I had confirmed that the next challenger would have around two weeks to become qualified to wield the holy sword and acquire it.

Also, the entire group dispatched to defeat the Demon King numbered a little over one hundred warriors.

And the holy sword was over there.

The holy sword definitely possessed a tremendous amount of power.

It had enough power to rival the Demon King.

However, drawing out that power depended on the competence of the wielder.

That's how weapons are.

Also, if we combine the holy sword's and that warrior's strength...

It's nowhere near enough.

All the members of the warrior group would be annihilated by the Demon King.

Of course, they're supposed to be supplemented by the challengers' strength but... it still looked like it would be tough.

I summarized all the organized contents in my head and came to a conclusion.

[PR and TL Note: The next few sentences are written in fragments as is the author's style; there are few minor edits.]

The key tasks to clearing the 26th floor are as follows:

Acquire the holy sword within 14 days.

Have a talented swordsman included in the group.

Fight the Demon King on the assumption that the Warrior group and the Empire won't be helpful.

Don't provoke the Demon King and when he's being unsummoned, send him off graciously.

Is this enough?

If socializing is a challenger's forte, they may get along with the Warrior group or may draw the Empire's support, but it won't be of much help.

I finished sorting my thoughts and Seregia was dragging the collar of my hand.

I followed Seregia's line of sight and when I turned my gaze, I saw the reddened faces of the warriors.

Behind them, the other warriors seemed to be uncomfortable as well.

Ah. I had been organizing my thoughts so I hadn't realized that I had been ignoring them this entire time.

“Sorry. I didn't hear you since I was thinking about something else.

What were you saying?”

The Warrior panted and started to say something.

Come to think of it, their clothes have changed.

I guess I can understand how I couldn't identify them right away.

In a few days, they had gotten a bit fatter and their faces looked smoother.

In the case of the female warriors, their skin looked visibly milky-white.

It seems that they were supervised in the capital.

They were summoned as Warriors, so they probably received a warm welcome.

Looking at it this way, I know why the stage doesn't reset even when the round ends.

If it reset, the challengers would intentionally not clear and enjoy their thirty days in luxury and repeat without clearing.

“You, you impudent bastard! You ignore me even to the end...”

I got a hold of myself when I heard the sound of his angry yelling.

I took out a Thousand Arms from my inventory and immediately dashed towards him.

I hadn't rushed into combat because of the Warrior's yelling.

It was because the Warrior had lifted the hilt of the holy sword with his right hand.

If he had just brandished a normal sword at me, I wouldn't pay much attention to him.

Of course, it would worsen my mood.

However, that holy sword was different.

It was a weapon that could easily endanger my life with just a rough swing.

Simultaneously, I considered the Warrior who had the holy sword strapped onto his waist as an 'enemy'.

As soon as I approached the Warrior, I plunged my longsword-shaped Thousand Arms into his chest.

When the Thousand Arms collided with the Warrior's armor, the sword snapped into two pieces.

Although I was flustered from my weapon suddenly breaking, aside from that, I calmly prepared myself.

I discarded the broken Thousand Arms and turned my body to the side, evading the course of his sword draw.

At the same time, I yanked the Warrior's wrist.

The Warrior urgently put strength in his grip so he wouldn't lose the holy sword.

Rather than unreasonably stealing the hilt of the holy sword, I manifested a sharp aura within my left palm and cut off the Warrior's wrist.

After I wrenched the stolen holy sword from his hand, the other warriors behind him dashed towards me.

Taking the holy sword from the Warrior had really only taken an instant.

Despite that, seeing as how the Warrior's colleagues that had been behind him are rushing me simultaneously, I could tell that they also

weren't amateurs.

At least, compared to what I had thought.

When I saw them running towards me immediately, I stepped back and slashed diagonally with the holy sword.

No, I tried to slash downwards with the holy sword.

[Hello, Warrior. It's truly an honor to meet you again. Since I'm in your hands again, rather than that half-wit, I feel a lot better. Normally, you'd have to learn the spell, but I'll give you a special service this time.]

While the sword chattered, it flung a wave of energy from the blade.

[PR Note: For reference, it's like Excalibur's Exalted Blade from Warframe.]

I was surprised by the strength and the attack that had been aimed at the warriors. The warriors were surprised by that strength and the trajectory of the sword that had been aimed at the warriors suddenly turned upwards.

The sword attack flew not at the warriors, but to the rampart behind them.

And as if it were slicing through tofu, a part of the rampart was cleanly sliced off and started to collapse just like that.

The soldiers atop the rampart and the soldiers that had left the fortress gate to capture Seregia and I could do nothing but be swept away.

I saw the soldiers being buried under the collapsing rampart and couldn't help but mutter.

[Hahahaha. How is it, Warrior? I'm the best, right? Right? Would there be another sword like me in the entire world? Now, you'll go without throwing me away, right?]

“...No, this isn't a holy sword. It's a demonic sword.”

Chapter 159

Tutorial 26th Floor (10)

[How is it, Warrior? I'm the best, right? Right? I'm the best, right?]

This crazy...

I lifted the chattering holy sword and briefly stood in confusion.

To think it could release this power irrespective of its wielder's will.

What's worse, the intellect behind its will seems to be sharp.

[As I thought, you'd prefer a woman's voice over my performance, Warrior? Please don't worry, Warrior. Until now, whenever I had a chance, I have been practicing. Ah, ah. Tee-hee.]

[TL Note: I omitted the "tee-hee" thing in a previous chapter. He only said it once in that chapter. At the time, I didn't really find a good way to depict his attempt at cutesy speech.]

It didn't have the intelligence of a human, but rather was at the level of an orangutan whose head was hit by a rock.

It also talks.

Though it mostly spewed out mumbo-jumbo.

I can't use this weapon however I wish, so it wouldn't fit into the category of a normal weapon.

If I mishandle it, or if there's discord between us, I could hurt myself with it; but how would anyone be able to use this thing in the first place?

However, despite that...

Rumble-

The lofty rampart is collapsing.

The soldiers under the collapsing rampart were buried under a mound of rubble and wordlessly crushed to death.

After the primary damage caused by the falling rocks, the small hill of debris surged towards the surrounding soldiers like a landslide and likewise crushed them.

The warriors hurriedly moved from their positions, so that they wouldn't be buried as well.

I heard the screams and moans from the warrior whose hand I sliced off, as well as from the soldiers who had lost their comrades.

[Tee-hee?]

This crazy...

You're saying that this is a holy sword?

I feel like it's something that I have to throw into the pits of Mount Doom.

[PR Note: Mount Doom is a Lord of the Rings reference. It's a big scary volcano with a lava pit at its peak.]

However, I still have a reason to not roughly throw this sword away.

Bzzzt. Bzzzzz.

I examined the sword that rang out with a sound similar to purring.

I regret that this sword had settled in and found its rightful place in my hands.

I'd like to immediately throw away the sword in my hand.

However, this sword would definitely split even the sky as a result.

The warrior who had lost his hand and was crying...

I now know why the warrior who had lost his hand and was crying had been so confident.

Also, I understood why he was so easily worked up and when he became agitated, why his hand went to the hilt of the sword.

If you were to suddenly acquire this strength overnight, you'd definitely be like that.

If I were to think about that Warrior's level, he must've felt like he had become a god overnight.

“It's definitely a demonic sword.”

[I'm disappointed, Warrior. I really am a holy sword. In fact, I've received a blessing from the God of the Sky.]

I have no idea what the God of the Sky was thinking.

The god's blessing may have enhanced the sword's power, but this sword is definitely not a sacred sword.

It was a sword that drove its wielder to his death.

I felt that it was fortunate that this sword had been sealed in the basement of the capital.

If this sword had been dropped in the middle of the continent, there would be a countless number of deaths in that region.

The Empire might've summoned the warriors because they didn't want to give this sword to one of its knights.

It was an absent minded notion , but when I thought of it that way I really felt that it was truly how things were.

[I love you, Warrior. I'm not just saying this because I'm in your hand. When I was in that half-wit's hand, do you know how much I tried to reach you? Tut. That half-wit wouldn't listen to a word I said.]

“What did you do then?”

[Uh, Oh? Hahaha. It's a secret. I love you. Warrior.]

Looking at how this guy talks, it seems like he urged that Warrior to fight with me.

I really should throw it into a volcano; I feel like this sword is fit to be dropped into lava.

That's what I thought.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty 26h floor, perfect clear.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 5000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 5000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 9000 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 300 points have been deducted.]

[All of the Gods of the Temple of the Hundred Gods are watching you.]

[TL Note: Changed White Holy Temple to this. White Holy Temple was an incorrect translation, but I got lazy and copy-pasted the original translation. I'm really unsure when I should change terms that people are so used to, but this one REALLY bothered me. I try not to change the previous translators' translations.]

[The God of the Sky would like to gift you a divine item instead of an additional reward. Would you like to accept?]

[Live Voting Results: 20 For. 19 Against.]

[The God of Light would like you to become his disciple.]

[Would you like to undergo the test to prove your worthiness to become a disciple?]

Messages started to appear tumultuously.

A perfect clear.

The Demon King had drawn out his true power, but I had defeated him alone.

In the process of getting the holy sword, not only did I not receive the trial of the holy sword, but it cornered the original owner into a deadly situation as well in order to be owned by me.

They were definitely conditions for a perfect clear.

The next thing I have to check is... the bonus rewards and the disciple offer.

First I'll check out the bonus rewards.

"I accept."

[The Holy Sword of the Sky, Ahoubuch has been acquired.]

...Holy sword?

The message appeared and at the same time, the holy sword in my hands disappeared.

I opened my inventory.

It was there.

The holy sword was in my inventory.

[The Holy Sword of the Sky, Ahoubuch]

Explanation: The God of the Sky, in order to punish arrogant humans, gifted this sword to the most arrogant of humans, the Empire's Emperor. The Emperor who had received the present, and the next representing Emperor, and the next representing Emperor, and the next representing Emperor were all swallowed up in a series of incidents caused by the holy sword and died.

As I thought, it's a holy sword in name only.

Its actual effect wasn't very different from the biblical story of God's flood that punished humans.

To have killed four generations of Emperors, what exactly did this sword do?

While that was happening, the Empire could neither discard the sword nor break it.

I don't know if it was due to the sword's overwhelming power or that they didn't want to anger the god, but this sword is definitely a demonic sword.

I should just shove this into my inventory and leave it.

Aside from the sword's heinousness, this sword has an excessively high degree of power.

If I use it immediately, tremendous results would be shown, but I won't have the opportunity to grow for quite some time.

Of course, if it were a normal challenger, they'll just think of it as a tremendous reward.

I think that the gods fixed the balance so that twenty five people would proceed through the stage.

However, if I draw out the maximum strength of this sword, I won't be able to face any danger that's actually dangerous for quite some time.

It's an excessive reward for me.

The next thing I had to check was the disciple offer.

The God of Light had offered me to become his disciple.

I pondered briefly and after I made my decision, I put it off.

I hadn't replied to the God of Death's offer to become a disciple yet.

I'll get some advice from Kiri Kiri and carefully make my decision.

Of course, in order to get advice about the gods, as well as information on them, I'll have to wait a long time though.

Rather than lacking in strength right now, I'm actually overflowing with power.

The stage had increased in difficulty and that's what I had wanted, but I didn't have a reason to obsess over possibly getting a new god skill.

I would first have to improve my own abilities.

Then, I can just receive the authorities after that.

[TL Note: The author uses the term "authority" to differentiate between his normal skills and the skills that gods give him; it also refers to their (gods') power. Sometimes, the author refers to them as "authority skills" as well. I believe previous translators just translated them as "skills". As per my editors' recommendation, I've kept it as authorities. I had compromised and used "god skill" before. I let my editors change it to whatever they thought best, so long as the general meaning is conveyed.]

I finished sorting everything out and saw the portal.

Should I depart immediately?

“Warrior.”

Behind me, I heard a voice I hadn't been thinking about.

It was Seregia.

“Ah, Lady Seregia. You have worked hard all this time. Thank you for taking care of me.”

“I'm sorry?”

“I think I'm going to head out now. It seems like this is where we part ways.”

Seregia, who had been behind me, stood in front of me, and said, “Can't you take me with you?”

“Yes. That's a little...”

“Warrior.”

“Yes?”

Seregia spoke with a serious expression.

It seemed that she had her usual expressionless face, but after seeing it several times, I could tell the differences between them.

“You said last time that so long as I don't die, you can't take me with you.”

“Yes... I did say that but...”

That's a bad habit.

It might've been because I've spent so much time alone, but after all the tension is gone, my thoughts just spew out sometimes.

Talking to myself was bad in various ways.

Let's fix that soon.

“If that's really the case, I'll die and follow you.”

“...Lady Seregia.”

“Warrior, look at that.”

The moment I was going to try to convince the insisting Seregia, Seregia pointed behind her.

The fortress had collapsed and the soldiers were dying.

Using the pretext of helping the soldiers, the warriors were running away from us.

Rather than saving the soldiers, it looked like they were running away from me no matter who saw it.

“You said that if I wanted to follow you, I had to die, Warrior, but even if I don't follow you, I'll die. Even if I somehow escape from here, I'll be chased.”

That's probably the case.

If Seregia is left alone like this, she will be pursued by the Empire.

Also, she'll harbor the crime of destroying the fortress and stealing the holy sword all by herself.

She'll definitely die, 100%.

I was scratching my head and Seregia took out a dagger from her chest.

“As I said, I'll die and follow you.”

And she forcefully stabbed her chest.

Blood spurted out from her chest.

I sighed.

I thought she would die because she was so bold.

Seregia didn't die.

Although it may look like it, the dagger hadn't pierced her heart.

I didn't need to use my elixir. If Seregia just uses the health potion that she has, she can sufficiently treat the wound.

Of course, if she just left it alone like that for a long time, she could die from excessive bleeding.

“Warrior.”

Seregia may have thought about it like this:

My path is too dangerous and that I couldn't bring her along.

So, if she didn't have the resolve to die, I couldn't bring her with me.

So she showed that she was prepared to die if need be.

However, that's not it.

I really can't take her with me unless she dies.

“Lady Seregia. Are you really prepared to die?” I asked abruptly.

Honestly, I didn't think it'd be much of a problem.

Personally, there was only a faint boundary between life and death.

Whether that line actually existed was the question.

That's why I was ready to take her with me if she wanted to.

That's why I could ask her so easily.

If she would really die.

“As I had said, even if I stay here, I'll die.”

So that I could progress the conversation quicker, I gave her a clear explanation.

“Lady Seregia. If you go with me, it won't be that it'll be so dangerous that you'll die. For starters, if you want to go with me, you have to die.”

“...Is it necromancy?”

“No. Rather than that, it's closer to the art of death.”

[TL Note: Korean doesn't really have a lot of proper “fantasy” words, so they borrow terms from other languages. In the previous sentence, the author uses the borrowed Korean term for necromancy while in Seregia's dialogue, ‘necromancy’ is spelled out how it would be pronounced in English.]

Seregia briefly stood wordlessly, all the while the dagger was still lodged in her chest.

“Think about it slowly. I can at least give you enough time to think about it.”

While Seregia was thinking about it, I also thought about it.

About what decision she'd make.

She'd probably stab herself.

If I were her, that's what I'd do.

With a soft squelch, the dagger lodged in her chest wedged all the way in until the hilt.

She pierced her heart.

[Soul Siphon]

I wanted to reduce her pain at least a little so I activated Soul Siphon.

After she had pierced her heart, Seregia was exposed to Soul Siphon and quickly died.

[Soul Collect]

I verified that Seregia's soul had been collected and I tried summoning her soul.

Seregia's form appeared in midair.

Compared to the other small palm-sized souls, Seregia's soul was as big as a forearm.

If we exclude the fact that she looks slightly blurry, she looked exactly like she did when she was alive.

“How do you feel?”

[I feel great. If I had known it would be like this, I wouldn't have hesitated and I would've died sooner.]

Seregia moved her body here and there and started to drift around as if she were swimming.

She adapted really quickly.

I looked at Seregia, who was muttering some nonsense while flying around her surroundings, and stepped atop the portal.

“Teleport.”

I left the 26th floor stage and moved to Kiri Kiri's field.

As usual, it was a peaceful and beautiful field, but there a few things that caught my attention.

To be exact, two things.

The first was that Seregia, who had been floating in the air beside me, disappeared.

The second was that I didn't see Kiri Kiri.

Chapter 160

Tutorial 26th Floor (11)

After I moved to Kiri Kiri's field, it wasn't that surprising to me that Seregia disappeared.

Something like this had happened before.

The same thing happened when Idy, who had been summoned through the Summon Dead skill, had visited here.

Kiri Kiri said that only I, the challenger, would be invited into this field, and Idy was temporarily unsummoned.

If I go back to the waiting room, I should be able to summon Seregia again.

Rather, not seeing Kiri Kiri was more surprising.

I think that this has never happened before.

Kiri Kiri had other things to do besides sunbathe in this field.

She definitely had work to do.

Also, she felt that that work was quite important.

Kiri Kiri didn't seem to be the type that would shirk her responsibilities without a reason.

I can think of two reasons.

The first possibility is this.

Kiri Kiri ran into a problem.

It was a problem big enough that she shied away from her responsibilities.

The second possibility was this.

Kiri Kiri is here.

It's just that she's hiding.

If it's the second possibility, it's not hard to get Kiri Kiri to show herself.

Without pondering further, I decided to test it.

I didn't need to draw the Seal of Solomon and bought a few cakes from the store window.

[TL and PR Note: Literally translates as the Star of David, but we thought Seal of Solomon made more sense. The Star of David has nothing to do with summoning. He doesn't need an elaborate pattern to summon her, he just needs cake.]

I spread out a mat on the floor and laid out the cakes I bought.

And I briefly waited.

If Kiri Kiri is hiding, she should be right in front of me.

Drooling.

“Kiri Kiri.”

“Uh, yeah?”

I heard a voice in the air.

As I expected, she's easy to read.

Like usual, I couldn't see her or detect her presence.

“Do you want to eat some cake?”

“Can I? But I lost the bet...”

[TL Note: I have no idea how to translate her “cutesy” speech. It has no real English equivalent and it makes the words sound weird. Besides stretching Ho Jae’s name, she also tends to speak in a cute way, kind of like how some Koreans write their cell phone messages.]

“You can eat it. If not, then well... If you don't then that's fine. You don't want any?”

“I want some!”

I heard a sonorous voice in the air and a slice of cake flew into the air.

After the cake shot up into the air, the number of cakes I laid out started to decrease.

It seemed that the pieces of cake that disappeared by the moment were going into Kiri Kiri's mouth.

“Kiri Kiri. I can't see you.”

As soon as I finished speaking, I began to be able to make out Kiri Kiri's form.

As I had thought, Kiri Kiri was picking up a cake and ferociously stuffing the cake into her mouth.

You'll have an upset stomach if you keep eating like that.

What reason would I have for bullying Kiri Kiri by not buying her cakes?

The bet was just a way to kill time and there was no reason to make her sulk.

The cakes are a bit expensive, but Kiri Kiri always more than makes up for their price.

With information, that is.

It was also cute seeing her eat.

“Yeah!”

What do you mean by 'yeah' all of a sudden?

“It's great to eat!”

What are you talking about out of the blue.

That doesn't add up at all.

“Yeah, go ahead and eat a lot.”

“Yeah!”

I watched as Kiri Kiri gobbled up the cakes and waited for her to finish.

Contrary to the other floors where I didn't really have any pending questions to ask, I was full of questions about the recent developments.

I reviewed the list of questions in my head and organized my thoughts.

* * *

“Now you'll answer my questions sincerely, right?”

Kiri Kiri vigorously nodded her head.

She took out a handkerchief and with a beaming smile, wiped her mouth and said, "Ask anything!"

Kiri Kiri folded her arms and responded confidently.

Before the buff effect of the cakes wore off, it'd be best to ask her my questions quickly.

"For the last few days, my exhaustion won't go away."

"Heng. That's natural."

"It's natural? I also drank an elixir, leveled up, drank a health potion, and recovered via the clear reward, but my fatigue isn't going away, even in this field."

"That's because it's not simply fatigue. It can't be helped."

"Can you explain it in detail?"

"Yeah. Strictly speaking, what you're feeling right now, Hoooooujae, isn't physical exhaustion."

"Then?"

"It's closer to mental fatigue."

"Are you talking about stress?"

Kiri Kiri fiddled with her long ears and said, "You're not wrong, but it's more correct to say that excessive concentration has strained your brain."

"My brain? Due to my concentration?"

"Yeah."

That's a surprise.

Honestly, I was really confident in my ability to concentrate.

I didn't think I'd lack focus and have these kinds of side effects.

“Rather than lacking focus, it's better to say that you focused too much. If you're human, you would never maintain even a moment of such an extremely tense state throughout your entire life; however, you maintained that extremely tense state for several days, and for several hours at a time.”

“It's that bad? Is this by any chance really severe? Or incurable?”

“It's not to that point. It'd be simpler to think of it as muscle pain.”

Muscle pain, huh.

I overtaxed my brain cells.

“You really overworked them. Even if you drive out the exhaustion through a healing effect, your brain will remember it. That overload is because you're overtaxing your brain. No healing method has a memory-erasing effect.”

“Can this be healed?”

“Nope. The best solution is to just empty your head for a few days and rest completely.”

“And after I rest, the exhaustion will disappear?”

“Yeah.”

It's alright.

I'll rest for a few days and practice swordsmanship with Seregia.

“Heng. You'll have to figure out for yourself if you can really call that

resting. It doesn't seem like you'll listen to me, either.”

Let's move on to the next question.

“About the level up rewards...”

“Like I said before, don't worry about those anymore.”

“No, aside from the stats and skills rewards, even the level up recovery effect is gone. What's going on here?”

Usually when you level up, your overall condition is restored to perfect health.

However, when I was covered in wounds in the aftermath of the Light Sword, I didn't realize that I had leveled up until after I drank the elixirs and recovered from my wounds.

Basically, I didn't get the healing effect from my level ups.

“Ah... that.”

Kiri Kiri didn't immediately respond to my question.

That's a big deal.

In most cases, Kiri Kiri immediately answers me.

“We're in the middle of voting.”

“Voting?”

“Yeah. I'll tell you about it later. Even if I were to tell you about it, it really wouldn't be all that useful to you and it's just expensive information. The only thing I can tell you for sure is that you shouldn't be worried about level ups from now on.”

I briefly paused my questioning and thought about it, but nothing came to mind.

I didn't know anything about it, so there's no point in making blind guesses.

As Kiri Kiri said, it'd be better to hear it from her next time.

"I got it. Next, I have a question about disciples. I don't know if my allowance is enough for information though."

"The God of Light?"

"Yeah."

"I recommend saving up some more. Since you still haven't heard about the God of Death yet."

"Yeah. Then let's move on the next question."

Unconcerned, I moved to a new subject.

From the start, I hadn't expected to hear information regarding the gods or disciples this time.

I had also thought about accepting the God of Death's and the God of Light's offers blindly.

However, I didn't really need to do that.

What I need right now isn't a skill from a god.

I was already struggling with developing my current abilities.

The difficulty was far easier than I expected.

The Demon King that appeared on the 26th floor was quite strong.

No, he honestly was much stronger than me.

His appearance was like rain after a drought.

However, I couldn't be sure that a formidable opponent like the Demon King would appear on the upcoming stages.

Of course, it would be nice if they did.

What's worse, even that Demon King was in the category of opponents that I was confident I could definitely beat.

From here, if I gain a few more god skills, my growth may stagnate for a while.

Perhaps I would delay accepting their offer to become their disciple even after receiving advice from Kiri Kiri regarding the gods.

[The God of Adventure is happy.]

[The God of Light hates someone.]

[The God of Death is bored.]

“Next is the holy sword. About the holy sword that the God of the Sky gifted to me. If I had used that, I think the stage would've been too easy. Did they give me the wrong item?”

“You're right. That's true.”

“What? They gave me the wrong item?”

“No. Not that. Honestly, even now the stage is easy for you.”

“That's true.”

“That's probably why they gave it to you. They thought that they'd never see you struggle in a stage, so instead they probably wanted to see how you would act if they gave you a weapon. That's probably

what the gods who voted for it were thinking. Honestly, most gods aren't concerned about the difficulty setup or how fair it is for the challengers. There's something else that's important."

I brooded on Kiri Kiri's words and thought about them.

When I had acquired the holy sword, I saw this kind of explanation.

It was a punishment sent by the God of the Sky, in order to punish the arrogant humans.

Would it have been given to me for a similar reason?

"Then why would the gods have been against it?"

"Eh. They probably all had their separate reasons. They might've not wanted you to attain the holy sword, Hoooooujae, or they didn't want you to get influenced by it, or they didn't want you to accept the God of the Sky's present, or they might've just hated the God of the Sky."

Influence, huh.

If we exclude the gods that have a bad relationship with the God of the Sky, all of them have reasons to oppose the present based on the influence of the holy sword or a connection to it.

It's certainly a demonic sword that could influence me.

"Or they might just hate you, Hoooooujae."

"...That can happen?"

"Yeah. There are gods that continue to hate you. Hehe."

When Kiri Kiri was finished talking, she was laughing contently to the side.

What's so funny?

I'm being hated by gods.

Some of the gods definitely hate me all the time.

For example, the God of Nature.

The God of Life and the God of the Sky among them too, but it seems like after what happened, the God of the Sky changed his mind.

No, seeing as how he gave me the holy sword, he might actually harbor a malevolent attitude towards me.

Apart from them, there were a few gods that didn't respond much but occasionally appeared and would exhibit a negative reaction.

I'm hated by gods.

How should I think about this?

“Kiri Kiri.”

“Yeah, they can't.”

“Huh?”

“You tried asking me this on the 4th floor, right? To what extent the gods can meddle with you.”

“Yeah.”

“They can't interfere with you. Unless all the gods of the Temple of the Hundred Gods agree to that interference. However, that probably won't happen.”

[TL and PR Note: Just a reminder. White Holy Temple was incorrect and will now be translated as “Temple of the Hundred Gods” (100 God Temple), denoting that there are one hundred gods watching over Hojae.]

“Are you sure?” I asked again, after hearing Kiri Kiri's confident tone.

“I'm sure. Also, if that happens, nothing bad will happen to you, Hoooooujae. The god's interference is limited to just that.”

[TL and PR Note: The author is really ambiguous about a lot of things. “That” refers to their interference and seems to be limited to things like giving items, skills, etc.]

So that's how it is.

Hm...

It's good information.

It's valuable information.

However, as I heard this information, my level of anxiety actually heightened.

I had asked about this information a few times in the past.

The response back then was that the information was too expensive and she couldn't tell me.

This was especially precious information.

“Kiri Kiri. How much more until I meet my quota?”

“You've pretty much used it all up.”

Damn it.

I had mostly spent my quota that I had saved up to ask about the God of Death.

I had been saving it since the 21st floor too.

“Heh.”

I wanted to wring the nose of the jubilantly-laughing Kiri Kiri but I did my best to hold back.

There was definitely a reason that Kiri Kiri had explained this information to me at this time, even if I had to spend most of my saved quota.

Even if I had to wait on listening to an explanation about the God of Death and the God of Light; there was a reason why I had to hear it.

That's what I thought as I passed onto the next subject.

“Kiri Kiri. Then, can you tell me about the abilities of the holy sword with the rest of my allowance?”

“I can. But are you going to use that holy sword?”

“No. For now, I'm thinking of just stashing it in my inventory.”

However, I needed to know the holy sword's powers, so I can use it if need be.

“I got it. You just need to check your inventory when you go back to the waiting room.”

Now I had asked roughly everything I had wanted to ask.

I thought for a moment if there was something I missed.

The Thousand Arms.

I forgot to ask her about the Thousand Arms that smashed into the Warrior's armor and split into two.

I asked Kiri Kiri why the Thousand Arms was suddenly destroyed upon impact.

“It broke because of the excessive concentration of mana.”

“The concentration of mana?”

Is she talking about the Light Sword?

I'd definitely thought back then that the amount of mana I'd gathered was outrageous.

“Yeah. That. Since the Thousand Arms is closer to a magical tool than a weapon, it's weak to the concentration of mana. Also.”

“Also?”

“Before the collision, the deciding factor was the holy sword's Dispel, which cancelled the built-in durability magic. Moreover, its durability had already declined and the built-in support magic disappeared, so it immediately broke.”

...The holy sword cast Dispel on the Thousand Arms?

If by any chance, the Thousand Arms was destroyed, did the holy sword think that I'd use it instead?

It was really a demonic sword that I wanted to throw into lava.

“You probably won't be able to use the Thousand Arms that's in pieces. The waiting room's effect won't restore it. It also won't change into other shapes. You have another one, so you can just use that.”

I sighed.

I didn't think that one of my Thousand Arms would be damaged this quickly.

The crucial problem was that my Light Sword had greatly diminished the durability of the Thousand Arms, irregardless of the holy sword casting Dispel.

If I use my Light Sword often with such a high concentration of mana...

I probably won't be able to use my Thousand Arms anymore.

The Thousand Arms isn't just a weapon since it can be used as a shield, gear, props, or a magical tool.

Rather than use the last remaining Thousand Arms as a sword, I thought it'd be better to obtain a new weapon.

“Kiri Kiri. I'm thinking of buying a new sword. What do you think?”

Chapter 161

Tutorial 27th Floor (Waiting Room)

[Kilimanshatu's Soul Sword]

Explanation: This is the soul sword found in the Kilimanshatu Dungeon. The materials used for this sword and the method its manufacturing are unknown, but this sword is capable of housing a soul. Based on the records found in the Kilimanshatu Dungeon, a certain king in an ancient kingdom placed his soul inside this sword and dreamt of eternal life.

A sword that can house a soul, you say.

“Heh.”

Seeing as how Kiri Kiri is beaming and laughing, I can be absolutely sure.

She had recommended this sword because of Seregia.

So I can put her soul into this sword and travel together with her.

For now, that was enough of a reason for me to buy this sword.

However, I looked around meticulously in case they had any other long swords.

The item that Kiri Kiri had recommended and passed to me was peculiar in various ways.

It wasn't just because of its ability to infuse a soul within itself.

“What exactly is this sword made of? It doesn't seem like it's made of metal but rock.”

I felt the blade with my fingers and was met with the rough texture of a rock.

It wasn't a sword made of a refined metal.

“You're right! It wasn't refined. Because of that, the edge is a little dull. I'm saying this just in case, but don't try to sharpen the blade yourself. Since it won't sharpen.”

“Because it's too tough?”

“Yeah.”

“If that's the case, in exchange for having a blunt edge, it shouldn't break or chip.”

Kiri Kiri kept nodding her head.

Due to its unusually strong density, it was a sword that even I couldn't sharpen.

I guess I should be relieved that they managed to mold it into the shape of a sword.

I touched the end of the sword.

The blade that should've been sharp was smooth.

Rather than a sword, it was closer to a thin yet sturdy club.

If it's a sword where slashing and stabbing are impossible, then I have to use it like a blunt weapon regardless of its shape.

“Heng. Look a little closer.”

Just as Kiri Kiri said, I examined the sword on a closer level.

Its size and weight wasn't much different from the Thousand Arm's in its long sword form.

It was at a weight that would be difficult for normal people to lift, but this weight is just right for me.

Next I infused my mana into the sword.

And then I understood why Kiri Kiri had recommended this sword.

I only infused a small quantity of mana, but gleaming blue mana formed around the sword's edge.

The sword possessed an extremely high level of mana conductivity.

Certainly, if there had been a sword this specialized for mana, there wouldn't be any reason for me to try to sharpen the edge.

“I'll choose this.”

The sale was finalized and I paid with my points.

A considerable amount of points were just spent in one go, but I thought that the sword was worth it.

“Good choice. It's the best sword amongst the ones you can buy, so you shouldn't have to swap it out for a while.”

Definitely.

That's also how I feel as the one holding this sword in my hands.

It's different from the holy sword that can unleash magical effects, but this is plenty good enough.

I enveloped my sword with aura and closed my eyes.

“Eh? What are you trying to do?”

When I swung the holy sword on the 26th floor, the holy sword passed through space and slashed the distant rampart.

Without any resistance.

The blade drew a line in the sky and just like it had cut through the air, split apart the distant rampart.

I wonder how that was possible?

This wasn't as if the aura had instantly extended by several meters and slashed through the rampart.

It also wasn't as if the aura was shot over a long distance.

It's not the kind of skill that closes distances like Blink Strike.

The holy sword just cut through space and also just cut through the rampart in its path.

I threw the Thousand Arms that had broken into two pieces into the air.

The doppelganger Magician had said this.

Magic's inconvenient magic formulas, trigger words, hand seals and incantations were essentially all set-up for the same goal.

They unveiled and demonstrated the method to using and manipulating the miraculous tool known as magic.

I threw the Thousand Arms up into the air and it soon dropped to the ground in an arc.

I'm trying to better understand this natural phenomenon and also demonstrate the change that I desire.

For example, if it were a type of flying magic, it would explain the phenomenon of how the Thousand Arms drew a parabola in the air.

And in that incantation, the miraculous tool of mana would be put into it.

The incantation that's filled with mana is based on the user's will and will activate in accordance with the structured magical formula.

This is the main foundation of basic magic.

In short, the important things are mana and intent.

Aura was also the same.

Following the magic circuits, mana would be transferred to the sword and would just flow into the blade itself.

Of course, just with that the sword should become a bit more durable.

The mana that coats the skin makes the body healthier and sturdier.

The muscles that are suffused with mana are also stronger and allow for faster movements.

However, that's all.

That mana must embody a swordsman's firm will in order to manifest aura for the first time.

Also, the next step was to give that manifested aura a special characteristic.

In order to give it a special characteristic, the first thing you need to do is imagine in your head what you want to manifest.

What would be the image most similar to the effect desired?

The Light Sword was friction.

Through friction, I would create an explosive light and heat.

That force in its entirety would be placed into the sword and I would transfer that energy in the direction I release it.

That was the foundation of the Light Sword.

If that's the case, what would be the key word for the technique that the holy sword had shown?

Amplification, leap, throw, illusion. There are probably a lot of possibilities.

I couldn't ask someone for the details nor could I learn about it, so I couldn't be sure.

The only thing I could do is use my senses to try to figure it out.

What I thought of was conveyed.

I cut the open space, and my will to cut traveled further and materialized in a distant area.

The Thousand Arms that I had thrown into the air started to fall to the ground.

I waited a little longer.

It was within a range that I could reach, my usual attack range.

No, it was closer than that.

The range that my will could reach was about the length of my arm.

I slowly lowered my soul sword that was over my head.

Slowly.

Like a petal softly falling in the wind.

I forlornly dropped my sword down.

I locked the whirling power into my grip and my sword, though I looked like I was at peace from the outside.

When the soul sword that had descended at a slow speed stopped in place, simultaneously...

Ting.

The Thousand Arms that had been dropping on my left side seemed like it was hit by something and slightly rose up.

Would it really not work?

[TL Note: The author isn't very clear about this, but he's attempting to replicate the space slash that the holy sword had performed.]

I had attempted it because I felt like I could do it.

For some reason, it seems that I couldn't live up to my expectations; it just felt awkward.

“...If a swordsman that was training for that saw you, they wouldn't just let you go.”

“Well, I failed though.”

“Heng. They'd try to kill you.”

* * *

“Do you want to drink an elixir?”

“It won't help.”

What did she say?

I was laying on the floor and stretched my exhausted body.

I pointlessly overdid it.

I'm really tired.

“Of course you are. How long has it been since I've told you not to overdo it and rest; then you go and do something crazy.”

Kiri Kiri's voice was a little sharp.

What do you mean by something crazy?

“I'm in the middle of regretting it so stop nagging me.”

Kiri Kiri, who was crouching over my head, slapped my forehead.

“If you keep going on like that, you'll really die.”

“I'll die?”

“Yeah. Your body will explode and you'll die.”

Are you serious?

“Are you serious?”

“I'm serious. Until now, you've grown in that manner and it's more strange that you haven't contracted any side effects. If you go on like this, your magic circuits may get blocked, or you'll have holes poked somewhere, or you'll get twisted around somewhere and you'll die. If that happens, you can't even treat it. Even if you're in the waiting room, it'll just prolong your life and if you go outside, there's a high possibility of instant death. Even if you don't die instantly, you'd die soon.”

So it's like destroying myself.

“Yeah. Just like that.”

I should be careful.

Just like there's a push to every pull , there's an equal and opposite reaction to my growth.

That's what I think.

If I train my muscles, muscular pain follows.

If I exercise, the time spent exercising as well as the muscular pain results in an increase in muscular mass.

The more I grow, the faster I grow, and as I develop further, that price will increase.

Also, if my body can't handle that price in its entirety, that excessive growth speed could become poisonous to me.

“Am I right?” I asked Kiri Kiri.

“Yeah,” Kiri Kiri affirmed.

From now on, I should also focus on increasing my body's durability.

Rather than using self-injury to increase my resistance skills, my entire body itself has to become stronger.

Blowing myself up when using the Light Sword technique alone, or my body not keeping up when I reach a new stage are situations that cannot happen.

[TL Note: New stage/level of strength, not necessarily a new tutorial stage.]

My body has already reached a level where it's difficult to see me as human, but there's still room for growth.

Let's try a variety of methods.

If I don't have any success with it, I'll just ask Kiri Kiri in the next stage for a more concrete method.

Now my planning is done.

Since it feels like I've rested as much as I need to, let's go to the waiting room already.

I dusted off my pants and stood up.

“Ah, about the next floor,” Kiri Kiri said abruptly.

“Oh. The next floor. I forgot to listen to your tips about the next floor. Is there anything that I should keep in mind?”

“Yeah. You have to pick the right guide. That's it.”

Considering how meager the tips were, it didn't seem like the next floor would be that difficult.

I felt unnecessarily dejected and walked atop the portal.

“Take care. You have to come back soon!”

Kiri Kiri scampered around and said goodbye.

I haven't heard a goodbye in a long time.

When we were betting, she hadn't said anything about coming back soon.

“Yeah, I'll come back soon and buy you some cake.”

I saw Kiri Kiri's beaming face as I was transported out of the waiting room.

“How are you? Are you dizzy, Lady Seregia?” I asked Seregia.

To be precise, I asked Seregia who was inside my soul sword.

[I feel great, Warrior. Would you like to try it out with some moves right now?]

As Seregia suggested, I slowly swung my sword.

While I swung my sword, Seregia spoke softly and kept muttering the same thing repeatedly.

“What did you say?”

[I'm happy.]

“I'm sorry?”

[If I knew it would be like this, if I was born as a sword, I think I would've been happier.]

That's a little... Is that normal?

It seems that she likes the feeling of being a soul inside the sword.

[Maybe it's because I don't have to rely on my eyes, nose, or lips, but my peripheral vision has greatly expanded. I can also see both yours and the sword's movements, Warrior. Really.]

That's a relief.

As I had thought, Seregia could just observe my movements when I'm fighting.

Sort of like a black box.

After the battle, using her observations, she should be able to give me more detailed and precise feedback.

It was unlike her, but Seregia spoke a bit quicker.

[I really like it!]

“...Is that so?”

[Warrior. From this point on, let's make our goal to reach the peak of swordsmanship. This sword that I'm in, if even for an instant I can reach the ultimate peak of swordsmanship, then even if I die, I'll have no regrets.]

But Lady Seregia, you're already dead.

[No, I've already died. Let me correct myself. After I'm reborn, I'll have no regrets even if I die again.]

She was so positive and bright that I couldn't get used to it.

“Lady Seregia. Do you really not feel regret or sadness? Still, you were born as a human and died once.”

[I'm a little sad that I can't eat snacks anymore, but I feel like I'll be happier living as a sword. Since my goal from the beginning was to follow you and see that swordsmanship. Of course, if I had become a common soldier's sword, then I would've been far more anguished than I am now.]

Seregia looked like she was really enjoying this.

Like she said, it seemed that she enjoyed it more than being alive.

I could even tell from the way she was speaking.

The speed at which she spoke hastened and above all, she spoke more.

[I wonder if this sword can handle that technique that you displayed on the summit of the mountain? Also, will I be able to endure it? If I can, I wouldn't have to worry about my sight being burned away and I should be able to clearly see that process. Wow! I'm so happy!]

She's a completely different person... Her personality has changed.

Does everyone become like this when they become a sword spirit?

I took out my other sword with an ego from my inventory.

As soon as I took out the demonic sword that used the moniker of a holy sword, it started to whine.

[Warrior, Warrior, Warrior, Warrior. Oh, Warrior. Why did you do that?]

“What's with you again?”

[Please don't lock me up in there again, Warrior. Please. I beg of you. I love you, Warrior.]

“My inventory?”

[Yes! There's no notion of time in that damn subspace! Warrior, if you lock me up in there again, I may go crazy.]

Are you like a Pikachu that doesn't want to go into a Pokeball?

Why don't you just threaten me?

It's become difficult.

I fundamentally store all my items inside my inventory.

However, if I can't put the holy sword into my inventory... that means I have to keep it with me all the time.

What's worse, I may have to carry around the soul sword that Seregia is in all the time.

“Is it that bad?”

[Yes! If you make a mistake I might be damaged, Warrior.]

I don't think it can be helped.

Even if I don't plan to use the holy sword, I can't just let the holy sword break.

There may be a time where there is an urgent need to use it.

Also, after I've reached a sufficiently high stage, I may start using the holy sword.

I took out the Thousand Arms from my inventory.

Between the two Thousand Arms, one of them was broken, but the other was still unscathed.

[Cough. Warrior. Please just throw away that crude toy! I'm a much better sword. Really. I was even blessed by the God of the Sky.]

It may have thought that I'd use the Thousand Arms instead of the holy sword, and the holy sword hastily responded.

[I-If you want to know how much strength I possess, Warrior. One moment. Please don't put me back into the inventory yet. I'll explain everything!]

You don't need to.

I asked Kiri Kiri and already got the explanation.

[The Holy Sword of the Sky, Ahoubuch]

Explanation: The God of the Sky, in order to punish the arrogant humans, gifted this divine item to them.

The sword would pull the surrounding people, including the owner into a bloody, desperate battle, with him at the center.

An owner who is exposed to its power for a long time would become extremely arrogant or they may exhibit perpetual bloodthirst.

Aside from the owner's will, there was a sword spirit called Ahoubuch dwelling inside of the blade.

Damage Prevention Magic is infused.

Hardness Reinforcement Magic is infused.

Sharpness Reinforcement Magic is infused.

Dispel Magic is infused.

Magic Shield Magic is infused.

Rapid Mana Recharge Magic is infused.

Magic Amplification Magic is infused.

Floating Magic is infused.

Flying Magic is infused.

Cleanliness Magic is infused.

The sword spirit can use the holy sword's magic at its own discretion.

The sword spirit is capable of casting all magics requiring less than three circles, including the stored magic.

The sword spirit can cast the holy spells of the cult of the sky god without any cost.

The sword spirit can manifest aura around the sword using its own will.

If the possessor is acknowledged by the God of the Sky, the sword can

act as a conduit for him to receive the god's blessing.

I can only say that these specs are really crazy.

There was a tremendous amount of mana equipped to the holy sword itself, and the holy sword's performance that could handle that mana was even greater.

That's why even if there's a strange sword spirit within, I can't just thoughtlessly discard it.

I turned my Thousand Arms into the form of a sheath.

And I put the holy sword into that sheath.

The Thousand Arms matched the holy sword's length and width by adjusting its size.

“There, it's fine if I just carry you around like this, right?”

[Yes! Warrior!]

“In exchange, you have to promise me a few things. You cannot thoughtlessly use your power. If you are to use your power, you need to get my permission beforehand. Also, for a while, your role won't be to cut down my enemies, but while in that sheath, it'll be fine to just talk about swordsmanship. And don't be so disappointed, too.”

[Yes, I understand. Warrior.]

He certainly responds properly.

Well, that's that.

“I'm not a warrior anymore, so you don't have to call me a warrior anymore.”

[I'm sorry? You weren't a Warrior?]

“Yeah.”

[Then what should I call you?]

“I wonder.”

When I really think about it, there's no fitting name that comes up.

[Then... Master? Shall I call you master? Master?]

“...No. Don't.”

Since he called me master with an old man's voice, it's kind of... you know.

Besides, I felt a certain freakish degree of cuteness in his voice, so I was even more disgusted.

Why is he mixing a nasally voice with a baritone voice?

[Yes. I won't do that.]

The mood became awkward.

I briefly turned my attention away from the holy sword and talked to Seregia, who was within the soul sword.

“Lady Seregia.”

[Yes.]

“Would you like to try saying master once?”

[I don't want to.]

Seregia instantly returned to her old manner of speaking and spoke coldly.

Chapter 162

Tutorial 27th Floor (1)

[So you got that as a reward? Wow. Gods are also shameless. Shouldn't you get a different reward in exchange for being entrusted with the holy sword?]

[That's what I'm saying.]

[So how long have you had that holy sword?]

[TL Note: I assume he's talking to the girl who's currently going through Hell Difficulty.]

* * *

[Rather than that, wouldn't it be better to slash downwards more heavily?]

“Maybe. If I consider the next motion, I think it'd be better to swing lightly.”

Seregia acknowledged my opinion.

Therefore, our three opinions were divided 2:1.

However, the holy sword wouldn't accept it.

[Just slash downwards with all your might. Everything will be taken care of if I use my Barrier Magic. Summoning a Fire Wall or a Wind Wall to block their approach works too. If not, then even if you just shoot a lightweight magic like Magic Missile, you'll be able to block the enemies that are trying to aim for your weak spot. Of course, you have to wield a magic sword that can do that first. Hoo hoo. However, where would you find another magic sword as great as me in the

world? Haha.]

He really is a natural at getting caught up in his own boasting.

I got irritated every time I heard the holy sword bragging.

This guy would boast all the time.

He's at the level of a narcissist.

[Warrior, you've been extremely lucky. There's not another sword like me in this world. Hahaha.]

I can't snap at him in times like this.

I realized that in the past few days.

If I say something, the holy sword wouldn't accept it and we'd start arguing.

And that argument would usually be sprinkled with the holy sword's boasts.

If I didn't want to hear that, the answer was to just ignore him.

So I just stayed silent.

Seregia stayed silent for the same reason.

[...Huh?]

Nobody responded, so when I heard the holy sword's flustered voice, I felt a little more cheerful.

I stood up.

“I think I've rested enough, so shall we go?”

[Yes. I believe three days' rest was enough. Let's depart.]

After Seregia calmly spoke, the holy sword, whose humility had reached its limit, spoke.

[At last, this is the start of a new journey. Warrior! Adventure! Friendship! Love! Justice! New bonds in a new world! And those new bonds will create a new legend of the holy sword! Ah... these are words from my early childhood, travelling here and there on the continent was my hobby.]

Damn it.

I want to sew his mouth shut and throw it away.

Ah, that guy doesn't have a mouth, does he?

I want to infuse the Thousand Arms sheath with a Silence Magic.

In truth, I had checked the store to see if there was anything like that.

If the holy sword didn't have a Dispel Magic function, I definitely would've bought it.

I ignored the holy sword that refused to stop boasting and stood atop the portal.

I passed a bonfire room and was transported to the stage.

I explained to Seregia and the holy sword that I travelled between dimensions and that like the mercenaries who worked as Warriors, I would travel to this or that world, and my job was to accomplish a specific goal.

Because of that, the title of Warrior was quickly discarded.

Also, I told Seregia to use my name and speak informally.

In truth, it didn't matter if they disregarded my title, but since Seregia

personally insisted that she was more comfortable with the title, we just decided to keep it as is.

The holy sword had also told me to call it by its name Ahoubuch, or whatever, but it was hard to pronounce so I just decided to call it the holy sword.

The holy sword was disappointed as expected, but I ignored him.

Other than that, Seregia and the holy sword couldn't perceive the portal, the waiting room, or the Tutorial at all.

They could only understand to the extent that they were a means of transportation and safe lodging.

It was unfortunate, but since they can't even perceive it, I did not pity them as much.

[Welcome to the 27th floor stage.]

There was a village built in front of a large cave on the 27th floor.

No, I should call it a town instead.

There was a fairly large number of people walking around and I also saw a lot of buildings compacted together.

But from just a glimpse, it was a town so squalid that it seemed to be more of a village for natives of a jungle.

[Warrior, what is your objective here?] Seregia asked.

The holy sword maintained his silence.

The holy sword had to be alert when he went outside, so I told him to talk as little as possible.

Maybe it's because I stressed it several times, but the holy sword was silent just as he promised.

Honestly, it was because of this that in this round I canceled my plan to rest and hurried into the stage instead.

I don't know how long the holy sword will be silent and keep his promise, but it was a relief he was well-behaved, even if it was for only a short while.

“I'm not sure. Let's wait for a little bit.”

I couldn't immediately respond to Seregia's question, since I don't know yet.

I briefly stood at the center of the town and waited.

[The 27th floor's challenge is starting.]

Explanation: To the east of Gravia , there are two trade routes to the western continent. The first route is the sea route, crossing the sea between the continents, and the second is via the enormous subterranean cave beneath the ocean. This subterranean cave that is well-known as Gravia's underground dungeon, is made up of three stairways. Also, there is an existence that is occupying the lowest floor alone. In the lowest floor of Gravia's underground dungeon, please vanquish the ruler of the lowest floor and seize the earthworm's treasure.

You will need a special guide in order to reach the lowest floor of Gravia's dungeon.

Please enter the building made of red bricks and obtain a guide.

[Clear conditions]

1. Defeat the earthworm.
2. Acquire the earthworm's treasure.

It was a fairly comprehensible stage.

So I attack the underground dungeon and defeat the boss mob.

Plus, I also have to acquire the boss mob's loot.

The clear condition concerning the existence of the earthworm caught my attention more than the stage's concept.

An earthworm, huh.

But “an earthworm” normally refers to an actual worm.

However, if it were just the average earthworm, there would be no way it would have a treasure worthy of being the stage's clear condition.

In any case, isn't it a dragon?

[TL Note: The previous section is the author's wordplay. The Korean word for “earthworm” can be taken apart and literally translated to mean “earth (dust) dragon,” though it is not usually used this way. This is Ho Jae's perception of the term, not what the clear condition actually says.]

Didn't it say that it was on the lowest floor of the underground dungeon?

Didn't it say that it's occupying the lowest floor alone?

Perhaps exactly as its written, it's a dragon living underground?

I was a little excited.

Seregia and the holy sword had also learned of the clear condition through the message.

[I'm looking forward to it. If possible, I hope that there will be a lot of enemies on the path leading to the lowest floor.]

[To defeat a wicked evil dragon...]

Seregia also showed her anticipation.

In the holy sword's case, it was excited about something and started talking, but when I gripped the hilt, it immediately stopped talking.

[Um... Warrior.]

The holy sword that had been briefly silent spoke furtively.

“What?”

[Can't I just speak casually with you as well? I won't be too noisy.]

“You can't. I don't trust you.”

[You're too much. Isn't this favoritism?]

It is favoritism.

“If you don't like it, then you can go back into the inventory.”

[Yes. I'll remain quiet. I love you, Warrior. You know that I always respect you, right?]

What are you talking about?

After we finished our conversation, I walked towards the red building.

I didn't walk that far before I reached the front of the buildings made of red bricks.

It should be sufficient to simply pick a guide from here and travel to the dungeon.

Kiri Kiri had advised me to pick my guide carefully.

However, what did she mean by ‘pick carefully’?

I have no idea.

I confidently shoved the door open and entered without much thought.

The scenery inside the building was typical.

An adventurer's guild inside of a game would look exactly like this.

They were selling alcohol and plain food and the people sitting at the tables all looked like vagrants.

There was a large wooden block situated in the middle of the building's interior, pinned with information notices and advertisements regarding this and that.

[It's a noisy place.] Seregia commented.

It was actually really noisy inside the building.

[It also reeks.]

After she said that, the holy sword beside me commented as well.

I have no idea how the holy sword could smell it when he didn't have a nose, but this place honestly reeked of a disgusting smell.

I briefly looked around the building and found a person who looked to be the front-desk clerk or a worker.

She was a fairly old-looking middle-aged woman.

She was sitting at the counter and either telling people about this and that or diligently writing something down on paper.

No matter how I look at it, she didn't act like a customer at all.

If I were to point out a peculiar point, it was just that she had a red eye tattooed on her forehead.

I approached the middle-aged woman at the counter and asked outright.

“I'm looking for a guide that can guide me through the dungeon.”

“You're that dual-wielding swordsman that I saw talking to himself over there.”

“I'm sorry?”

“It's nothing. You said you were looking for a guide?”

It seems like she had seen me talking to my swords outside the building a little while ago.

Then again, it must've looked a little strange.

If you just look at me, I carried around two conspicuous swords and I had stood in the middle of the street muttering to myself.

“What is your destination?”

“The lowest floor.”

“Are you by chance looking for a spot to kill yourself?”

“No.”

Her voice that abruptly asked whether I was going to kill myself was sad, but I calmly responded.

“I'm visiting.”

Immediately after I had told her that I wanted to go to the lowest floor, the woman began furrowing her eyebrows right in front of me.

If I had told her that I was going to kill the dragon, it seemed like she would call it a bluff and chase me out of the building.

“As you may know, even if we can guide you there, we cannot guarantee your safety. That is...”

“I don't need it.”

When I bluntly told her that, the woman retained her crumpled face and pondered for a long while.

Then she pointed to a corner of the building and said, “Ask that child over there. That child's probably the only one who will guide you.”

I saw a kid that didn't even look ten in the corner that she pointed at.

“Are there no other guides?”

“I'm not sure. That child's probably the only guide who needs to make money today or else he'll die tomorrow.”

I had no choice but to accept this guide considering the circumstances.

I roughly said my goodbyes and I approached the child squatting in the corner.

Right when I was about to introduce myself and raise the child up, the child abruptly stood up.

“Hello, Swordsman. Did you say you were going all the way down to the lowest floor? Woah, you're an amazing person. You're manly, you've got courage, and moreover, you have a couple of swords. You don't have to worry too much about the lowest floor. Especially since the scary rumors regarding the lowest floor were made up by all sorts of people. But for a swordsman like you who's the real deal, it won't be a very dangerous place for you. Haha.”

Perhaps he was listening to my conversation with the middle-aged woman, but the child already knew about my destination.

Because of that, it seemed like I wouldn't have to separately explain it to him.

Strangely, the child had a red eye tattooed on his forehead just like the middle-aged woman.

[In his first meeting with you he's smoothly flattering you; he's an unusually rude little kid.]

The holy sword muttered.

Look who's talking.

[Rather than flattery, I also hear it as sarcasm.]

It was just as Seregia said.

That's how I heard it.

This little kid wasn't sincerely being sarcastic with me.

That's just how I heard it.

Since I heard the kid's words that way, it seems like his expression was hugely affected.

His thin voice that hadn't yet gone through puberty was also probably disturbed as well.

This young dirty kid revealed his white teeth and was smiling brightly.

However, his smile only formed on the sides of his mouth.

He bowed his forehead slightly and the eyes that looked up at me weren't smiling at all.

He was repeatedly rotating between observing my facial expression, my clothes, and my weapons.

Seeing as how he's repeatedly looking at the places he's observed before, I could tell that the child's mental state was extremely anxious.

[He's a child without much attentiveness. His focus is also terrible.]

Seregia criticized.

I agreed with everything she said.

[If he wielded a sword, he'd die outside of his home within a month.]

This time, the holy sword commented.

It was a little uncertain, but I agreed.

The child seemed to be an existence that exhibited all the habits or peculiarities that you can't have as a swordsman or a warrior.

His intentions are written all over his face.

His attentiveness and his focus are lacking, and he wasn't even sure of what he had seen himself.

He looked around carefully for other people's gazes, but he turned his eyes towards too many things, and he couldn't identify what was most important.

For example, my eyes that are looking straight down at the kid.

His breathing was so erratic that he may as well have had tuberculosis, and his standing posture was terrible.

Even if you look at his build from the outside, it's terrible; the space between his legs when he steps is erratic.

No, the angle that his feet are touching the ground is strange.

There may be some kind of problem with his feet.

[Warrior. I maintained my ego for a considerably long time, but this is my first time seeing such an untalented human in the world.]

The holy sword didn't drop its criticism.

This kid isn't even a swordsman, so why do his talents matter?

It's fine as long as he guides me well.

[Yes. He really does have the worst ability. Even in the academy where numerous students gather, there wasn't anyone that bad. He's still young and he doesn't seem to have been given any particular education nor has he been trained. Even if we consider his malnourished and unhealthy state, it's really hard to find a human like that. He's a dunce sent by heaven.]

Seregia supplemented.

The holy sword's and Seregia's criticism combination was too cruel that even I, the one listening, felt sorry for the kid.

“Swordsman? Is there any problem...?”

“No, there's none. Then, can you give me an explanation regarding the dungeon? I need to test whether you have enough knowledge as a guide.”

“Yes. First, please sit over there. I'll explain after you sit down.”

I had thought of this before, but it came up again.

Kiri Kiri had advised that I need to pick my guide well.

I don't really understand the meaning behind that.

The only option I had was this kid.

Chapter 163

Tutorial 27th Floor (2)

The kid continued his explanation for a while.

It seemed like I wouldn't have to be dubious of his knowledge of the dungeon.

But I still couldn't believe him.

This kid said it'd be best if I stayed in this building's quarters on the 2nd floor and departed tomorrow morning.

It was a good plan.

In various ways.

“Fine, let's do it like that. Here, give me your hand.”

I took out a subspace bag from my inventory and the kid obediently stuck out his hand as I instructed.

I pulled out a few gems that I had prepared in advance from the subspace bag.

“Here, this should be enough for a down payment. Exchange it for money as you wish.”

I placed the gems into the kid's dirty palms.

It seemed like the kid was in disbelief at the gems that had been placed in his hand; his mouth gaped wide open and remained still.

“Like you said, I'll stay in this inn today, and we'll depart tomorrow.

Come pick me up here tomorrow morning.”

After I finished speaking, I left the stunned kid and the corner; I went towards the counter with the middle-aged woman.

“A room?” the woman immediately asked as I approached.

“Yes. You have good hearing.”

It wasn't easy to listen to my conversation with the kid in the corner inside of this noisy building.

What's worse, she shouldn't have been able to see us as we were cleverly hidden behind a column.

“What do you mean, good hearing. I just guessed. The dungeon's also quite far, so rather than departing at such an ambiguous time, it'd probably be better to depart in the morning. If you were going to depart immediately, you wouldn't have left that child over there and came here by yourself.”

Now that you mention it, you have a point.

She definitely could've guessed that I was going to ask for a room.

However, I was certain.

This middle-aged lady could hear my conversation with the kid.

Since that kid had also heard the conversation between the middle-aged lady and I.

“Then you're even more amazing.”

As I said that, I placed a single gem on the counter.

“This should be enough, right? I don't need the change.”

“It's enough.”

The middle-aged lady hurriedly grabbed the gem, hiding it in her bosom, and said, "How about being a bit more careful, especially if you don't want to be robbed in the middle of the night?"

She's an amusing old lady.

The old lady should also be well aware that I'm not concerned about things like that.

Even if I hadn't taken out the gem, I knew.

Compared to the people around me with their disheveled appearances, I wore clean, trimmed clothing and I had two expensive-looking sword hilts strapped to my waist.

Also, the woman should be well aware that I don't mind attracting the attention of other people.

However, I wonder why she's pretending like she doesn't know.

This old lady, after I had entered this building and started conversing with her, has been maintaining a consistent attitude.

Whether I'm thinking about my own power or this woman's ability to gauge my level of strength, it's not the right attitude for her to take.

"Auntie, do you have any interest in being a guide? I think you'd do well."

"Not everyone can be a guide."

After she was finished, she shut her mouth.

However, I didn't stand up and stared closely at her.

The old lady showed a variety of expressions after that for a short time.

After she had cycled through several emotions on her face, the final

emotion she revealed was hostility.

It was a vivid, clear killing intent to the point that I could feel it.

When I didn't react at all to her hostility, the woman quickly dispersed her energy.

And muttered.

“I have no intentions of going on a trip with a monster whose intentions I don't know.”

That was an interesting statement.

“Your room's on the 2nd floor. Your room number is written on this key here. Go up.”

After she said that, the old lady left the counter and went outside the building.

Rather than following her, I decided to go up to the building's 2nd floor.

I found the room number that was written on the key and as I entered the room, I thought.

She had no intentions of going on a trip with a monster.

If she had regarded me as that dangerous of a person, I had to rethink what she had said.

Her warning about the lowest floor... Did she say that it's dangerous despite taking a peek at my strength?

If that's not it, was that also just an act?

I ought to reassess the kid.

The assessment that the kid needed to work if he didn't want to die

immediately tomorrow.

Did that old lady think that that kid would go down to the lowest floor despite the risk of death, or if not, did she think that the kid would die because he was going with me?

It could be both.

I entered the room and roughly tossed the subspace bag atop the bed.

Shall I meditate until tomorrow morning?

[Warrior.] Seregia said.

“What?”

[I believe that there's a high possibility that the young child from before won't return in the morning. I cannot be sure, but that's what I think.]

“That's also what I think.”

He'd probably disappear somewhere with the down payment of gems.

If the lowest floor is that dangerous, and he didn't want to work together with a dangerous person who carelessly takes out gems in this squalid place...

[Then why did you give that child...]

“In the event he doesn't come, I just need to find a different guide.”

[Didn't you hear that that child's the only guide available?]

“No. She just said that that kid's the only one willing to guide me on such a dangerous path.”

There are definitely at least two guides.

Kiri Kiri told me that I had to pick my guide well.

Plus, the young guide also had a strange tattoo engraved onto his forehead.

That meant that I could easily make an inference.

What I needed to worry about right now is the woman who had recommended the boy, who had ran away with my gems.

How do I use this excuse to convince her?

The fact that she's excessively hostile towards me will be a variable.

If convincing her isn't possible, I think I'd need to threaten her.

[I think differently, Warrior. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo.]

While I was in the midst of organizing my thoughts, the holy sword cut in.

“If you're going to talk gibberish again, I'll put you into the inventory immediately.”

[No, it's not that. It's not that, Warrior. Please trust me! When have I ever spoken nonsense for you to say that! Please trust me!]

How can I trust you?

[I'm telling you this because neither the great and courageous Warrior nor the cute and shy Miss Seregia seem to have encountered a lot of people. If you don't have experience in cases like this, it's something you wouldn't know well.]

[...Ugh.]

Seregia groaned at his flattery of our cute such and such.

I really should put him into my inventory after all.

I opened my inventory and was about to put it in when the holy sword hurriedly yelled.

[That child will return tomorrow!]

“What did you say?”

The holy sword hadn't given up, yelling something, and once I put the holy sword into my inventory, I started to meditate.

Only one ego sword had disappeared, but I started to take in the silent and calm mood of the room.

[I think like I can live now.]

I agreed with Seregia's half-muttered sigh.

* * *

“Good morning, Warrior. Then, shall we immediately go to the dungeon?”

[See that. I was right, wasn't I?]

[...]

Seregia and I couldn't refute the annoying holy sword's statement.

Because the kid had appeared with a much cleaner appearance than yesterday.

Perhaps the kid washed his hair this morning, since it was clean and tidy; even his clothes looked much better than yesterday.

His clothes were clean, but they weren't new.

He had exchanged the gems that I had given him into currency and rather than buy new clothes, it seemed like he had come wearing his best clothes.

Plus, he was wearing a large backpack on his back.

It looked bloated even from the outside and I was certain that it was packed full of miscellaneous items.

“Yeah, let's go. Take me there.”

I didn't refuse and just told him to go.

I could tell why the child had turned up even without the holy sword explaining the reason.

Amongst the kid's various flaws, his most fatal flaw was that he would diligently observe someone, but he wouldn't realize that the very person was also observing him.

The next fatal flaw was that his gaze and his expression were like an open book.

I had heard these words before.

A person's greed knows no end, and they would repeat their mistakes.

Where did I hear this again?

That's not what's important.

What's important right now is that this kid is repeating his many mistakes excessively.

I nonchalantly slung my subspace bag over my shoulder which contained my bed and left my room.

Based on the movements of my bag, the kid...

The kid's eyes were following the movements of my bag and it was only after I got right in front of him that his rapidly-moving eyes paused.

“Yes. I'll take you there.”

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. What did I tell you?]

I just silently listened to the holy sword's annoying condescension.

Now I could read the bare greed within this dirty kid's eyes, though I ignored the dissatisfaction I saw.

Even after I had gone home and thought about it calmly, I couldn't fathom a desperation worth gambling his life on.

It's been a while since my abilities were lacking.

Also, this was the type of ability I cannot be lacking in.

Though I'm clumsy when it comes to situations regarding tact, I was confident when it came to reading my opponent's intent.

When I was a pro gamer, I remember saying that I didn't know what the difference was between my two team members.

I don't know why it is that I can so easily grasp an enemy's intent, yet I don't even have the slightest idea of what other people usually want.

However, I definitely felt something different.

Also, I had failed to discern the kid's intent yesterday.

Even though it was such a clearly-exposed intent.

Was it because I took this kid too lightly due to his lacking strength, or if not, would it be because of a different reason?

It was troublesome work.

Because of that reason, I didn't obstinately plug the holy sword's mouth and left the town.

And we approached the cave's entrance, no, the dungeon's entrance...

They say that the dungeon that looks relatively close by is actually much farther than your eyes can see.

It would take around six hours to get there, walking.

When I was in the town, it didn't feel like it would take that long, but after I left the town and starting walking through the woods, I could definitely feel it.

The dungeon looked as if it were right in front of you, yet the true distance hardly lessened.

The path between the dungeon and the town was tranquil.

There would occasionally be some adventurers or merchants who passed by and I matched the kid's slow strides, but in no time I had walked far ahead of him.

The kid's gait was on the slower side.

Even if you consider his still short legs, he was still slow.

And it was tough for the kid to even walk this slowly.

Pant. Pant.

If you listened to him, you wouldn't be able to call it pathetic; it was to the point that even I, who was walking beside him pited his breathing.

“Let's rest here for a little bit.”

“Yes... Thank you.”

I helped the kid lower his backpack and we leaned our backs against a wooden column.

I also dropped my subspace backpack from my shoulder and put it on my lap.

We were sitting under a tree like this, which reminded me of Myong Myong again.

Is he living well?

It made me uncomfortable that even in this peaceful memory, several things weighed on my mind.

Indeed, what kind of condition would mean 'living well'?

And whatever the condition, can I say that Myong Myong is living well?

Is the Myong Myong I'm even talking about that Myong Myong?

What's the difference between that Myong Myong and the other Myong Myongs.

Let's say that all the Myong Myongs found their happy ending. Does that mean they're living well?

Kiri Kiri had, in a roundabout way, referred to the tutorial and challengers as places that aren't Earth.

There should definitely be some challengers who reached the 19th floor besides me.

These civilizations that exist in the cosmos and the tutorial that possibly exists within them.

Also, in the face of all those possibilities, there is a possibility that Myong Myong isn't unhappy.

The more I recollect it, the more sad I get.

When I was together with Myong Myong, if I hadn't deliberately tried

to ignore this fact, would I be able to laugh together with Myong Myong?

If I had left Myong Myong in front of the closed-off town's gate; what kind of choice would I have made?

It was suffocating.

It was the exact same back then.

Still, the reason I hadn't completely ignored it was because Idy had suggested a path that would enable me to resolve this suffocating feeling.

I brought my unproductive thoughts to a close and focused on the here and now.

After I had organized my thoughts, I asked the two ego's swords' opinions.

What do you think?

Rather than using my voice to speak like usual, I transmitted my intent through voice transmission.

Seregia and the holy sword both agreed with my opinion.

[I agree.]

[I also agree, Warrior. For things like this, you need to tidy things up beforehand so that there's no trouble down the road.]

I confirmed their opinions.

I'll confirm it one more time and then take care of it.

I took out some bread and water from my subspace bag and passed it to the kid.

“Eat it while you rest.”

The kid saw the objects protruding out of the subspace bag and was astonished.

“This is that magic bag, right?” the child asked excitedly, and the sound of his breathing had quickly calmed down.

“That's right.”

To be exact, it was a subspace bag, but well, I guess it's the same thing as a magic bag.

“Do you have other items in there besides food?”

I decided to answer the kid's excited questions and say it like it was.

“Of course. I also took out and gave you the gems from here yesterday.”

The kid was in awe, saying 'woah', and I waited briefly for the kid to eat his bread.

When the kid started eating the bread, I took out a short sword from my bag.

“It also has weapons!”

“Of course. It contains various weapons.”

In truth, this short sword was the only weapon inside the bag.

It was the gladius that I had bought after clearing the 4th floor.

According to the holy sword's logic, which was strapped to my waist, the gladius was a treasure that could be called a holy sword thanks to the god's blessing it had received.

It wasn't fancy and it was actually rather plain, but possessed a high

quality aura on the outside.

I raised that short sword and threw it towards a tree that was a bit far away.

Just as I had intended, the short sword lodged into the center of the tree trunk.

And I concentrated, moving my mana.

Due to my mana, the short sword pulled out of the tree column, flying into the air before returning to my hand.

Beside me, the kid was exclaiming.

“Is it a magic sword!?”

“Yeah. It's a magic sword.”

To be honest, I had just idiotically pulled out the faraway short sword with my mana.

It wasn't as if I had used mana's special characteristic or displayed its absorbent power.

I had just used my mana to embed the short sword in the tree trunk, pull it out, and raise it up before it flew to the front of my hand.

Even compared to normal people, this kid's magic circuits were tightly blocked and he wouldn't be able to notice what I had done.

I threw my short sword again, towards the tree column.

And using my mana again, I brought the short sword back to my hand.

As he saw my acrobatics, the kid who had been exclaiming with all he had bashfully asked.

Upon his red flushed face, his eyes gleamed, and his fingertips were slightly shaking.

“May I also try once?”

Sure, of course you can.

Chapter 164

Tutorial 27th Floor (3)

I offered the short sword to the kid.

The kid's hand reached out towards the short sword's handle.

With an unusually quick speed.

Sharply.

It didn't look like the movements of a kid who was weak and couldn't even walk right.

Even so, it was still the movements of a little kid.

With this, I think I've given him several chances.

If it were possible, I'd like to roughly turn him in.

Still, isn't this too much of a dead end?

[I don't know what you mean by a 'dead end', but I also think that way. Warrior.]

The holy sword chattered.

Why would you agree on something when you don't know what it is?

It doesn't matter.

Whether the holy sword agrees with my opinion or not, won't affect my decision.

When the kid's hand touched the short sword's hilt, he touched the edges with his fingers, and rotated it.

As I saw the embarrassed kid's expression, the reverse grip short sword stabbed into his chest.

“AH!”

[TL Note: Changed Korean groaning/moaning sounds. They make no sense in English because they're sounds made in Korean.]

After he cried out briefly, he fell flat on his face.

He didn't die.

No matter how bad his motor skills are, it wasn't to the point that he would mishandle the short sword.

“Hey, kid.”

“Ugh... ah...”

The kid couldn't respond to my words and just groaned in agony.

“Hey, kid. Say something.”

[I would just kill him discreetly, and find a new guide.]

The holy sword chattered again.

I wonder what kind of ego this guy has to call himself a holy sword?

“Hey, kid, you'll die from excessive bleeding like that. Say something.”

The kid couldn't respond.

It seemed like the kid couldn't think out of fear and confusion, rather than the pain.

He wasn't in the kind of condition where I could bully him into speaking.

“Don't worry so much. You won't immediately die from getting stabbed. You see, I haven't just been stabbed only once or twice.”

It hadn't reached his inner organs and blood wasn't gushing out of the wound.

Of course, if the bleeding continued on like this, he would die from the bleeding. And there had been the possibility that he would've died from shock when he first stabbed his chest with the short sword.

I took out a potion bottle from my subspace bag, dangling it from my hand.

It wasn't an elixir, but it would be able to heal that kind of injury with ease.

“Here, I even have a potion. You don't have to be concerned about dying.”

The kid's look changed.

That's probably the look of a traveler in the desert when they discover an oasis.

When this kid had seen my short sword, when he had seen my subspace bag, when he had seen my gems, when he had first seen my clothes, and when he saw the swords at my waist, he had shown the same expression throughout.

I have no intention of blaming this kid.

I could understand him, and I could even sympathize with him.

I just have to tell him.

I slapped the kid's outstretched hand away with my hand holding the

potion bottle before swinging back my hand holding the potion bottle.

The bottle shattered against the kid's head with a loud kish!, splashing the potion onto him.

In the midst of the sharply breaking glass shards, the kid briefly clutched his head and groaned.

Then, he soon realized that the pain coming from his head wasn't important.

The kid tried to gather the scattered potion on the earthen floor into his hands, but the thin potion instantly soaked into the ground.

For the first time, the kid's eyes bore at mine.

Finally.

It was a gaze of extreme desperation and confusion.

Only when he was in this position did he look into my eyes for the first time.

Because it seemed like he had only looked into my eyes for the first time due to the position he was in, it felt a little pitiful.

I took out another potion from my subspace bag.

The kid attempted to reflexively raise his body, but when I moved my hand and gripped the potion upside down, his body waned.

And he begged.

“Please... Please. Please give me the potion... I'll do whatever you ask. Please, I beg of you.”

As I looked at the kid begging with watery eyes and a runny nose, I realized that he wasn't that dumb.

If you sink into a state of panic in this kind of a situation, your head doesn't work; people who repeatedly make stupid decisions are not uncommon.

However, the kid read my reaction and quickly realized that he was powerless.

“You don't need to do anything.”

The child's eyes became more and more haggard.

“I only want one thing from you.”

I decided to only go this far for now.

If we waste more time, this feeble kid might just die on the ground.

“Here, I'll just give you the potion.”

And I put the potion bottle into the kid's hand.

The kid hesitated momentarily before he removed the lid of the bottle and started drinking the potion.

Since his hands were shaking so much, most of the potion dripped down his chin.

I had to take out another potion.

I fed him the potion myself because he couldn't properly drink the potion. I even separately rubbed some onto the surface of his wounds.

[TL Note: It doesn't specify what Ho Jae rubbed onto his wounds, but it's assumed to be either the potion or a separate ointment/medicine.]

It took about 15 minutes for the kid to calm down.

He was still in light shock, but he had stabilized enough for him to listen to me talk.

Fear over gratitude.

You shouldn't have been so greedy, kid.

“Here, take it.”

I threw the subspace bag onto his chest.

And I said to the quizzical child.

“Now I'll add this to my down payment of gems. I'll give you this bag.”

“I'm sorry?”

“And if my work ends well, I'll add the short sword to that, and I'll give you more gems too.”

It seemed like the kid didn't understand the situation very well, because he gazed at me with a vacant expression.

I asked the kid.

“Now, let's go back to the previous conversation. I said that I only wanted one thing from you, right? What do you think that one thing is?”

Even while he was flustered, he quickly found the right answer.

“G-Guiding you to the lowest floor.”

“That's right.”

I grabbed the back of the kid's neck and propped him up.

I hit his back hard enough to make a clapping sound, and said.

“Then let's go. Towards the dungeon's lowest floor.”

I followed behind the kid who clambered on his feet, holding the subspace bag at his chest.

The kid was soon able to walk without much problem.

He had a hole in his shirt, but he was actually walking faster than before.

It was to the point where it would be quite an unmanageable speed for a normal person.

I satisfyingly followed behind the kid as I sorted out the characteristics of those guys called “guides.”

Firstly, they have acute senses.

I'm sure that they have more sensitive hearing and eyesight than normal humans.

Even among their senses, their hearing is really outstanding.

They don't simply hear the smallest sounds; even when it's noisy, they can precisely discern what they're looking for.

To add to that, their leg and arm muscles are superb.

With that kid's poor amount of muscle, he wouldn't ever be able to display such speed or endurance.

That was one of the reasons that the kid planned to attack me.

If he acted like a lanky kid and suddenly attacked in a burst of speed, most people wouldn't be able to deal with it.

If it was a normal human, you would think that they would have mana to make up for their lack of muscular strength, but that kid was different.

That kid has no connection to mana.

It just looked like a problem with his blood.

I thought that he may be a different species similar to humans.

Next, the guides are good at acting.

It's not just at the level of spewing a few good lies, but they would be able to create a separate persona for their employer.

It could be a common point that was linked to either blood or a tribal tradition, or it could also be nothing more than a professional characteristic.

Lastly, if we're also talking about that kid's characteristics, it'd just be that he's really talentless.

If you had a body that was blessed with those muscles, it'd be really hard to be talentless.

It's still the same regardless of how little he eats or how lanky he is, or even if you consider that he hasn't received any training or education.

This should be enough, right?

Assuming that the kid will deliver me to the lowest floor well, his guidance would be useless information after.

There really isn't any reason to delve more deeply into my thoughts here.

[Warrior.] Seregia said.

She must be asking for the reason.

[Could you please explain?]

Seregia interrogated me regarding my previous behavior.

She doesn't want to affect my decision, but she wants me to justify my

past behavior.

[Let's summarize that kid's two problems.]

[Though it's not just one or two problems.]

[Still, there are two things that are problematic. First is his greed. Everyone has greed. And you can be swung around by your own greed here and there. It's just that that kid was excessively greedy. When he had received the gems, that kid, rather than being satisfied with them, wanted more. The reason that this could become an issue is that I don't know where his greed ends.]

One might say that the kid's payment was overboard, but even so, the kid's greed hadn't been sated.

If I could guess where his greed would end, I would have solved the matter by just giving him the treasure that he wanted.

Inside this tutorial, whether it be gems or anything else, all the items I possess are just points.

Also, I had no intention of treasuring those gems that were nothing more than points.

If it allowed me to clear a stage easily, I would give that kid enough gems to buy the entire town that we had passed.

However, even after receiving that many gems, I wasn't sure that the kid would be satisfied.

[That's why I gave them to him so easily. I also gave him the subspace bag that drew his attention, and even added more gems and the magic short sword on top of that.]

[However, that wouldn't solve the problem. Even after receiving those, you don't know if that child would want even more.]

[That's why I gave them to him so easily. Whether it be gems or magical tools, I needed to show him that all of those held no meaning

to me. I don't know how much time I'll spend with that kid in the future, but I'll imply it.]

[What are you talking about?]

[That if he asks me directly, I can give him as much as he wants.]

Seregia was momentarily silent.

Seregia assented with my reasoning and I walked through the forest, listening to the birds call.

After a little time passed like that, Seregia spoke.

[That must be your solution to the second problem.]

[Yeah. The kid's second problem was that he was going to attack me in order to satiate his greed. That's why I let him know. That there was a better method.]

[However, Warrior. I think that there are still two problems remaining.]

Two problems, you say.

Rather than pondering, I just asked Seregia.

[First, it's if the child's greed still isn't fulfilled until the end.]

[That's why I used a slightly violent method. I want to give him the impression that I can give him as much as he wants, but he could die if he makes the wrong choice.]

[Yes. The child will attempt to walk on a tightrope. However, the idea that that child will be moved by his greed until the end still remains.]

I don't think so.

Fear will overshadow his greed.

Fear would stimulate a human's most basic desire: the will to live.

The faint Seregia probably won't be able to understand that.

At least right now, the kid that's walking in front of me isn't guiding me to satisfy his greed.

He's just doing as he's told because he's scared.

For the time being, I should be able to control him with fear.

And as time passes, when that fear fades, I can inversely take advantage of the kid's greed.

Finally, that fear would fade, but would still remain; that fear will curb that kid's excessive greed.

[What about the second problem?]

[There's a possibility that this kid may bear a grudge because of this.]

* * *

I followed the kid's lead and arrived at the dungeon; the dungeon's entrance looked a bit different than what I had expected.

I had expected the cave entrance to be dreary and ominous, but this was just a marketplace.

I wasn't saying that it was as noisy as a marketplace, but that it was a literal marketplace.

There were stalls here and there, surrounded by people soliciting those passing by.

Whether it was the surroundings of the dungeon's entrance, or a passage beyond the entrance, it was all the same.

It was noisy and boisterous and there were too many people.

There were seriously too many people.

I grabbed the wrist of a man who bumped into my shoulder before trying to pass by.

And I gripped it and twisted it.

Crunch.

They either tried to rummage through my pockets or tried to steal the swords at my waist; the number of pickpockets who had their wrists and elbows shattered already numbered over ten.

The pickpocket's agonized scream had been buried by the bustling market; the collapsed, screaming pickpocket was drowned in the crowd and left my sight.

“Is this place normally like this?”

“Yes, Swordsman. It's always like this because there's only one entrance. If you go inside, it'll be a bit better. Until then, be careful of pickpockets.”

Hey kid, there already aren't any pickpockets remaining that can continue their business in my vicinity.

Chapter 165

Tutorial 27th Floor (4)

When we reached the passageway leading to the middle floor past the upper floor of the dungeon, I was finally able to get away from the chaos.

The people using the intercontinental underground passageway, the adventurers who look for medicinal herbs or monster corpses, and mercenaries generally only use the upper floor.

Because of that, it's only been two days since we've entered the dungeon and today, we enjoyed silence and were able to walk casually.

“How long will it take until we reach the middle floor?”

“It'll take around three days.”

That's long.

It's just the passageway between the upper floor and the middle floor, yet it'll take three days?

“Be that as it may, it'll take too long.”

“That's because it's not just a simple passageway. It's not a literal title; rather than calling this place a passageway, you can call this the upper-middle floor.”

The upper-middle floor, you say.

When the kid described the dungeon beforehand, I hadn't heard anything regarding the upper-middle floor.

Now that I think about it, he didn't explain the middle floor either.

When I think back, now that I've entered the dungeon, the information that the kid gave back then didn't have any worthwhile information.

“What's in the upper-middle floor?”

“Rather than an intercontinental passageway, the upper-middle floor is generally used as a refuge. There are a few refugee towns composed of criminals and cursed people.”

It's as big as a town...?

“It seems like it's a lot bigger than I thought.”

“Yes. It's actually larger than the upper floor. However, since we're going to use a crossroad that leads directly to the middle floor, we should be able to pass through it in three days.”

Contrary to his explanation in the town, it was fairly informational.

I didn't know how precise and substantial the contents of his explanation were.

“Toll.”

I saw the thieves occupying the crossroads and asking for money as if it were obvious and briefly pondered.

Should I just give them the money and pass through?

[It's been a while, so what do you think about tidying them up, Warrior?]

Just shut up a bit, you psychopathic demon sword.

I looked at the kid, but he just looked back at me as if paying the toll was expected.

And it didn't seem like he had any intention of paying the toll with the down payment I gave him yesterday.

[Warrior, we don't have any change right now. We have to pay with the gems, but if they accept those gems, they won't let us go; rather, they'll try to extort us even further.]

They probably would.

But you never know, so I decided to pay the toll fee.

If there are any surveillance crystals stuck somewhere, things will become troublesome.

This is the cave passageway.

If this lively bunch in the surrounding area become my enemies, they could even tear down the passage and bury us.

I took out a gem from my inventory and threw it to him.

“This should be enough, right?”

The thief boss, who had received the gem, briefly pondered, and asked, “May I ask you where your destination is?”

Seregia's prediction was wrong.

He spoke much more submissively than I expected.

“The middle floor,” the child beside me said abruptly.

The man glanced at the boy and said, “So, you were a guide, huh.”

“Yes.”

The man turned his head towards me again, and asked, “You have no business in the upper-middle floor?”

“No. We’re planning on going straight down to the middle floor,” the kid said again.

“Then may we guide you?”

“Yes. Of course.”

The kid accepted their leader’s request.

I didn't know anyone here, so I decided to stay quiet.

After the kid exchanged a few more words with the thieves, we started to move again.

One thief was added to our party of the kid and me, so we moved as three.

“Explain to me what happened back there,” I asked the kid, after around thirty minutes of walking.

The kid glanced back at the thief following behind to see if he was watching, and started to explain.

“I told you that the people in the upper-middle floor formed a town and gathered, right?”

“Yeah. You did say that.”

“There's something like an ongoing conflict within that group. That's why when someone that looks strong like you appears, Swordsman, they're probably concerned that you'll join the other side. Normally, rather than just letting you pass, they'll ask you to join them or often take you with them against your will...”

Rather than that, it meant that they were comfortable with the fact that I was clearly going down to the middle floor.

“That man back there had better sense than you.”

I had sated my curiosity and continued to walk forward.

Together with the awkward kid.

* * *

“Starting from here, this is the middle floor.”

The man who had said that he would guide us but actually followed us to spy on us had already left.

The kid explained that this was the entrance of the middle floor and his face expressed an anxiousness that he didn't have before.

“Really dangerous monsters appear in the middle floor. Plus, there aren't any light stones embedded in the walls... And...”

“Right, I know it's dangerous, so let's hurry and get going.”

“...And... starting from the middle floor, if you don't have a guide, you'll never be able to return outside.”

“Ok. If it becomes dangerous, protecting you is my top priority.”

It seemed like the kid wasn't relieved even after hearing my response.

When I looked at the hesitant kid, I thought.

If I want this kid to guide me to the lowest floor, what should I use to convince him: gems or violence?

It seems like I was leaning towards the latter.

In any case, if I take away the gems, and I want to convince him, it'll inevitably be accompanied by a coercive atmosphere.

Fortunately, the kid started to move before I was finished thinking.

First, he took out and raised a short wand from the large backpack that was strapped onto his back.

And he started to walk forward.

I followed behind the kid and as I went down the middle floor, I could see the remarkably different landscape.

Contrary to the upper passageway that seemed well-built, the middle floor was a dark and uneven underground tunnel.

It was such a narrow tunnel that a single adult could barely pass through it.

“This is way too cramped.”

“If you go farther, it'll become wider. Narrow passageways and large clearings show up repeatedly in the middle floor. They each have a different size, and they say that there are some empty lots the size of a town, but there are also passageways so narrow that it's even difficult to crawl.”

If the passageway is that small, it'll be a bit uncomfortable.

After he finished talking, he seemed to be tense, trembling with every step.

It seems like this is the first time that this kid has come to the middle floor.

Both his words as well as his behavior indicated this.

Will we really be able to go all the way to the lowest floor?

[Warrior, I have a hunch that that child won't be of much help.]
Seregia said.

No, it seems like that child will be helpful.

I replied to Seregia.

Honestly, I'm relieved.

Before we got inside the dungeon, I was considering two things while I was bringing the kid.

It was late, but I was thinking about going back to the town and getting a new guide...

Or going into the dungeon alone without a guide.

However, I ultimately discarded the first option because it was a hassle and discarded the second as well because you never know what could happen.

It was truly a relief.

If I came all the way here by myself, I would've had to go back to the town in order to get a different guide.

[It's already been hundreds of years since I became a holy sword, but this kind of feeling is a first. What should I call it? Hm...]

The holy sword muttered in a slightly quiet voice.

[I feel like I'm going to vomit.]

Me too.

[Is that so? I don't feel any different.]

Seregia's like that because she can't consciously spread mana.

It was the special characteristic of this dungeon's middle floor.

The mana that I had spread in order to grasp my surroundings quivered dizzily.

The mana that had been wandering in the air couldn't escape my periphery and dissipated just like that.

I may be jumping to conclusions, but using your mana to survey your surroundings or to find a path is impossible.

And this middle floor is really vast and also narrow; and if that winding path had forked roads like a maze, it would be impossible to get out of here by yourself.

Just like the kid had said.

[Perception Degradation Magic, Mana Diffusion Magic, and it also seems like there's some other types of suppression magic that I'm not familiar with... There are several mixed together. I cannot dispel it with my abilities, and it's also at a level that I cannot grasp its true nature.]

Since the holy sword is going that far and saying that, it seems like it'll be difficult for me to escape this situation on my own.

Fortunately, the kid walking in front of me should have a method for finding the right path.

When the man we had met in the upper-middle floor had heard that we were going to the middle floor, he looked at the kid and noted that he was a guide.

The old lady that I met in the town recommended this kid as a guide to get me to the lowest floor.

This kid definitely has a way to find the right path.

And that way is probably related to the wand he had taken out.

I sorted my thoughts and took out a luminescent stone from my inventory, silently walking and following behind the kid.

It wasn't difficult for me to walk in the darkness, but it's probably difficult for the kid.

I have to at least be considerate of his needs.

Since his senses were outstanding, he could probably walk through the darkness without much trouble, but in this narrow underground tunnel, the walls were thick and rugged, so he could easily be injured.

The kid was concerned that the light would draw and gather the monsters, but I insisted that it would be ok.

Drawing the monsters with the light was killing two birds with one stone.

* * *

Shriek-

While gazing at the beheaded monster's corpse, I asked the kid, "Are all the monsters in the middle floor like this?"

"Yes... well... yes... most of the monsters are at that level..."

What a disappointment.

All the monsters in this dungeon were the type that would hide themselves in the darkness to suddenly burst out and ambush me.

After that, they would just follow their instincts, utilizing their quick and agile movement to use their sharp talons or teeth to attack.

That was it.

Of course, they were really fast and were powerful, but that was it.

I shoved the luminescent stone back into my bag.

If the monsters that lived in the dungeon's middle floor were all just monsters like this, I didn't really want to go so far as to lure them in order to kill them.

[Are you not really satisfied, Warrior? Even though you haven't seen blood in a while? It's hot, fishy, and red blood! Yoo-hoo! Warrior, won't you swing me and use me to fight next time? Yes? I'll even beg you like this. Tee-hee?]

This crazy bastard.

The holy sword is exposing its bloodthirst now.

[It's boring. Now that I've become and started living as a sword, I wanted to cut down an opponent who knows swordsmanship. Even if they don't know swordsmanship, it would've been nice if they were at least intelligent.]

Seregia's response also wasn't really desirable, but I agreed with her opinion.

The IQ of the monsters here was way too low.

“That monster just now... It's a species called cave clock. If we consider that it's in the middle floor then... it was... a Class 2 risk... This isn't a monster that you can normally kill in one stroke...”

The kid had quickly taken out an illustrated book out of his bag and rummaged through it, and spoke.

Even though the luminescent stone was in my bag.

Considering that he could read the book aloud even though the luminescent stone was off, it seemed like the dark wasn't much of a problem for him.

When you consider the speed of the monster that I had just taken care of, as well as the durability of its hide, it was a really dangerous opponent.

I said this before, but it was just too dumb.

“Where do we have to go next?”

There was a forked road behind the monster's corpse, which was collapsing down onto the floor.

The kid raised his wand in front of the forked road, gripped it tightly, and concentrated.

That's what he did whenever we came across a forked road.

After about five minutes had passed, the kid opened his eyes.

I matched him and opened my eyes.

"It's the left-most path. This way."

* * *

It's already been two days and we still haven't been able to get out of the middle floor.

First, I gave up on drawing a map inside my head using my sense of direction within the first six hours of the first day.

Even if I go back the same direction to the place I was before and followed the forked road, something I'd never seen before would show up.

When I asked the kid, he said that the place was different from the one before.

The location seems the same, but he said that that was the lower floor.

When I asked him why we're going further up, he said that while he was looking for the path that went down, he ended up going up instead.

Then, when I asked why he didn't find that path when we were on the upper floors, he said that there was no crossroad that directly connected to that path on the upper floors.

When I thought about my journey inside the dungeon, I felt tired.

I wasn't physically fatigued, but it was narrow, dark, repetitive, and emitted a strange smell; we also didn't know where we were going and regularly walked in circles, which was mentally draining in itself.

After walking around in circles for two days, I abandoned the map inside my head as well as everything else.

Instead, whenever the kid came across a forked road, I concentrated whenever the kid raised his wand and gathered his focus.

5 forks in the road.

Two of the paths led up, while three led down.

However, that's just the direction of the forked road; you don't know what way the forked road leads until you actually walk through it.

However, the kid, without being blocked or without hesitation, picked one of the paths of the forked road.

We had stayed in the middle floor for two days, not because the kid couldn't find the path and was wandering around, but because this middle floor was excessively vast.

The kid had said that he had memorized the geography of this place, but that was a lie.

This wasn't at the level you could memorize and go through.

I wonder how you could go through the forked roads without memorization?

You couldn't even spread your mana and look ahead with it.

Did he create a map in his head and pick the right path?

That's impossible.

Is there a sign that only guides can identify for forked roads?

Throughout the two days, I had thoroughly observed for a sign in vain.

Is it simply using decision-making and prediction?

Likewise, that's impossible.

If this kid is using his own knowledge and wisdom in order to find the right path, that's close to predicting the future.

The last thing I could think of was obvious, but it was that wand.

The wand was acting as a navigator.

I have my doubts again here.

If that was the case, then that wand is some sort of magic tool; but how could it find the right path?

This dungeon was characterized by mana obstruction that was extensively pinning us down.

The kid closed his eyes.

I also closed my eyes.

The kid, in front of the forked road, acted as if he were concentrating and secretly pet the lower part of the wand's handle.

In the next moment, the wand emitted mana.

That mana doesn't spread towards the forked road.

It just roamed about the surrounding area and transiently dissipated.

Just like my mana.

The kid opened his eyes.

I also opened my eyes.

“It's the second path from the right. This way.”

* * *

The kid stopped walking before the four forked roads without an up or down.

As he had done before, he tightly gripped his wand.

He closed his eyes.

I also closed my eyes.

It wasn't the first one.

It also wasn't the third one.

The fourth one was... a bit ambiguous.

[I have absolutely no idea.]

[It seems like the third one, Warrior.]

It's not the third one.

It doesn't seem like the fourth one either.

It's the second one.

Now, let's see if I've picked the right path.

This kid opened his eyes.

I also opened my eyes.

“It's the second path from the left. This way.”

Chapter 166

Tutorial 27th Floor (5)

“This way.”

I followed the kid's lead and it soon became three days of wandering around in the middle floor...

Right about now, I was able to make a inference regarding the role of these so called guides.

They can lead you to the right path without depending on their sense of direction, their mana, or magic lamps in this middle floor.

I had thought it was just their top-notch senses and physical abilities, but they had a much more peculiar kind of ability.

When you seek a guide for the middle floor, they'll probably be a strong individual that the client wouldn't easily meet.

It wasn't just this kid; the old lady that I had met in town was also at a level where you couldn't deal with her easily.

That's why these guys are generally of a lower social class.

It's a bit awkward for them to refuse a request outright, and their workplace is extremely dangerous.

In addition, they may be abused in some way once they get inside the dungeon.

Therefore, I thought that this job as a guide was the most dangerous, difficult and dirty; the most extreme of the 3Ds job.

However.

The kid who had been silently walking through the passage stopped.

There was a new forked road in front of him.

Once they had departed the town, passed the entrance of the dungeon, gotten through the upper floor and the upper-middle floor, and reached this middle floor, they gained a greater social status.

The kid took out a small clock from his chest and checked the time, saying, "It's taken exactly three days."

It's been three days since we've entered the middle floor.

"Yeah."

"There are thousands of people who unfortunately suffer an accident in the dungeons; no, it may actually be tens of thousands. It could also be even more than that."

The kid started talking.

If it were possible, I wish he'd speed up the conversation a bit more.

"However, even amongst them, there's a famous story. Do you know of it? Of the story of the swordmaster Eheram?"

"No."

"I'm talking about the story regarding Eheram, considered the strongest swordmaster of the continent, starving and dying in this dungeon's middle floor. Eheram and a guide had entered this dungeon together, but three days after entering, he argued with his guide."

That was obvious.

I'd really like to skip this conversation, though.

"After their argument, the furious guide left Eheram and exited the dungeon first. They say that when Eheram saw his guide do so, he

screamed at him. That he could get out on his own. Eheram was left alone like that in the middle floor and they say that they found his skeleton two years later.”

[It's finally time to kill him! Yoo-hoo! Warrior, have you killed a lot of children before?]

[Warrior. My mood is worsening to the point that it's slowly becoming unbearable. If it's at all possible, could you please put that magic sword on the other side of your waist? I want to be as far as possible from that thing.]

...I got it.

I moved the holy sword, which had been attached to the left side of my waist with the soul sword, to the right side of my waist.

It seemed as if the child thought my actions were dangerous.

“Why don't you go ahead and try to kill me? You won't be able to get out of here without me!” he desperately lashed out.

“It doesn't really matter much if I die here. After all, my life is in the gutters, so dying here isn't very different from dying outside. However, it's different for someone with a lot to lose like you, right, Swordsman?”

I wonder what that kid wants?

More money? The holy sword and the soul sword? If not those, then an apology for the violence from before?

I had already directly and indirectly conveyed my intent to the kid several times.

That if he had something he wanted to just say it.

That if it's proper, I'll just give it to him.

However, that kid's the one who ignored my intent.

“If you're by chance planning to steal my wand, you should just give up. This wand can only be used by my kin. If you're not a person with our kin's blood, this wand won't activate.”

Yeah, I'm sure that's how it is.

Since it would only activate by blood offerings, he would prick his finger with the awl at the end of the wand.

I had thought that it would have that kind of condition.

And I could easily guess that the wand had that kind of limitation when I saw the kid use that wand so confidently in front of me.

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. My blade is crying out!]

[Warrior, please just shove it into the subspace.]

Just as Seregia suggested, I shoved the holy sword into my inventory.

And I raised my hand, spreading my mana.

I briefly observed the dissipating mana.

There were three forked roads in front of my eyes.

The mana that flowed from my fingertips chaotically roamed the air and dissipated.

Before it dissipated, the mana's movement was extremely erratic.

However, after spreading my mana for three days and frequently observing it, I figured out that there was a pattern there.

This middle floor's maze is special.

It had several special points, but the most unique aspect was the mana obstruction magic.

And that this wasn't a spontaneous phenomenon.

Someone was deliberately casting this large-scale magic.

Semi-permanently at that.

The magic's purpose was clear-cut: to make it difficult to find the right path.

However, the right path certainly exists here.

The path that leads to the lowest floor.

Using the few clues I had, I made a deduction about the caster of the magic.

Two speculations were possible.

If it was a spell used in order to imprison someone, then the caster is in the upper floor; in other words, they must've used their magic from the exit of the dungeon.

In this case, the goal of the magic would be to make it impossible to find the path that leads to the exit.

If so, I just need to spread mana in the direction we came from.

Because we came from the exit.

Since I knew the correct answer, I should be able to figure out the pattern with a few tries.

However, that wasn't it.

The next possible assumption is this:

This magic was being cast from the dungeon's lowest floor in order to prevent you from recklessly entering the dungeon's lowest floor.

When I think about this stage's mission about the Earth Dragon and the Earth Dragon's treasure, the second assumption is much more plausible.

It was a large-scale magic that obstructed the path towards the dragon's lair.

It's entirely possible.

If, based on my second assumption, this obstruction magic's goal is to block my way to the lowest floor...

Then I had to add an additional assumption here.

In what manner did the caster of the magic cast it?

It wasn't easy to disperse the mana within a specific area with magic.

No, it's impossible.

In casting magic, the most important things are the conditions and the medium.

When the kid was walking, he had suddenly said that starting here was the middle floor.

He had also said that the middle floor's terrain consisted of narrow passageways and clearings.

The passageway's ceiling, walls, floor, and from the front... The fact that there was a mana obstruction effect...

And the limitation on the technique known as magic...

If I substitute in those few conditions, I could easily tell what the caster of the magic is using as a medium.

It's the passageway.

And even amongst all those forked roads, the right path.

In the deepest depths of the dungeon, he was using the passageway leading straight to the exit of the dungeon as a medium.

The passageway that acts as the medium spreads throughout the middle floor and exerts its influence.

I spread my mana once again.

Due to the force that was pulling at my mana from all directions, my mana loomed in the air here and there and disappeared.

However, the pulling force was coming from a strange place.

But it was impossible to grasp the direction it was in.

Because the mana dissipated instantaneously.

However, this second dissipating mana was different.

I memorized the pattern of the dissipating mana and I willed my mana into that shape.

The pulling force pulled, but I added my strength and pulled back harder.

The mana thread was pulled on both ends and easily snapped.

However, if only one side pulled, it would simply move to one side.

I pulled the mana that was facing the first passageway, but it dissipated.

The first passageway is the correct answer.

[I have absolutely no idea.]

This way of manipulating mana with your hands would be impossible for Seregia.

The holy sword that I had shoved and discarded into my inventory also wouldn't be able to do it.

In a short time, I had observed the pattern, and I had to memorize that pattern.

And you'd have to subtly manipulate your mana according to that erratic-looking pattern.

Finally, you'd have to grasp where the mana is going in that split second before your mana dissipates.

If you weren't an extremely exceptional magician, it would be difficult to do.

Though I could do it.

“About this wand. Our ancestors invented this wand...”

The kid was still describing the wand.

He was explaining its value and it seemed like he wanted to seize the initiative.

Just like before, he still didn't tell me what he wanted.

“You spread your mana, and you read the pattern in the split second of your mana dissipating. It's probably like some kind of calculator.”

It wasn't hard to guess the wand's function.

Just by looking at the exterior, I could tell that wand had only two abilities.

It just spreads mana into the air.

And then it would film the sight of that mana dissipating.

That was all.

The mana would randomly roam in the air and dissipate; the sight was extremely erratic and chaotic.

It would change that irregularity into a pattern.

And it would compare it to all of the patterns that were built into the wand and tell you the right answer.

I wasn't completely sure, but the likelihood of it was over 70%.

It was an efficient magic tool.

Honestly, the abilities in and of itself aren't bad.

Because filming the volatile movement of mana was difficult.

I don't know who it was, but whoever invented that was probably at the level of an Archmage.

“Get out of the way. And don't block my path.”

I shoved aside the kid who seemed flustered and went inside the first passageway.

“W-Without me, you won't be able to find the right path!” the kid yelled, following behind me.

“I found it, didn't I?”

* * *

“That's impossible...”

The kid followed behind me and mumbled.

The kid had followed me, confident that I would never be able to find the right path.

However, I had repeatedly chosen the right path five times; his face paled about half way through.

[Are you just going to leave him like that?]

Yeah.

[Wouldn't it be better to dispose of him?]

It's fine. There's no need.

I don't think I need to kill him just because he became useless.

In any case, that kid wouldn't be able to leave here alive, so I didn't need to get blood on my hands.

The kid continued to follow behind me.

The kid probably couldn't help it as well.

The kid couldn't deal with the monsters in this middle floor that hid their bodies and lived in the darkness.

There were also dangerous individuals who lived in the upper-middle floor and wanted sacrifices.

If he didn't have someone to protect him, they would take everything he had and capture him.

Therefore, the kid had no choice other than to follow me.

Even now, when he is seized by the fear that I could turn around at any time and kill him because he had threatened me.

The kid couldn't separate himself from me.

It was quite unfortunate.

“Just a moment... Swordsman. Please just wait a moment.”

Even while panting because he couldn't keep up with me.

The kid couldn't afford to lag behind.

“Please... Please. Please let me live, Swordsman.”

They're words that I had heard some time ago.

Just a little while ago.

“...Swordsman. Swordsman.”

His voice sounded as if it was echoing, so he must've been quite far behind me.

“The gems. I'll return the gems as well as the bag! I'll give you everything that I have!”

The kid stopped walking and started shouting after me.

Rather than following me and convincing me, he stayed in place to catch his breath and yelled at me. He might've been trying to get me to stop walking.

“I-If I'm capable of doing it, I'll do anything! Swordsman! Please!”

[How unfortunate.]

What is?

[Humans.]

That's not what I think.

Behind my back, the kid's cries shifted from anger to desperation.

He was so far away that he couldn't even see my back and it seemed like he had sunk into a panic; he was just spitting out any words he could muster.

He was cursing me, and he was also cursing the world too.

As I listened to those words, I could understand why the kid was so obsessed with money and why he was so greedy.

He was considerably unfortunate to the point of being interesting and had a long story, but he wasn't able to stop me from walking.

“Swordsman, I'm actually a girl!”

This time, I had no choice but to stop my stride.

Because it was so absurd.

What exactly do you want me to do?

“I know!”

I yelled behind me and started walking again.

I knew that she wore a bandana, cut her hair short, wore male attire, deliberately changed her voice to sound like a man, used her dirtiness and her smelliness in order to hide her pretty face; I knew she was afraid of revealing that she was a woman.

From the day that I first met her.

However, does that really matter?

I asked myself.

It didn't matter at all.

The only thing that mattered right now was that there was an Earth Dragon waiting for me in the lowest floor.

The word “earth worm” wasn't another name for a worm.

There's no such worm in any novel that can use this kind of high-rank magic.

The one occupying the bottom of this dungeon was a dragon.

I continued to walk forward as my heart fluttered.

Chapter 167

Tutorial 27th Floor (6)

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. This will be the start of a new legend of the holy sword as well as the title of Dragon Slayer!]

What are you going on about?

“If I kill the dragon, the Dragon Slayer title is mine. Why do you get that title?”

[That's because my blade will pierce the dragon's heart!]

“Nope. I'm not going to use you.”

The holy sword radiated and threw a tantrum.

He wanted me to use him to kill the dragon.

[Warrior, could you please just shove that thing back into the subspace?]

[...]

Seregia said, and the holy sword returned to being quiet.

The holy sword really hated entering the inventory, so whenever someone said anything about putting him inside of it, he'd immediately behave himself.

I honestly had no plans of taking out the holy sword from my inventory before I parted ways with the guide kid.

But I was concerned that if I just left the holy sword inside my

inventory while I was taking care of the dragon, he would whine like there was no tomorrow.

If by chance the holy sword refused to cooperate at an important moment, it would be a huge deal, so if he behaved, I decided to attach and wear him at my waist.

[It's a strange place.] Seregia said.

Like always, her voice was calm and dry. But the more you listened to her, the better you'd get at roughly understanding how she feels.

“Yeah. The murals are also unusual.”

It's been two days since I've parted ways with the kid.

I had passed through the middle floor and reached the lowest floor.

Though I didn't have a guide, I could easily tell that I had escaped the middle floor.

I walked through the middle floor's passageway and was eventually met with a stone gate that blocked the narrow passageway.

It was a thick stone gate, inscribed with a glowing magic circle.

If the holy sword's explanation was correct...

Based on the holy sword's explanation, the gate was a magic door that would open only after you spoke the proper keyword. I just smashed through the gate with pure strength and went in. After that, the dungeon's appearance changed significantly.

Contrary to the middle floor's narrow passageway that went on in the shape of a winding road, the lowest floor consisted of a single clearing.

The lowest floor looked as if it was a giant temple.

I couldn't read most of the writing and the drawings were discolored as well, but I could tell what this place was.

This place was a spot built for worship.

But rather than worshipping a god, it looked as if it were a place to worship a dragon.

That's what I thought when I saw the stone statues of a giant dragon as well as the vague draconic patterns.

I walked through the dragon's temple silently save for the sound of my footsteps and eventually reached the end.

A giant door.

I thought it might be about as high as a ten-story apartment; the giant door was the only thing blocking my advance.

The giant door was engraved with strange words and symbols.

[They're runes.] Seregia said.

“You also know runes? That's surprising.”

It was prejudiced, but Seregia didn't look as though she had any expertise in anything other than swordsmanship.

[I remember learning it from the Academy's liberal arts classes.]

“Can you read it?”

[No. I only know that they are runes.]

As always, Seregia responded confidently.

She had given off this impression since a while back, but whenever Seregia believes that she can't do something, something won't work out, or she doesn't have something, and talks about something

negative, she responds even more confidently than before.

Is that a characteristic of her speech, or if not, is it some sort of strange masochistic gag?

[Hoo. Hoo. It's obvious that our cute Miss Seregia wouldn't be able to read those words. You don't have to be too hard on yourself, Miss Seregia.]

The holy sword went 'hoo. hoo.' again and started talking.

[...I'm not blaming myself, but you're making me feel bad, so please refrain from calling my name.]

The holy sword ignored Seregia's request and continued.

[Those runes are written in the draconic language.]

“I see. Then can you read it?”

[No. I can also read a few runes, but reading that is impossible. It's not like draconic language is like a kid's coded message, so how could I read it? There probably aren't even ten people on this entire continent who can decipher that message.]

I briefly felt that the holy sword's statement was odd.

Was the draconic language that difficult of a language to understand?

I had heard about the distinctive characteristics of the draconic language from Idy before.

“Is it really that difficult?”

[Yes. Of course.]

“What I heard is that all of the meaning is put in the front in the draconic language; the rest is just an inefficient language that lists unnecessary words. Then, if you just decipher the beginning of those

runes, shouldn't you be able to guess its meaning?"

[I don't know who you heard this from, but that someone clearly has absolutely no knowledge of runes. You cannot just thoughtlessly say something like that, Warrior. Magicians will say that you're looking down on them and attack you out of anger for your disrespect.]

Is that so?

The dungeon's path continued on beyond that giant door.

If it's possible, I would just smash through the door and walk in, but I wanted to understand some of its meaning before that.

"Can you at least read a few letters?"

[I might. Even if I know a few runes, the meaning can be completely different so there's a high possibility that I will misunderstand it.

[TL Note: He's saying that the words differ in meaning, presumably based on how they're sequenced, spelled, etc.]

How unfortunate.

I smacked my lips and I walked forward to smash apart the door.

[You don't have to blame yourself for not being able to read those runes. It's only natural, sir holy sword, Ahbooboo something or another.]

The quiet Seregia suddenly 'cast' provoke.

[...Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. It's natural, you say?... Warrior. Could you please give me some time? If you just give me enough time, I can interpret as many of those mere scribbles as you want!]

The holy sword was caught by the provocation.

The effect was tremendous.

“No. It's not a matter of time, but you said that you couldn't read it. Let's just go.”

[OH! Please, Warrior! If you give me a chance, I'll be quiet!]

That was a tempting offer.

“Fine. Then I'll give you some time, so stay quiet.”

[Yes. Thank you, Warrior. I love you, Warrior. I'm definitely going to decipher that draconic language. And I'll show you that I'm worthy of being a holy sword. When I say I'll do something, I definitely follow through. And Miss Seregia, my name isn't Ahbooboo, it's Ahoubuch!]

[I know. Sir mythomania holy sword.]

I ignored the bickering between Seregia and the holy sword, and leaned on a nearby pillar.

Since I had been moving unceasingly for a few days, resting before smashing apart the door wouldn't be such a bad idea.

I have absolutely no idea what was beyond that door.

Enemies may burst out the moment I open the door, so let's move after we've gotten some rest.

It also quieted down the holy sword.

I closed my eyes and briefly passed the time by circulating the mana circuits inside my body.

* * *

“Are you still not done?”

[That is... Warrior. If you give me some more time and manpower then...]

Manpower. What manpower?

I drew the holy sword from my waist.

[Warrior! Please! Please don't put me into the inventory!]

As soon as I drew the holy sword from his sheath, he had thought that I was going to put him into my inventory and quickly protested.

I crudely stuck the holy sword into the ground.

"I'll give you 10 more minutes. Finish within that time. Meanwhile, I'll be taking a look around."

After I stuck the holy sword into the ground at a position where it could see the front of the door well, I walked around the clearing as I glanced around.

I couldn't read the letters and the drawings and pieces were extremely damaged, so it was difficult to figure anything out.

But it felt like I was walking through a museum, so it wasn't bad.

In the corner, there were several comic strip-like murals divided into sections.

Likewise, they were considerably damaged, but the more you looked at them, the more you guess the story.

A great dragon fought and defeated an evil enemy.

The dragon that had defeated the enemy had either been cursed or made ill.

The dragon prepared a special ritual.

Before the ritual began, the dragon gave something to a human with a certain pattern.

At the site of the ritual that was taking place, the man waited outside of the door for the dragon.

The human became humans.

Whenever the drawings would change, the humans' faces would change slightly.

The drawing of the humans who waited outside of the door for the dragon continued for hundreds, maybe thousands of times.

The longer it went on, the more their numbers dwindled.

On the final picture on the wall, there was only one person remaining.

[It's an interesting story.]

“Yeah. I'm really curious what the dragon gave to the humans.”

What could it have possibly given them that they waited generations for the sleeping dragon?

I wonder what had become of the dragon's consciousness?

Has the dragon not woken up yet, by any chance?

It would be a real disappointment if the floor's objective was to slay a sleeping dragon.

[What do you think happened to the humans? Do you think they grew old and died?]

“Probably not. They probably just don't come over here anymore, even if they're still alive.”

[Why do you think that way?]

“Look at that pattern that's drawn on the humans over there. Don't you think you've seen that somewhere before?”

[So it was the guides' symbol.]

It was an interesting story, in more ways than one.

I returned to the front of the stone gate and drew the holy sword.

“Were you able to decipher some of it while I was away?”

[...]

The holy sword just kept silent.

[Sir holy sword sure does keep his promise, considering how he's already silent.]

Even though Seregia's remark was clearly sarcastic, the holy sword didn't retort as I returned him back to his sheath.

I drew the soul sword and enveloped it in aura.

And swung it at the giant stone gate.

* * *

Ultimately, even with my strength, I completely failed to break apart the stone gate.

It definitely seems like it's made of stone, but its hardness surpassed that of steel.

I tried a few times, but in the end I had no choice but to give up.

Instead, using my maximally condensed aura, I was able to make a small hole in the gate that I had to narrowly crawl through.

The air was different as soon as I got out of the hole.

The mana density was extremely high.

It felt like I was swimming through water composed of mana.

And beyond the darkness, I sensed a powerful existence.

I felt that the circulation of my mana was blocked due to its magic, and my sight couldn't pierce through the deep darkness.

All I could do was assume who this existence was, based on the power that I felt.

And I was sure.

That was a dragon.

I could say without any hesitation that the only existence that could match up to that is a dragon.

Rather, it was to the point that I was surprised.

Even though it's a dragon, I expected it to be on par with the Demon King or just a little weaker.

That's because the strength that the Demon King exhibited definitely wasn't suitable for the 26th floor difficulty.

However, that was a miscalculation.

That thing exceeds the Demon King's strength.

When I had met the Great Mother, I had witnessed the nearby mana resonating with her.

That was only possible because the Great Mother had complete command over the area.

When I had encountered the Demon King on the 26th floor, I could feel something tremendous beyond the Demon King's physical appearance.

The summoned Demon King would be used as a medium connecting him to his original body's mana in the Demon World beyond.

The Demon King summoned his body's strength and I had felt that considerable power crossing over right before my very eyes.

It was a surprising experience.

And right now, I was experiencing both of those phenomena right now.

The ground underneath and the ambient mana began to shake, and was resonating with the owner of that strength.

And within that owner's body, there was a vessel that existed, containing that absurd amount of mana.

What's worse was that it pulsed every few seconds and generated new mana.

It was an absurd spectacle.

Every few seconds, it would be freshly supplied with an amount of mana similar to my entire supply of mana.

If you just looked at our mana, you wouldn't even be able to compare the two of us.

Kwang!!

It suddenly roared, accompanied by a cloud of dust and wind surging forth.

And I could feel it.

The dragon had recognized my existence.

Those dragon eyes were looking at me.

My feet stiffened at that truth.

It wasn't fear.

It wasn't from a magical effect.

My brain had just stopped for a second.

At the face of overwhelming strength.

I couldn't find a way to take it down.

In my head, I could see myself repeatedly fail; after that, I could see my death.

That thing isn't something that should appear on the 27th floor.

There's some kind of problem.

[Warrior.]

I heard Seregia.

I instinctively drew and unsheathed the soul sword.

And I raised the holy sword in my left hand.

Although I had decided to refrain from using the holy sword for the sake of my growth, I had to use it in this kind of dangerous situation.

That's why I had continued to carry it from the very beginning.

I thought as I felt its gaze narrow on me.

I couldn't see it, nor could I sense it, but it had turned its body towards me just now.

The first thing I could think of: a magic attack.

When its long-range attack comes, how should I handle it?

“Holy sword.”

[Yes. Warrior.]

Contrary to his normal speech, the holy sword spoke both curtly and sharply.

“If a long-distance intangible magic attack comes, for example a restraint, or sleep, or a magic that puts my body into an abnormal state, you can block it, right?”

[I can. So long as the God of the Sky responds, I should be able to block it using holy spells.]

“How much?”

[Twice. Maybe three times.]

That's too few.

“What about ordinary attack magic?”

[I cannot block it at my level. No matter what comes flying, I won't be able to block it.]

So you're saying that I have to evade attack magics and rely on Talaria's Wings.

My preparation against the long-distance attack is too poor.

If that's the case, I have to approach first.

While the dragon is preparing its attack right now, I have to preemptively rush it and win in a short-term battle.

[Indomitable]

[Talaria's Wings]

[Soul Siphon]

[Soul Cry]

[Designate Opponent]

I used all the skills that I could and stepped forward.

At the same time, the dragon roared.

The dragon rushed towards me, accompanied by a deafening roar.

Contrary to what I had expected, it's going to fight me hand-to-hand.

Those conditions aren't bad for me.

I gripped the swords in my hands.

And I too, ran towards the approaching dragon.

Chapter 168

Tutorial 27th Floor (7)

[Roar!]

It felt as though the dragon's harsh cry was reverberating even inside my body.

The dragon and I approached each other at breakneck speed; the distance between the dragon and I was closing quickly.

In an instant, it ripped through the darkness and the dragon revealed itself before my very eyes.

Its body appeared as though it were larger than five meters.

It currently wasn't flying, but those giant, widely-spread wings...

As well as its teeth and its talons looked as big as my body...

Since it's close to me now, I can feel that overwhelming mana more clearly than before.

Its very existence was emitting a powerful intense pressure.

Just looking at it face-to-face made me lose my breath.

I repressed that intense pressure and told the holy sword.

Holy sword, focus on blocking the magic.

[Yes.]

[Blink]

I heard the holy sword reply curtly, unlike usual, and blinked to the back of the dragon's head.

I simultaneously swung the soul sword, cutting the back of the dragon's head as I leaped past.

The sword was enveloped in aura, but the dragon hadn't sustained much damage.

My attack wasn't shallow.

It was just that the dragon's defense was excessively high.

Despite precisely-aimed strikes, it just made a scratch mark on the dragon's hide, rather than cutting through and causing the dragon to bleed.

[Time Confinement]

I organized the outcome in my head.

It had nullified that simple sword strike.

It wasn't as if my aura was completely ineffective.

It was just that the damage inflicted was insignificant.

In order to land a serious attack, it must contain my aura's flames or I have to attempt an even stronger attack.

The former's consumption of my mana and mental strength is huge, and there's too much danger involved in the latter.

Next is the dragon's condition.

I could only observe it with my eyes for a split second, but I had seen everything that I needed to see.

The dragon's condition wasn't normal.

Fortunately.

The dragon's four legs were extremely skinny.

Its muscles looked as if they had shrunk as well.

Its wings' webbing was torn to pieces.

I could easily figure out the reason for that.

It wasn't just the wings; the dragon's entire body was covered in scars.

They were all self-inflicted wounds from its talons.

As the leading expert on self-injury, I was sure those scars were definitely self-inflicted.

Those self-inflicted scars were different in their direction and location than normal self-inflicted scars.

To add to that, I didn't see the pupils of its eyes.

Its pupils were dyed in a cloudy white color.

No matter how I see it, it looks like it's not in the right state of mind.

If the dragon's mind is addled, it wouldn't be able to utilize its spells or mana, so I could understand why it was idiotically charging in like that.

Of course, I can't be positive that the dragon won't use magic.

If it feels like it's in even a little bit in danger, it may start chaotically firing magic at random.

I formulated a plan until my Time Confinement ended.

I tried to predict the dragon's next move, one by one.

I postulated on every type of attack that I could imagine, and considered these situations while factoring in the dragon's speed.

Of course, most of my simulations' results were negative.

However, it was a lot better than what I had thought before the battle.

Just by approaching the dragon this much, my chances of winning were a lot higher than they were before.

I have to end the fight in a short period of time in order to win.

The next thing I had to think about was whether or not I could use the Light Sword.

Could I use the Light Sword the moment that the Time Confinement ends?

I slowly examined my current condition.

It's impossible.

Positioned in the air.

The direction of the attack.

My body is shaken up by my opponent's mana.

Kiri Kiri's warning on the mental strain on my brain.

The alarmingly close distance from the enemy.

Using the Light Sword right away is impossible.

I dismissed the Light Sword and pondered on my choice of attack I'll initiate as soon as my Time Confinement ends.

In that instant, the Time Confinement ended.

[Blink]

As soon as the effects of my Time Confinement were over, I used Blink to avoid the dragon's front legs.

I held onto the holy sword that had been in my left hand in my mouth.

I changed the Thousand Arms sheath that was attached to my waist into a dagger.

[Blink]

I blinked once again.

This time, I aimed for the dragon's neck and bashed into it by casting blink.

The powerful impact was accompanied by a heavy thud sound, as if I were crashing into a wall.

When I had used my blink tackle combo on the waiting room's wall, I had estimated the strength of the impact before using my blink.

I could ignore the impact and move my body.

I pierced the dragon's skin and lodged the dagger in my left hand into the dragon's neck.

I had planned to get up close and pierce a tender region; my dagger ended up lodged about half-way into the dragon's neck.

[Poison]

[TL Note: Was translated as Poison Energy before. That's much too literal and should be translated as poison anyway.]

After the 12th floor, I had consistently practiced the skill; it came in handy here.

It wasn't a skill that was to be used as a finisher, but I had enhanced my sword with the skill and fought several opponents with it before. Therefore, the skill level itself was sufficiently high.

In addition to the poison, I had also added my blazing aura.

Compared to the dragon's huge body, a dagger was nothing more than a needle stuck into its body, but it was different when poison and fire were involved.

If they were to pass through its body, it could obstruct its flow of mana; a critical attack.

Both of the dragon's front legs flew towards me.

[Blink]

[Blink]

I used Blink twice and I once again moved to the back of its head.

I raised the soul sword with both hands and focused on my aura.

I couldn't recklessly use the Light Sword, but I could use imitations of the Light Sword as much as I wanted.

[TL Note: The 'imitations' refer to the techniques with those cringy names that the swordmasters created in an attempt to replicate the Light Sword.]

Amongst them, there was a technique with the grandiose name, Cutting the Sky or Falling Fire's Judgment or whatever.

Even amongst the many techniques, it was the sole technique that stressed explosive power to such a degree.

Since I couldn't sever the dragon's head in one strike, I decided that striking the back of its head was my best plan of action, so long as I can buy even a split second longer for my next attack.

The technique properly struck the back of its head, and the dragon and I were both shocked by the attack.

Due to the impact, my body momentarily floated into the air.

I focused for my next move.

It was hit with an attack of this severity, so the dragon will start considering the use of magic.

Now, I'd have to move differently based on the dragon's response.

Offensive magic, evasion magic, obstruction magic.

I have no idea how many types of magic the dragon can use.

I also have no idea what magic it uses.

I would just react based on the purpose of that magic, that's all.

And in order to respond to that magic, I would have to predict the dragon's intent.

In a situation where I don't know how many or what kind of cards my opponent has, I have to predict their next move.

What's worse, it wasn't even a human; it was a dragon.

I focused on the dragon's face and muscle movements.

Regardless of what kind of magic the dragon decides on, there will always be telltale signs of its intent.

No matter how tiny they are.

Along with that, I was also tense from the trembling of the ambient mana.

Even though I was close to a beginner at magic, I had to foresee the characteristics of the magical invocation no matter what.

It was unbelievably difficult, but it was something I had to do.

My focus and my thinking speed sped up faster than ever before.

Due to the acceleration of my thoughts, the world slowed down to a speed that could compare to Time Confinement; I tried to guess the dragon's next move.

Despite my attempts, the dragon did something completely preposterous that was outside the realm of my predictions.

The dragon didn't attack, evade, or even restrain me.

It just screamed in agony.

[Shriek!]

I was dumbfounded when I saw the marred dragon clearly exposing its blind spots.

I was locked in confusion and couldn't initiate my next attack.

* * *

When I saw the dragon's overly straightforward movements and its dull pupils, I had assumed it, but the dragon had definitely lost its mind.

Contrary to my expectation, the dragon didn't get a hold of itself when danger was approaching, and even after encountering pain, it couldn't formulate a counter-measure.

It just writhed in pain and chased me because I was in its sights.

It swung its human-sized talons and teeth at me with enough force behind its arms and legs that it seemed as though it could break

through anything. But its behavior wasn't much different from a housecat chasing around a mosquito.

Although the dragon's close range attacks were backed by a fearsome strength, it wasn't at a level that could threaten me.

Its front legs, as well as its teeth exhibited a simple attack pattern.

Anything that lay in its line of sight was in its aggro.

Its muscles would jerk in order to attack.

The dragon wasn't even aware of its own exposed blind spot and just mustered all its strength to move its body.

Because of that, no matter how strong or fast its attacks were, I could predict the course of its attacks in advance, and calmly avoid them.

It wasn't hard.

Pure strength can lead to different outcomes based on how you use it.

Based on how you use your strength, the result can differ; the results branch off into an infinite number of outcomes.

And far from using magic or mana, the dragon demonstrated an intellect worse than a neighborhood mutt's, so there was no way that it would be my match.

Henceforth, what was progressing wasn't a battle, but a one-sided hunt.

I dodged its attacks and whenever there was a gap, I would stab it with my soul sword.

I didn't really need to put myself in danger to get in a damaging strike.

My sword strikes were enveloped in poison and flames, so whenever I hit the mark, the dragon would cry out and worsen its own injuries by

thrashing about.

Ultimately, the dragon couldn't bear the exhaustion created by its uncontrolled movements, plus the poison and the flames, and collapsed to the ground.

For a short while, the dragon was gasping intermittently, but eventually stopped moving completely.

I sighed.

How empty.

I had such high expectations as I progressed through the 27th floor.

When I had first saw the dragon, it had demonstrated strength beyond my imagination.

However, it couldn't properly wield that strength and died like... this.

It was such a hollow ending that it was sad.

* * *

Only when the matter came to an end was I able to properly examine the dragon.

At the time, the situation had felt seriously dangerous; the dragon had so wildly dashed in, so I hadn't been able to properly examine it.

However, the dragon's condition was a little strange, to say the least.

“Ahbooboo. Do you know a bit about dragons?”

[It's Ahoubuch, Warrior. If it's truly difficult for you to remember, please just call me the holy sword. Since becoming a holy sword, I have encountered a dragon about twice before, but to see one in that state, it's a first. Even for me.]

So that's how it is, huh.

The dragon's appearance certainly looked strange.

Despite it being my first time inspecting a dragon, it was so strange that I could easily discern that peculiarity.

Its body was far longer than a few meters, decorated with red spots as well as discolored black spots; sometimes, there were sections where the skin would be flaking off, revealing bone.

Of course, there were several wounds caused by my attacks, but even if we exclude those, the dragon had already been on the verge of death.

As its flesh burned, a foul stench emanated from the smoke coming from its body.

I had become used to the foul smell of poisoned and burnt corpses.

However, the foul stench that came from the dragon wasn't like that.

Was it because of the curse that I had seen on the murals?

In any case, the dragon hadn't been in its normal condition.

This did fit the stage's high difficulty.

Since it looked like the main process of this stage was to win over a guide, and reach the lowest floor, there was definitely more to this.

Rather than a battle like this, sometimes the stage focused on a different aspect. I believed that the 27th floor was also one of those stages, so there wasn't anything strange with the difficulty.

It just seemed a little empty.

That overwhelming presence that I had felt when I first came inside this room...

I had definitely felt like I might die, and in each moment I had strived to make the best decisions.

However, the dragon was worse than I had expected.

I think I knew why the clear condition message clearly specified that it was an earthworm.

It was too low-level to be called a dragon.

“Maybe I should've given it an elixir and fought it after it'd recovered a bit.”

[Warrior. I don't believe that an elixir would be able to solve the problem that even the dragon hadn't been able to solve.]

Seregia interrupted.

That's what I think too.

I'm just saying that because I'm disappointed.

In any case, I defeated the dragon that had already been half dead. The only thing left to clear was to acquire the treasure.

The clear conditions clearly stated to defeat the earth dragon and acquire the earth dragon's treasure.

Yeah... it'll probably take a quite a bit of time to find it.

As always, the magic in the dungeon was anarchic.

So long as I couldn't use my mana to search my surroundings, I would have to go around and search for it manually.

The clearing I'm in right now is considerably vast. No. It looked ridiculously huge, and I also saw dark crossroads; who knows how far those crossroads would continue on for.

Perhaps I'll have to search the entire floor, including the room with the exit.

I didn't even know what exactly the earthworm's 'treasure' was.

The lowest floor was boundless.

Around the 11th floor or so, I had received a mission where I had to find a hidden treasure in an underground city.

It felt like I would be trapped inside that underground city forever. Needless to say, I had wandered around in there for a long time.

Ultimately though, I broke down a wall and found a secret room in a fit of anger.

If I have to find a hidden treasure again like that time...

I pondered briefly before explaining the situation to Seregia and the holy sword.

And I asked the holy sword if he could find something similar to a treasure with his magic.

[It would be difficult. I can't really do anything about the mana obstruction magic in this room. Also, Warrior.]

“Yeah?”

[Are you sure that that treasure is in the lowest floor? Based on what you said, Warrior, you don't know where the treasure is, right?]

After the holy sword spoke, I was momentarily silent.

What if the its treasure was outside?

That was actually a little better.

That's because I can just interrogate anyone who might have the

treasure. Interrogate roughly, that is.

For example, that old guide lady.

However, if it were somewhere in the middle floor, the upper-middle floor, or the upper floor...

How would I find it?

I'm screwed.

I had been so focused on the dragon that I had completely forgotten about the treasure.

* * *

First, I decided to search the lowest floor meticulously.

If I look for it and can't find it at all, I can just use the Order of Vigilance to look for corresponding information on the lowest floor, so there was no reason to be overly anxious.

Since the beginning, the Order of Vigilance was involved in helping with the rankers' clears.

I have to use them at times like this.

I took out a magical stone lantern from my inventory and slowly looked around the lowest floor.

There were talon scratch marks here and there on what remained of the walls and the floor.

They were from the dragon's talons, of course.

“Anyhow, why did the dragon become like that? Based on the murals, I know that it was afflicted with some sort of curse or poison. But is it possible for a dragon to lapse into such an incurable idiotic monster?”

The murals had also depicted a time when the dragon had been wise, governing the humans under its command.

If that's the case, then it means it suddenly changed like that after the battle with that black being.

[Aren't stories of frenzied dragons fairly common?]

A frenzied dragon?

“No, that's the first time I've heard about it. Please explain it to me.”

Seregia explained.

[It's not a special story. It's a story commonly passed down orally. A dragon that had lived for thousands of years went insane due to a certain reason. Each person has their own theory, but if there's a common denominator, it's that the dragon didn't stop rampaging until it died. Most stories speak of an ancient empire that couldn't stop the dragon's rampage and fell or they speak of an entire race being wiped out.]

After hearing Seregia's explanation, I interpreted it as something that could happen occasionally; however, a dragon going mad was still uncommon.

“A mad dragon, huh... Then are there any stories of people successfully defeating a frenzied dragon?”

[No. There aren't any. As it destroyed everything in its sight, it would exhaust itself, weaken, and die. It's a common ending.]

Weaken and die?

Then while it's running amok, you're basically saying that you have no other choice besides running away.

“Is that so? Then is this guy too weak to be called a dragon?”

[I'm sorry?]

“Well, that's because at its level, I would've stopped it regardless.”

[I'm sorry?]

[Pardon?]

“What?”

Seregia and the holy sword both expressed their doubt.

I played along.

“I mean, it was becoming a bit stale. When I realized that that guy was dumb, I didn't really feel like he was much of a threat to me anymore. That's why it felt a little empty.”

[...From start to finish, I thought that it was very dangerous. In the first place, a dragon that isn't frenzied isn't a being that mere humans can mess with.]

[Hoo. Hoo. As expected, you're truly the warrior that I, the holy sword Ahoubuch, chose. I love you, Warrior.]

The holy sword once again said something that gave me goosebumps.

I ignored him and asked a question.

“Holy sword. Do you have any guesses as to why the dragon turned out like that?”

[There are a few causes that could make a dragon go crazy, but in this case, it's probably a curse. Considering how the dragon couldn't treat it, there are two possibilities.]

The holy sword started its explanation.

Unlike usual, Seregia and I quietly listened to the holy sword's

explanation.

[First, there's a chance that it was the type of curse that was impossible to purge. I've heard about it before, but if it's the type of curse that parasitizes the host's mana, then the dragon's immense mana could have been used to poison it. If not, then it could be the type of curse that suppresses one's mana. In this case, other people need to treat you, but not just anyone can treat that kind of curse.]

Surprisingly, the holy sword had a broad knowledge of curses.

And come to think of it, I hadn't thought about learning magic from the holy sword.

I do need offensive spells, but after I possess the knowledge regarding seals and curses, my highest priority will be having a defense against them.

I'll try to learn it when I have the time.

[The other case is that it was a curse that the dragon itself couldn't treat.]

“Is that possible? Aren't dragons normally at the pinnacle of magic?”

Of course, it wasn't exactly information that I had personally witnessed.

It's normally like that.

[There are the gods.]

Ah. That's right.

I had forgotten about the gods.

[If the dragon's enemy drawn on the murals was an evil god, it's entirely possible.]

It was an interesting story.

The gods that were watching the Tutorial.

They were the gods that were watching me, even at this very moment.

If such gods existed, they would clearly make their presence known to the world.

In the 16th floor and 26th floor, there were people who had talked about the gods.

And I had also heard about the consequences of the gods' intervention in those worlds.

The stories that the knight on the 16th floor had told me and the holy sword that the God of the Sky had gifted mankind on the 26th floor fit in perfectly.

If that's the case, there's a possibility that that dragon had attacked a god as well.

Since it was a matter that couldn't be found on Earth, I hadn't thought about the possibility of a god being the attacker.

And inside this Tutorial, the gods' range of activity was significantly limited.

All they could do was use messages to relay their feelings and intent to the challengers, and exhibit their power.

To me, the gods' existence still seemed like a mirage in a far-off place; it felt as though they were unknown beings that I could never reach in my lifetime.

That's something I need to change.

I have a goal.

As soon as I've achieved my goal, and if the gods deny it...

Then I'll have to try to convince them, or bend down to their will.

As absurd as I felt thinking about it, it was also a task that was just as hard.

However, it's a task I've promised myself to do, as well as something I had to do for my own sake.

Thus, in order to fulfill my goal, I can't just remain as an infinitesimally small existence before the gods.

[The God of Slowness is pleased.]

[The God of Adventure is rooting for you.]

[The God of Dueling is staying silent.]

[The God of Death is rubbing his eyelids.]

[The God of the Sky is feeling uncomfortable.]

[The God of Devotion feels sorry for you.]

[The God of Nature thinks you're foolish.]

The messages before my eyes passed by quickly.

Aside from the gods that I see often, there were even some gods that I had only seen a few times.

The total sum of those messages was 100.

[All the Gods of the Temple of a Hundred Gods are watching you.]

I won't be able to think to myself, jeez.

Most of the gods had negative reactions.

Those that expressed a positive reaction were only a small minority.

The God of Chaos for example, or the God of Amusement sent reactions. They were, for the most part, gods who enjoyed ridiculous situations.

Then there's the God of Adventure and the God of Slowness.

Are these guys ok?

If you look at it a certain way, I had essentially promised to fight against the gods' will, yet they were cheering me on.

[The God of Adventure is clenching his fists.]

[The God of Slowness is embarrassed about someone.]

Subsequently, I couldn't help but giggle.

That old man sure doesn't change.

He really doesn't change.

* * *

After about four hours had passed since I started searching the lowest floor, Seregia asked.

[I'm sorry, but Warrior. Could you please give more details on the explanation you were presented with? We're lacking too many clues. There won't be an end if we keep searching like this.]

After she asked, I revealed all the information that had been presented to me.

[Ultimately, we don't have any information regarding the dragon's treasure.]

“Yeah. That was all the guidance it gave me to find it.”

[If there are so few clues, let's inversely use the lack of information as a clue.]

“How?”

[One of the two conditions: if you defeat the dragon, you should be able to naturally find the dragon's treasure. If that's true, then the treasure should be close to the dragon's body. For example, it could be the dragon's corpse itself. Above all, it's a dragon's corpse.]

[A dragon heart! Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. I, the holy sword Ahoubuch, who received the blessing of a god, have figured out the answer. A dragon's most valuable treasure is a dragon's heart! It's a dragon heart. This earth-shattering reasoning! Wow... though I'm a holy sword, I'm so extraordinary, aren't I?]

“No. You just said out loud what Seregia had already figured out.”

[No that's not it, Warrior. I figured it out first. I was just late because I sorted my thoughts first and then spoke. Really. Please trust me. If you deduct the time I took confirming my hypothesis, I had figured it out more than an hour ago. Miss Seregia? You also think that way, don't you, Miss Seregia?]

[First, please check if the treasure truly is the dragon heart. Warrior.]

Seregia sharply ignored the holy sword's remark.

Just like she said, I returned to the area with the dragon's corpse.

I approached the dragon's belly as it lay unmoving on its side...

When I got closer, the corpse's foul stench began to hit my nose...

I thought I had seen it all, yet even I felt as though I was going to vomit a little.

I felt nauseous.

My nose was congested with the foul stench.

When you think about my skills corresponding to my senses like Paralysis Resistance and Poison Resistance, it's really unbelievable.

The source of this foul smell is probably the curse that the dragon was afflicted with.

Rather than a simple foul odor, there's a high chance that the corpse is still afflicted with magic.

Whatever the case, at least in this instance, I was thankful that my sense of smell was impaired.

It was good to know that my sense of smell had been moderately paralyzed.

In the meantime, I drew the soul sword to gut it.

[Warrior.]

“What?”

[The great holy sword, Sir Ahbooboo said that he wanted to cut through the dragon and gain the title of Dragon Slayer. Although the dragon's already dead, you should at least give him the opportunity now.]

In conclusion, use the holy sword instead of her to butcher the dragon.

I thought about it briefly, sheathed the soul sword, and drew the holy sword instead.

[Warrior! Please just wait a moment. Just a moment.]

The holy sword frantically tried to stop me, but I ignored him and stabbed the dragon's chest.

“Ugh!”

I ignored the holy sword's screams and continued butchering it.

The gutting took longer than I thought it would.

I had actually vomited twice and the holy sword whined over and over again. By the time that the holy sword started to beg, I was able to take out the heart from the dragon's chest.

Chapter 169

Tutorial 27th Floor (8)

[Blech.]

Please refrain from making such nauseating sounds. I feel like I'm going to vomit again.

I endured it without saying anything out loud, and instead muttered inwardly.

The holy sword was sufficiently tormented in the process of extracting the dragon's heart.

The holy sword, retching a few more times, said.

[I'll go inside and rest a little bit.]

“Where are you going?”

[My room.]

The holy sword turned silent towards the end of his reply.

There's a room inside of the sword?

Is there by any chance a bathroom inside as well?

It wasn't just the holy sword, Seregia was also grumbling and making sounds.

“Were you really that nauseous?”

[No, it's not that. I'm just... I'm feeling a bit strange. I think it's

because of the battle before. I feel as though my feelings and eccentricities have been enhanced after becoming a sword.]

The feeling of becoming a sword.

Seregia's already a sword.

Seregia probably calmed down as she returned to her calm voice and said.

[Warrior, is that it?]

After she said that, I looked directly at the dragon's heart.

It was a red shade overall, but I could see numerous black spots on the heart.

The heart seemed to be as big as an armful, had an intense foul stench, and radiated with an ominous energy.

The cause of the dragon corpse's foul smell seemed to be this heart.

Just being close to the heart would give you a feeling of disgust.

That's why I was standing pretty far away from the heart right now.

However, the clear condition definitely stated that I had to acquire the earth dragon's treasure.

If that heart is the earth dragon's treasure, I have to obtain it.

However, what's the criteria for acquiring it?

Do I have to put that dirty, unpleasant, and foul-smelling heart into my arms?

I really don't want to.

At that time, a message appeared.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 27th floor, cleared.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 5000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 5000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 6000 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 3300 points have been deducted.]

[All the gods of the Temple of a Hundred Gods are watching you.]

[You have received an additional 2200 points.]

What a relief.

If that dragon heart wasn't the earth dragon's treasure, I would've had to search every nook and cranny of the dungeon.

“It seems like that's the right one.”

[Then what do we do now?]

“We've done everything we needed to do. We just need to take this and return,” I said, as I looked at the magic circle beneath my feet.

Seregia summed up this phenomenon simply.

[That's convenient.]

I was glad she accepted it so easily so I wouldn't have to explain the tutorial system to her.

If she became curious, this would've become much more troublesome.

I can't truthfully explain it to her due to the system's restraints, so I would've had to make something up.

And I would've had to continue to play along with my lie.

[Warrior, then what are you going to do with that?]

Seregia spoke without hands or even a face, but I could easily tell what she was referring to.

She was referring to the female kid guide who was crawling through the hole in the stone gate.

I had cleaned up all the monsters on the way here from the middle floor, opening a safe path for that kid.

[Let's kill her before going.]

“Do we really need to?”

[I don't feel like that child will trouble us in the future. However, you don't really have a reason not to kill her. She can also be a stain on your reputation in the future. Please finish this up and then go.]

“It's fine. Let's just go.”

I cleaned the bloodstains on the holy sword and stood atop the portal.

I was about to transport, but then I heard Seregia.

[That child is lucky.]

“What?”

[There's the dragon's corpse. If she takes just a few of those scales, she'll be able to make a fortune. If she somehow gets out, she'll be able to live without ever worrying about money ever again.]

Or on the contrary, she may be met with disaster because of those

scales.

Well, whatever.

Whether that kid leads a wealthy life from now on.

Or dies without being able to escape the dungeon.

Or is killed by other people outside.

Regardless of what this kid's story is henceforth.

It didn't matter.

I reaffirmed my indifference towards that kid once more, and teleported through the portal.

* * *

“Blech. The smell.”

I was transported to the field, and Kiri Kiri covered her nose as soon as I encountered her.

Kiri Kiri had been scribbling something on the floor, and stretched her hand in front of me.

A cozy warm wind blew from her palm.

I felt the lingering foul stench and the ominous energy vanish.

“Thanks. If it had remained any longer, I was going to vomit again.”

“Heng. I hate this stage. It's always like this,” Kiri Kiri said, pouting.

It seems like I had cleared the stage through a tried and true method.

The words “it's always like this” meant that the other challengers had

also extracted the dead dragon's heart.

“But it's actually not like that.”

“Could you explain it to me in more detail?”

“In how much detail?” Kiri Kiri said, sitting down in her spot.

I followed suit and sat down as well.

As I sat down, I felt a certain emptiness at my waist; the holy sword and the soul sword which were strapped to my belt had disappeared.

They should be inside my inventory.

The holy sword is probably going to complain about something again.

I responded to Kiri Kiri's question.

“Just what's necessary for the person behind me to tackle the stage.”

“Honestly, you can just leave that kind of thing to me. Because that's my role. Hoooooujae, you don't really need the advice. I'm not giving you much information, but I'll give the person after you, Hoooooujae, as much advice as I can.”

That's true. Giving people advice about the stages is Kiri Kiri's role.

She was also happy to do her job.

But she may have thought of it as me overstepping my authority here.

“Nope. It's nothing like that.”

“It's because I want to prepare for my growth in the stages ahead. Also, the more advice, the better.”

After Kiri Kiri listened to me, she placed her finger at her cheek with a

thoughtful look...

“First, you have to pick the right guide. There are several guides in the town. In order to request a guide, you have to improve your reputation within the town by doing this and that in order to gain the guide's trust.”

“But there wasn't anything like that for me?”

“That's because you frightened the first guide, Hoooooujae.”

I think I understand what she's talking about.

The old lady that I met in the town said that I was a monster and she had no interest in taking a stroll with me before running away.

“The guide that accompanied you was honestly the worst, Hoooooujae.”

She was the worst?

I had thought that she was lacking in various ways.

“Then... The other guides won't threaten you in the dungeon or be covetous of the challenger's possessions?”

“They will.”

Then they're no different from the worst.

“The degree at which they do is different though. They're a bit smarter and you can talk to them. When you've passed the upper floor and upper-middle floor, they're also more useful. You have to win over the guide in the town that way. In the middle floor, you have to convince the guide once more. The guide is quite finicky so they won't go down to the lowest floor. You have to offer them the right price, or threaten them with force.”

So it wasn't easy after all.

If the challenger doesn't figure out how to find the right path in the dungeon, then the guide obtains the position of power.

It shouldn't be easy to convince them.

As the kid guide was fine with us both dying together if she were in a pinch.

“Then what about when you're in the lowest floor?”

“If you go all the way there with your guide, everything's pretty much been taken care of, so I don't think I really need to explain that.”

I see.

That's because you can just progress the same way I did if you reached the lowest floor on your own without a guide.

“In return, if you progress without a guide like you did, Hoooooujae, you'd have to find the right path yourself, defeat the dragon, have a high poison resistance and paralysis resistance, as well as a fear resistance skill.”

If it's possible, you should go together with a guide.

I could advise the next challenger, Lee Hyung Jin to raise his resistance skills, but I don't think he'd actually be able to raise his resistances.

It's hard for people to raise their resistance skills.

Even more than I had thought.

I had roughly sated my curiosity for the 27th floor.

Now it was time to ask about other things.

“Heng. You can't, though.”

I ignored Kiri Kiri and asked my question.

“Tell me a method of increasing the difficulty of progression in the next floor stage.”

I want an even higher difficulty.

I want an even more dangerous and more difficult trial.

I want more death and more danger.

I had felt that danger from encountering the dragon and it may have been because the fight had ended so hollowly, but I felt a greater sense of yearning than before.

In order to run up against difficulty like that, I needed specific conditions.

For example, like how I had provoked the summoned Demon King on the 26th floor, inducing him into using his full strength.

Kiri Kiri sighed rather than reply.

“You can't. There'll be an accident that way. You're not supposed to recklessly use those methods. For example, if you made a mistake on the 27th floor, the dungeon could end up collapsing on top of you. If that happens, even you would be helplessly crushed to death, Hooooujae.”

“The stage's setting, the dungeon, can also collapse?”

“It can. Don't think about randomly raising the difficulty level. If you go up the floors, clearing will naturally become tougher. Be patient.”

It was disappointing, but I decided to accept it.

Aside from the difficulty, there could actually be an accident that I can't avoid.

More importantly, this was the first time that Kiri Kiri refused to give me any information.

I didn't have to endure danger to the point that I ignored her advice.

“Don't worry. The next stage will be difficult even for you, Hoooooujae.”

I wonder.

That's because I've heard that more than once or twice and I've been disappointed with the stage's difficulty.

* * *

After I had listened to all her advice regarding the stage, I decided to take a nap in the field; it was something I hadn't done in a long time.

Kiri Kiri had continuously advised me to rest and it had been a really long time since I'd had proper sleep.

I laid a mat onto the floor and laid down.

The instant I was about to close my eyes, messages appeared.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: What are up to? Are you busy?]

I was about to sleep.

Though I wasn't busy.

[Lee Ho Jae, 28th floor: I'm not busy.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: So you've already gotten to the 28th floor. I remember a few days ago that you were on the 25th floor, though.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 28th floor: Yeah. What? Is something wrong?]

I responded curtly.

In response, Kim Min Hyuk said that there were no problems, but there were things he wanted to talk to me about.

Honestly, what would Kim Min Hyuk have to talk to me about?

He would just tell me about this and that and how they're progressing.

In any case, it's because I also hold a key position in the Order of Vigilance.

Kim Min Hyuk told me about how they were communicating with the Korean government.

Whatever the Order of Vigilance or challengers wanted to say could be communicated through the challengers that had cleared the tutorial and gotten outside.

However, relaying what the outside wanted to say to the inside was extremely difficult.

The sole method was relaying messages to the newly entering challengers, but these new challengers would be selected randomly.

Ultimately, they would have to broadcast those messages nationwide.

In order for all the people in Korea to know.

However, in this scenario, there's no way to relay the type of information that the public cannot know.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Therefore, we're making secret codes. But we also can't have someone who doesn't know the secret codes figuring them out. It's quite tricky.]

Even so, it wasn't an area I could help them with.

I just continued to listen to Kim Min Hyuk's complaints.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: We also thought of a way to send messages to a small amount of people.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 28th floor: How? You never know who or when they'll be summoned.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: We'll send the message to a few people, and pray that they'll be summoned.]

You should really pray diligently then.

Amongst the population of 50 million Koreans, only 100 people are summoned per round.

Even if you roughly think about it, the chances of the designated individual being summoned are 500,000:1.

Adding a few more people won't change the odds much.

I yawned while thinking that.

Since I had suffered insomnia on the stage, I hadn't been able to sleep properly, but I could get a good night's sleep for at least a few hours on this field.

Right when I closed my eyes, I felt tired.

As soon as I felt drowsy, I couldn't see the messages properly.

No, even though I saw them with my eyes, I couldn't comprehend the contents of the messages.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor:... This round is almost over too. First, if we gather more information from the next round newbies, we should be able to hear about the supermen that appeared in China...]

I suppressed my sleepiness, and saw the messages, but then I had a thought.

That this had become a conversation that didn't really concern me.

The latest in the community were noisy regarding this subject.

They wanted to know about their lives following their clear and going outside.

They predicted that they'd be used as test subjects in labs, or be used as human weapons in the army, or that they'd become heroes in a world where monsters were causing chaos, or that they'd become the hope of humanity, or they even thought that they'd become a new race of mankind.

There were truly countless stories.

That's because whenever the challengers had time to spare, they would talk about that subject.

However, I had felt like it had nothing to do with me.

I had secretly wanted the Tutorial to go on forever.

Even if I did go outside, I didn't want to be labeled a monster and live in solitude.

I wouldn't have any goals or any stimulation, and I didn't want to live a dry life until the day I died of old age.

Of course, my thoughts had changed now and I had a goal I wanted to achieve once I got out of the Tutorial.

However, that goal wasn't limited to just outside the Tutorial, Korea, or even the Earth.

I thought I was a little strange when I thought that.

“Kiri Kiri.”

“...Uh, yeah?”

I called Kiri Kiri, who was sitting atop the mat.

It seemed as though Kiri Kiri was thinking of something else, as she responded a bit late to my voice.

“Kiri Kiri, you can press the message window, right?”

“Yeah. I can, why?”

“Then could you talk to him a little bit for me?”

“How?”

“Just say 'I see'. Yeah. Oh. Right. I understand. Do as you please. It's fine if you just respond like that.”

“...Is that ok?”

Kiri Kiri's round eyes rolled around here and there, speaking with a anxious expression.

“It's fine. I usually respond like that anyway. Then, I'm counting on you.”

Towards the end, I closed my eyes.

As soon as I closed my eyes, I quickly fell asleep from the surging deluge of exhaustion.

* * *

Whenever I woke up from a nap in Kiri Kiri's field, I would usually awaken due to her head; she would be sleeping with her head on my stomach, using it as a pillow.

However, it was a little different today.

I heard a strange laughter and woke up.

“Hehehe.”

Hehehe?

It felt strange and as soon as I opened my eyes, I saw Kiri Kiri.

My hand had been raised in the air, and Kiri Kiri was about to press the “confirm” button on the message in the air.

And the message window, no. I also saw the reason for the cake set floating in the auction window.

“Kiri Kiri.”

The beaming Kiri Kiri stopped immediately.

Kiri Kiri briefly stiffened like a stone statue, quietly closed the auction window, and put my hand down to the floor.

And she sat down like nothing had happened.

She briefly stayed still like that.

Then she scampered away and started to run away somewhere.

I sighed as I saw Kiri Kiri quickly get far away and stood up.

I had at least rested for a bit, so it was now time for me to get a move on.

[22nd round, 26th day. 2:20]

Chapter 170

Tutorial 60th Floor (13)

“Is the work going well?”

I opened the laboratory door and said.

“No. I feel like I'm dying. Save me.”

My clone bastard was making a fuss over nothing.

“It's not nothing, you know. You damn main body bastard.”

While watching the grumbling clone bastard, I clicked my tongue and sat down.

The analysis of the authorities that the clone bastard gained on the 61st floor was at its peak.

Though it was something I'd done several times before, analyzing authorities always brought new challenges.

An authority is the implementation of one's will through divinity, which is the essence of one's identity, by a being who acquired godhood with their own power.

It honestly wasn't much different from magic.

Perhaps the gods don't think that there's a difference between magic and authorities.

They would use the ‘power of miracles’ known as mana, and unleash their will onto the world.

Their divine power is used as a medium to invoke their authorities, which produces miracles; said authorities are determined by their divinity.

While magic is limited by its power, scale, perception, and range, gods' power is limited by their identity.

There are gods that probably use their power without even thinking about it very much, but I couldn't use it as comfortably as them.

I had to thoroughly analyze it, study it, and pass through countless trials and errors before I could barely imitate it.

That's why all the authorities that I use, that were gifted to me by the gods, are all imitations.

Though I could say that they're improved products.

As I continuously used their authorities, I realized the principles behind them.

I realized how my suspicions, the god's divine power, as well as their personal identities were connected.

In this artificially restricted space where time would be repeated and stopped, I watched as the authorities were 'cast' instantaneously and analyzed what kind of process they go through as they're cast.

And I would use that data as a basis to fabricate those authorities.

Through magic.

I was the disciple of several gods, used those authority skills so much that I got sick of them, become sensitive to divine power, had a great understanding of the divine, realized the height of magic, and lastly, had the seed of the divine within me.

If not for those, I wouldn't have been able to attempt it.

But in any case, I'm doing it now.

I had enhanced Blink Orb* on a previous evening, as well as familiar authorities like Soul Siphon. Now, I was succeeding in improving the authorities that my clone bastard had brought this time, one by one.

[TL Note: Previously translated as Blink Emblem by other translators but should have been translated as Blink Orb.]

But because there were so many authorities that the clone bastard stole, it would take a long time before I could make all of them mine.

But ultimately, it was just a matter of time.

No matter how obscure or complicated the principle was, there weren't any authorities that seemed impossible to analyze and remodel.

“No. About half of them are impossible. I said that it's impossible. You crazy main body bastard.”

“Why are you saying it's impossible without even trying? It seems like it'll work.”

“If something goes wrong, there are dozens of things that could cause my head to blow up. You call something like that impossible.”

“But we can succeed if you overcome the risk of your head blowing up. That's what you call possible.”

“You crazy bastard.”

While my clone bastard muttered some curses, I halted the activation of the magic circle.

The giant magic circle that had been spread all across the laboratory disappeared.

Considering the scale of the laboratory, how it took a quarter of a day

just to walk from one end to the other, the magic circle that my clone bastard had been maintaining was truly huge.

Of course, it wasn't to cast something, but for analysis.

Still, my clone bastard should be feeling extremely exhausted.

“Know-it-all...”

“Then let's rest a bit.”

“Oh, really? What's the matter?”

“Since you need sufficient rest to be more efficient.”

“So you're saying you'll give me a task that requires high efficiency again, aren't you. You damn main body bastard.”

Even while my clone bastard was complaining, he sprawled out onto the floor and prepared to rest.

I saw him take a novel out of the subspace and I too reclined on my chair.

And I opened my message window.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Contact me when you have the time.]

It was such a dry and brief message that I felt as if the existing moisture evaporated.

It seems like she sent me a message like that in order to minimize the interference in my authority analysis.

It's not much of a disturbance, so you can send me a long message if you want.

Is it because of what happened before?

Since I've made some mistakes, I nagged at myself as well.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: I'm resting a bit right now. What's the matter?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: There's new information from the outside. How's your work going?]

That's what I had asked my clone bastard before.

My work is going well.

“No, it's not. It's not going well.”

I ignored my clone bastard's voice and continued to send messages.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Of course it's going well. And send longer messages. What do you mean by 'contact me when you have the time'. That's too dry.]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: I did it that way because I thought I might get in the way of your work.]

It was the reason that I had anticipated.

I felt bitter for no special reason.

And I felt apologetic.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: You're not getting in the way at all. In fact, I'd appreciate if it you sent me messages more often.]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Are you sure? You said you were busy doing something lately.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: It's ok. And am I busy? You're the one who's busy. Is your work going alright? You're not pushing yourself too hard?]

While I could analyze as much as I want, when I want to, as well as rest and play whenever I wanted to, Park Jung Ah was finishing her work on schedule.

Aside from that, she was focused on counseling, coordinating opinions, and even trivial matters, so she was really busy.

Rather, it's to the point where I'm the one who's waiting for her messages more.

After Kim Min Hyuk went outside, it looked like she didn't even have a few hours of spare time a week.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: What's this? Why are you so nice all of a sudden? It's not like you.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: You don't like it?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: No, I like it.]

“You crazy...”

My clone bastard cursed at me.

I ignored him.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: I wonder why you're doing this all of a sudden. You wouldn't have contracted a terminal illness; are you having an affair?]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: What do you mean by an affair; there are only the three of us here: Yong Yong, my clone bastard, and me.]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: If a man becomes kind all of a sudden, they say that it's evidence of cheating.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Says who?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: The community.]

She's like that because she learned about dating from books too.

Though I'm no different.

For a short while, I talked to Park Jung Ah about trivial matters.

The conversation had no value to it, but it was a joyous talk nonetheless.

My clone bastard, who was listening beside me, twisted his body around, and when he started to look tormented, Park Jung Ah brought up the main point.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Lee Joon Seok failed to defeat a G-rank monster. To be exact, the information states that before he attacked, Lee Joon Seok declared that the attack was inadvisable and ran away.]

That was unexpected.

“That's a surprise.”

My clone bastard thought the same as me.

Right before Lee Joon Seok cleared the Tutorial, he had told me that he was level 201.

Level 100 had been the maximum value in the early phases, and if you compare him to the other Awakened on Earth, there really was a overwhelming gap that existed.

That's why I had been optimistic.

That Lee Joon Seok would be able to defeat it, since Earth's Awakened had already successfully hunted a G-rank monster before.

So he should've prepared for the attack.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Was it by chance an attack initiated by Lee Joon Seok alone?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: No. Korea, China, and Japan temporarily transferred a considerable amount of Awakened, and the ASEAN and the U.S. became the key members; it was an attack they had prepared for.]

It doesn't seem as though they lacked anything for the attack.

Then what could've been the problem?

They had succeeded in safely subjugating the G-rank monster on the U.S.'s eastern shore.

Back then, the force of rallied Awakened, and the American Navy had taken considerable damage, but had, in any case, successfully taken care of the monster.

Under the assumption that they prepared a similar force, Lee Joon Seok joining them should've raised their chances of success by more than 50%.

And I relayed my thoughts to Park Jung Ah.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Then it makes sense that he cancelled it. A 50% chance of victory isn't very high. And the casualty count wouldn't be low. Wouldn't they consider cancelling the attack and look for the next opportunity with a success rate like that?]

Is that so?

Is it because I think too lightly of danger and sacrifice?

“Obviously, you crazy main body bastard. In that sense, isn't continuously pressuring me into doing a job that doesn't even have a 10% chance of success too much?”

“You wouldn't die from it anyway.”

After I had ignored my clone bastard's complaint, I sent a message.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Do you by any chance have any detailed information regarding the attack on the monster at the eastern part of the U.S.?)

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Nope. The only things we know are in the data that was officially published by the press. It didn't convey any detailed information regarding the G-rank monster.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: What about the Academy Line?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: They had the same information that the press had revealed.]

Academy Line.

The Korean government, after the Tutorial had been disclosed, required the entire nation's citizens to train their physical fitness, as well as undergo battle training; at the same time, they had established facilities to train special elites.

The government would sort out the individuals with extraordinary physical abilities and decision-making abilities, and started to train them in preparation for the Tutorial.

Of course, there was no guarantee that the Academy trainees would enter the Tutorial at the right time.

It was much better than standing still and gawking.

Honestly, there are occasionally a few trainees that enter the Tutorial.

These trainees had more information than what was revealed by the press, and they remembered messages that they had to transmit to the challengers within the Tutorial.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Firstly, we'll use the people who have cleared in this round to relay a message to the outside that we want information regarding the G-rank monster.]

Lee Joon Seok's failure was a really serious issue.

The other people probably thought 'a G-rank Awakened has appeared, so let's try it out once. If not, we can just cancel it.' and had prepared accordingly, but Lee Joon Seok should've been different.

Through the conversations we had before he went outside, Lee Joon Seok had assured me that he'd be able to take on a G-rank monster on his own.

I thought the same.

If we go by the data we've been given regarding the G-rank monster, it was certainly possible.

That Lee Joon Seok had given up on the attack.

I wonder why?

If the data we have isn't true.

If there are far more casualties than we're aware of.

Or perhaps the success of the attack in its entirety is a lie.

How should I determine the danger of the G-rank monster?

There's no standard.

So long as we can't trust our reference point, the last attack, we can't blindly assume the G-rank monster's strength.

I sorted out all my thoughts.

In conclusion, I could only wait until new information came in.

The evidence that Lee Joon Seok had given up on the attack.

Precise data on the G-rank monster.

The information was lacking.

Like always.

After I had finished thinking, I suddenly had a weird feeling.

That Lee Joon Seok, after clearing the Tutorial, had went outside.

And for the news of Lee Joon Seok on the outside to be relayed.

It was truly a strange feeling.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Jung Ah, how old are we again?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: 29.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: What? Haven't you also passed thirty now?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Since I haven't counted my age after 29, I'm 29.]

What's with that unbelievable stubbornness?

* * *

For a while, I chattered with Park Jung Ah through my messages, and eventually closed my message window.

I had finished resting, and looked at my clone bastard.

He was still lying prone on the floor, reading a novel.

“Aren't you going to work?”

“Let's just rest a little more. No, can't we just rest for the entire day?”

So you really don't want to work.

“It's not that I don't want to work, I really feel like I'm going to die.”

He was laying on the floor, and spoke while swinging his legs around.

I clicked my tongue, seeing him lie on the floor and speak while swinging his legs around.

“I told you to do some magic training. At this rate, Yong Yong will catch up to you.”

“I don't really care if he catches up to me, you know. Yong Yong isn't as cold-hearted as you, so even if he becomes stronger than me, he'll take care of me well.”

I didn't believe a single word of what my clone just said.

Really.

The phrase, 'desire to improve myself' was always extremely important to me.

I fundamentally liked to improve myself through my own efforts.

And I can't stand falling behind others.

Along with that, I really, really hated passing the boring and tedious time without doing any work.

I always had to be doing something or I wouldn't feel satisfied.

My clone bastard's personality was created using mine as the base.

To be exact, it was a personality formed by using my memories inside of the Tutorial.

He should obviously be doing his utmost to train, as he doesn't know much about the world outside the Tutorial, and only holds intense memories from within the Tutorial.

Despite that, the reason he doesn't want to improve is clear.

He must think it'll have an adverse reaction to his development.

Regardless of how important you regard the desire to improve, or how your personality develops, if someone else coerces you and pressures you to do so...

As soon as you're born at that.

You'd have no choice but to have an adverse reaction to it.

"I'll go call Yong Yong. Since it's already dinnertime. Let's eat together."

My clone bastard said, and as I watched his back, I once again had mixed feelings.

With an apology.

I don't know why I'm remembering so many memories that I feel sorry about today.

My clone bastard who had been walking along paused, and turned his head towards me.

"Why. What. You got something to say?"

I'd thought after closing the link, but it seems like my emotions had leaked out.

"If not, then whatever."

He once again turned his back on me and started walking; I spoke to his back.

If I don't say it now, I felt like I wouldn't be able to say it in the future.

"I was sorry about what happened before."

He had been walking, yet stopped.

His back was still, yet he couldn't help but turn his attention towards me.

I felt embarrassed so I touched my chin or my nose for no special reason.

The brief silence continued on, and soon I heard his responding voice.

“As long as you know, it's fine.”

As he opened the lab door and walked out, he added one more thing.

“Your apology's way too late. You damn bastard, Ho Jae.”

And he left, closing the door with a thud.

My embarrassment wouldn't end.

I hadn't felt anything like displeasure or fury from him before he'd closed the door and left.

Rather, his feelings were warmer and brighter.

My embarrassment really wouldn't fade.

I pondered briefly and I sent this through telepathy.

[Thanks.]

He was my younger sibling, something that the protagonist of a fantasy novel yearned for.

Lee Ho Chi quickly sent a message back.

[I'm really feeling goosebumps here, so stop it.]

Chapter 171

Tutorial 30th Floor (1)

[Round 24, Day 29. 3:30]

“Heng. It was tough this time, wasn't it?” Kiri Kiri asked, as she smiled beamingly, and I couldn't help but nod.

It certainly was difficult.

Though they weren't at my desired level of difficulty, the 28th and 29th floors had certainly been difficult.

Especially the 29th floor.

My reputation had risen abruptly.

If I hadn't earned the people's trust enough to hear the information that the underground force was going to perform an act of terror on the city's marketplace, I may have had to challenge the stage more than once, taking several rounds.

I had been tied down in the 29th floor for a whole round, but on the contrary, it was fortunate that I had been able to clear it within only one round.

“So about what I was talking about before, the combat difficulty.”

“No, that's...”

Kiri Kiri had been talking ecstatically, but she suddenly paused.

I wondered why, and I waited briefly.

Kiri Kiri looked at me seriously and said, “Hoooooujae, you already know what kind of floor the next one is, right?”

Of course I do.

The 30th floor.

It was the first residential district that existed within the Tutorial.

It was different from the stages that repeated every round, or even the waiting rooms, that were maintained by a powerful preservation magic.

They weren't connected to time; regardless of the number of people, or the organization of said people in the waiting room, it was a space where you could rest when you wanted, play when you wanted, and meet people when you wanted.

Of course, it had a different meaning for me.

I'm alone anyway.

The residential district wasn't much different from a large waiting room to me.

“That's not it.”

“What do you mean?”

“It doesn't have a healing function, restoration also doesn't work, and there's also no protective wall.”

“Is that a huge difference?”

“It's a big difference.”

I thought she would say some pointless wordplay, but Kiri Kiri looked quite serious.

“Hoooooujae, you've mostly done your training in the waiting room. Of course, you also grew a lot during combat, but that foundation came from your training in the waiting room.”

“That's true.”

If it weren't for my training, my concentration, and my preparation in the waiting room before entering a stage, it would've been difficult to exhibit a sufficient performance or growth.

“Also, the waiting room is an innocuous space. Since no matter what you do, you won't get hurt, and nothing will be broken. If you're hurt by an excessive impact, or the walls collapse, they'll also be restored.”

I nodded my head once again.

“It's such a different environment. It differs based on the individual to what extent your body feels that, but your mind is different. Most people definitely recognize the difference in their mind, and through that, they're able to influence their subconscious mind.”

“For example, by you using your body more excessively than usual.”

“So that's how it is.”

It was just as Kiri Kiri said.

You could see it if you took a look at my training that I had invested the most time into, or even my self-injury.

Of course, even if you consider my self-injury as a part of my training, there would be a question remaining of 'are you ok', but... let's say that it's training.

If it weren't the waiting room, would I have been able to self-injure myself every day like that?

Regardless of how much I needed it, or how much I preferred that method, I wouldn't have been able to self-harm myself so frequently.

Because my body would sustain damage.

“In conclusion, I'm saying that you shouldn't just rest for a few days and immediately rush to the 31st floor.”

Yeah...

Honestly, after this round ended, and the next round started, I had decided to immediately enter the 31st floor.

I couldn't anticipate any improvements on my specs through level ups anymore, and as the combat difficulty of the stages went down, I wouldn't be able to anticipate my growth in battle either.

The only thing remaining was for me to go up the stages as quickly as possible, and encounter greater difficulties.

That's also how Kiri Kiri had advised me.

“However, it's not often for you to get an opportunity to take a major step forward through just training.”

A major step forward, huh.

It'll be that effective just training on the 30th floor?

Why would training have such an effect in a space that isn't even the waiting room?

I had sometimes trained in stages where I had already acquired safety and I needed to kill time.

“Stages are also different. Especially you, Hoooooujae, since your body changes whenever you leave the stage.”

“Are you talking about my insomnia?”

“A little of this and that, including that too.”

I briefly pondered, and ultimately decided to follow Kiri Kiri's advice.

I usually didn't lose out by listening to Kiri Kiri.

Though it did happen occasionally.

“It doesn't!”

“What do you mean 'it doesn't'.”

Kiri Kiri may have saddened from my statement as she went 'hmpf' and turned her head.

For some reason, I started laughing at the sight.

I laughed, stood up, and approached the portal.

“Finally, if I were to tell you one last thing, you have to rest a bit.”

“I got it. I'll make sure to rest properly.”

“And don't do it half-heartedly. Think about it as training too, and force yourself to rest.”

“I got it. I got it.”

After I finished responding, I stood atop the portal.

As soon as I waved my hand, Kiri Kiri scampered around and said her goodbyes, telling me to take care.

Soon, I was transported to the 30th floor from Kiri Kiri's field.

[Welcome to the 30th floor residential district.]

The message was accompanied with a full view of the 30th floor.

The 30th floor residential district had also been the setting for the first

competition.

It definitely looked identical to what I'd seen before.

There was a square in the middle, surrounded by a line of wooden buildings.

I wonder how many buildings there are?

Even if I were to make a low estimate, there should be more than hundreds of them.

I was certainly well-aware of how the residential district was structured.

At the time of the competition, I had experienced it firsthand, and I also read the community's explanatory articles.

Certain buildings should be lodgings, while others should be restaurants.

Even amongst these buildings, they had separate uses.

They even had a cafe, a pub, a playground, and even a casino.

It was truly a town.

However, to me, it was no different from the waiting room.

On the contrary, it was worse.

There wasn't anyone here besides me anyway.

I sighed, and started walking to decide my lodging.

I felt hungry.

In general, whenever a stage ended, my hunger would automatically

settle when I entered a waiting room, so I wasn't often pestered by hunger.

However, I had spent an entire round within the previous floor, and had been transported to the residential district, not the waiting room; thus, my hunger hadn't settled.

As soon as I find my accommodations, I should eat something.

Is there any beef jerky left?

* * *

[Oh... I was really scared, Warrior.]

“If you pout one more time, I'm going to shove you into my inventory.”

I stopped the holy sword from making his frightened appeal in his cutest way.

The holy sword felt that it was unfair, but who cares.

[You know how scary going into the inventory can be.]

What do you want me to do about it?

Whenever I go to Kiri Kiri's field, you're automatically stored into my inventory.

“What about Seregia? Were you also scared by any chance, Seregia?”

[No.]

She answered promptly.

It also sounded like she snorted at the end there.

It was definitely a ridicule-filled snort towards someone.

“Seregia, are you feeling better now? You seemed really unwell back there.”

[Yes. I'm alright. And I was alright back there as well.]

Whenever there was a battle recently, Seregia became a bit weird.

Though she was usually curt and didn't speak much, she became really quiet after a battle.

She becomes firmer and sharper.

I'm not talking about the tone of her voice, but her will.

It was to the point that I, the wielder, could feel it; the sharp will within her.

And considering those times, it seems like she's losing her humanity.

Well, she seems to like her current condition, so I'm not sure if I should be worried about her.

I didn't have to walk for very long and went inside the closest building.

There was a table with chairs spread around it on the 1st floor.

It was a space where you could sit and rest.

I went up to the 2nd floor.

I opened the closest door and went inside.

There was a small desk to the side and a bed right next to the window.

It was a small room.

It was the same as the room I had stayed in during the competition.

“What should I do now?”

[I agree with the advice that you heard, Warrior. First, please rest.]

“Do you really think I need the rest?”

[Yes. You really do need it.]

After the holy sword spoke, I asked for an explanation.

[First off, it's your bodily condition, Warrior.]

“My body's fine. My fatigue has also gone away for the most part.”

[No. I'm talking about your continuously maintained tense state. I have no idea what will happen if you completely release all your tension. Truthfully, the amount of time a person can maintain a tense state is at most a few days. However, you haven't released that tension even once, Warrior. At least, after you acquired me.]

He had a point.

It was unlike him.

Even in the completely safe waiting room, as well as Kiri Kiri's field, I hadn't ever completely released my tension.

That's because I need to concentrate in order to clear the next stage.

However, if I were to completely release my tension while I have this chance to rest...

[Next, it's regarding your 'level'*, Warrior.]

[T/N: His level of strength. Not his Tutorial level or stage.]

“Level?”

That was unexpected.

What does rest have to with my level?

[If I'm completely honest, your level changes case-by-case. It's not to the point where I can see it going up and down, but I see it abruptly go up to the next level.]

“I'm hearing that as you saying that I'm a half-wit who can't even manage his own power.”

[Yes. That's exactly what I'm... not saying, but I'm saying that that's how amazing you are, Warrior! Ha. Ha. Haha. I love you, Warrior.]

I wish he would stop saying that he loves me over and over again.

[From my point of view, it seems to me that your problem is that your body cannot keep up with your own skill, Warrior. Since you haven't given your body the time to adapt to your skill and you've been continuously growing until now. Of course, during that time, your body should have also felt that process of growth, and had grown accordingly, but that's only when talking about normal people. When you get to this strength, it is important for your body to become accustomed to even a single leap of growth.]

He had a point this time too.

If we just exclude that it came out of the holy sword's mouth, it was extremely useful advice.

Kiri Kiri and the holy sword.

Both of my trusted advisers had recommended that I rest.

Unreasonably going to the 31st floor from here would probably be overdoing it.

I want to immediately leave here, but I restrained myself by thinking of it as another sort of training.

I chattered with Park Jung Ah and Kim Min Hyuk a bit, and read the surplus community articles.

I guess I'll meditate if I get bored.

With that in mind, I decided to rest for a few days.

“Also, teach me some magic.”

[I don't want to.]

“...Why?”

He spoke so firmly that for an instant I thought the holy sword was Seregia.

[My position becomes uncertain.]

“If you don't teach me magic, your position will become really solid. You'll definitely be able to reflect on your solid position from within my inventory.”

[I'll teach you.]

After my consultation with the holy sword, I decided to rest for three days accompanied by study in magic theory.

So after I feel as though I've rested aplenty, my schedule would be one day of rest, one day of magic study, and one day of swordsmanship training in that order; and I decided to stay here for around one round, maybe even two.

I drew up a chart of my daily schedule as if I were a elementary school student.

My schedule was mostly filled with rest, taking walks, meditating, or

chatting (messages) and I tried my very best to follow it to the letter.

Even on the days I had to train in magic, my training didn't surpass three hours.

It was a boring everyday life to the point that I felt impatient, but it was effective.

It had been one week since I'd entered the residential district.

And then there was an unexpected change.

[Your level has been adjusted.]

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv. 101

I had been at level 56 and had suddenly shot up to level 101.

Chapter 172

Tutorial 30th Floor (2)

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv. 101

What is this?

Is it like when you level up after spending a night at an inn in an RPG?

No. That's not possible.

It wasn't as if I hadn't rested at all this entire time.

Like Kiri Kiri and the holy sword had said, my body hadn't been able to keep up with my achievements; by resting, my body had become able to get used to them.

I heard I needed rest, but I didn't know that it'd have this kind of effect.

I expected my focus to improve with enough sleep, but I hadn't expected my level to shoot up by about 50 levels.

On that note.

“I’m completely abandoning my schedule.”

[I'm sorry? Shouldn't you rest a bit more? You only rested for about a week.]

“I'm going to rest more.”

[Yes?]

“I'm just going to rest for the entire week. No more magic or swordsmanship training in the middle. I'm just going to eat, sleep, and play for the entire day.”

[Isn't... that too excessive?]

The holy sword tried to dissuade me, but my mind was made up.

Since I had figured out that rest was this effective, I decided that I'd rest for the entire week without doing anything.

If I drastically increase my level this way, maybe I'll be able to receive level up rewards again.

I may not level up from resting anymore, but there's also a possibility that it could increase further.

I'll rest lazily for one or two days, and then I'll be able to confirm whether it's true or not. I wanted to see if my level would increase more if I rested properly for a week.

If it didn't, I can just start training again after a week passes.

[I'm concerned that you'll become dull if all you do is rest for a week, Warrior.]

“Not a chance.”

Seregia said something about me becoming useless or whatever. I quickly denied it and dove into my bed.

Starting now, I'm not going to move a step from my bed!

Until I really need to use the restroom.

[Pain Resistance Lv. 6 has been acquired.]

[Mental Pollution Immunity Lv. 5 has been acquired.]

* * *

In terms of results, resting for a week was a complete failure.

My level didn't change a bit.

Instead, my Pain Resistance and Mental Pollution Immunity skills leveled up.

I hadn't self-injured myself while resting either.

I had only rested all day. The boredom and the restlessness really took a toll on my willpower; the psychological agony was practically torture as my body writhed atop the bed, so my skills leveled up.

I knew myself well; even as I rested for a week, I felt like I was being lazy, or that there was nothing to do. That's just how sincere I was about resting.

After resting for a week, I felt as though I had been buried by that tranquility.

It sounded like the second hand of a nonexistent clock rang out, and it felt like the ceiling would collapse on top of me at any moment; I felt an uneasiness that had no basis.

The entire time I spent on top of my bed felt like torture.

It seemed as though Seregia and the holy sword realized that both my body and mind were exhausted, so they tried to convince me to start training again; but I thought of this as training too, and endured.

And today, the week-long rest ended.

As soon as morning came, I happily got down from my bed and went straight to making a new schedule.

[Mind power* is ultimately no different from magic. Don't they say that extremes meet? Normally, when a young superman reaches a certain level, he'll be able to easily master both magic and swordsmanship. It was the same for me as well.]

[TL Note: I had absolutely no idea what the author had written in Korean, but I looked it up. I believe it's a word used in Tai Chi and means "yinian". It's likely a word often used in wuxia novels rather than Korean novels. It can roughly be translated as intent/will and mind power as well. It's what lets you use your chi/inner energy. The author mentioned that Ho Jae felt like his "life force" (chi) may have been drained from using the Light Sword before, so...]

"Then, you're saying that I should focus on swordsmanship first?"

[Yes. You don't really need to learn magic right now. Swordsmanship is the best. More importantly, isn't it cool? Why do you want to learn something that those tottering magicians mutter in their small rooms?]

[You can say that again. Swordsmanship really is the best. Please hone your swordsmanship first, Warrior.]

Seregia ended up being persuaded by the holy sword.

"It's not like I'm going to neglect my swordsmanship. But I'm finally able to study magic. I was barely able to find a magic book that specifies runes."

As soon as I had cleared the 29th floor, I got Kiri Kiri's help and bought magic books.

In large quantities.

[That's not it. I'm not saying you shouldn't learn magic. But you should focus on your swordsmanship right now.]

"I should focus on my swordsmanship? Why?"

The holy sword wasn't saying that I should prioritize my

swordsmanship; he was saying that I had to train my swordsmanship at this time.

I asked for a detailed reason.

[You are still unskilled in using your mind power, Warrior. It also hasn't been very long since you've genuinely used it. In order to become skilled at using it, you need more practice and effort. Plus, you've recently shown an extraordinary growth rate, Warrior. This kind of opportunity is hard to come by even once in your life. Whether you were blessed by the God of War, or the energy of the universe is focused on you, this unusual acceleration is uncommon. Just as there's a period of growth with your body, there's also a time where you'll experience explosive growth in your swordsmanship. And this period of growth differs between individuals. I'm saying that you never know when it'll end. You don't know when this condition will end, so don't waste time on magic. Please focus on swordsmanship.]

What are you talking about?

I've just been growing normally.

Whether it's the God of War's blessing, or the will of the universe fulfilling my desires, it's not like I've ever heard or seen them before.

[He's correct, Warrior. This is the first time he's said something right, so please listen to what Sir Ahbooboo has to say.]

Seregia assented from my side.

Was she enthusiastically chiming in after understanding what the holy sword had said?

I asked out of curiosity.

[I wasn't paying close attention, so I'm not sure. More importantly, I'll be bored if you decide to train in magic, so please practice swordsmanship.]

It turned out that she was just being faithful to her desires.

Due to the two ego swords' passionate complaints, I decided to change my schedule.

First, I'll polish my swordsmanship a bit, and study magic later.

After I've made some visible progress in the two fields, I'll enter the 31st floor.

That's how my training in the 30th floor residential district began.

* * *

“I thought that it was a technique that added magic, though.”

I was talking about the technique that the holy sword used on the 26th floor.

I had just slashed downwards, but the cut had gone beyond the field and through the rampart.

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. That was a technique that I frequently used when I was still human. At the time, I wasn't familiar with magic. That was when I was at my peak. Ha!]

It seemed like he was going to start boasting again.

“At any rate, explain the basics of it for me. If you don't want to go into the inventory.”

[Yes. I'll explain it to you. First, I have to talk about your skills, Warrior. That's because this kind of thing is understood differently based on the individual. When you used your mind power Warrior, how did you do it?]

As the holy sword requested, I drew the soul sword and took a stance.

“Honestly, I never learned this technique in detail. I just imitated it based on the stories that I had been told. I recalled something in my head when I listened to the stories and I just reenacted the same

thing.”

[Good. Focusing on that image and embodying it is an effective method. However, you were able to successfully figure that out on your own. Plus, you were able to utilize a technique you've never learned before.]

“Next is... It's difficult to explain.”

[That's alright. It's naturally difficult to explain.]

“...This is just a speculation. If I were to artificially generate heat and light, I think I would've had to rub the mana together. This way.”

I stretched my left palm out and released my mana.

My mana collided with atmospheric mana, and as it shot up, the impact generated heat.

If I released any more mana, the heat would have been accompanied by light.

[You really do all sorts of things. Do you really need to learn magic? You don't use that technique by applying that to your sword, right?]

“I do apply it to my sword.”

[...Please try it.]

I shifted the aura that had formed around the sword.

It was definitely a lot more difficult.

Generating heat around the sword was much more difficult than using friction to form fire using the atmospheric mana.

A sword was a solid medium.

It had much more of a dull, stiff-moving, refined aura.

As the aura moved against my will, the heat generated was far greater.

First, I have to be careful that the energy doesn't build up in my body.

At the same time, in order for the unfolding energy that travels along the sword to go straight forward, the direction of my movements also had to line up.

I weaved together the aura that was spreading everywhere spontaneously, and then the aura is focused onto a single point on the sword's tip at the end of that complex process.

It started from my body, and would flow down through the sword until it ended at the sword's tip; it would continue to collide and the flowing aura which created energy would be released from my control at the tip of the blade.

The energy that was released from the sword's tip wouldn't be in a straight line.

As soon as the energy is released, it will shoot in various directions.

The continuously colliding energy would flow down the sword until it reaches the blade-edge, where it undergoes a diffused reflection. The sword's fixed power would dissipate, spreading out in every direction.

The energy could shoot out to the side, and could even aim at me, behind the sword.

Ultimately, it was vital that I direct it into a straight line in front of me.

This was the Light Sword's first form, Pierce.

A bright light would glisten upon the sword's tip.

That was the end of it.

I stirred the soul sword around, and waited for the heat to be

discharged.

I didn't use the Light Sword at its completed stage.

You could see it as an imitation because it wasn't the founder who used it, but a different swordsman who created it. However, it did contain immense heat.

[...Does that make any sense? All those miniscule particles of aura moving forward? Who was it? The person who told you about such a suicidal technique?]

“No one told me about the technique; I just tried it based on the story that I heard.”

The holy sword seemed momentarily dumbfounded, and laughed with a 'ho ho.'

[I don't know what to say. In general, if you attempt that kind of technique without any guidelines or without a conventional method, your body will explode.]

My body did explode, and was followed by a flood of mana.

If it hadn't been in the waiting room, I may have died.

I briefly told the holy sword about my attempts at practicing the Light Sword.

[Even though something like that happened, you ultimately completed the technique. Your tenacity is amazing, so such so that you're absurd. In any case, it's a relief that you didn't die.]

The holy sword said that I couldn't do something so dangerous in the future, stating that a warrior's most important weapon was their body, and began nagging that I needed to be particularly careful with mine.

After he nagged me for a bit, the holy sword taught me his technique.

[It was a technique that I called the Spatial Rift Mind Slash.]

“Did you say the Spatial Rift Mind Slash?”

When I heard the grandiose name, my anticipation rose.

[Of course, it's not a technique that allows you to harm your enemy with just your will. However.]

“However?”

[It doesn't seem that different from the outside. That's the important factor. Hoo. Hoo.]

“Stop laughing and explain it to me quickly.”

[Yes. Of course. First, it's important to form the aura around both sides of the sword symmetrically. And the aura follows the sword and goes to the end... no, when you use your soul sword, Warrior, rather than the sword tip, a slightly more distant point would be better. And...]

The holy sword started to explain obediently.

He used similar words and expressions to the ones I used when I used the Light Sword and explained it so it was easy to understand.

He started with a simple outline, gave a description to help with imagining it in my head, told me the pattern that my magic circuits should unfold (as well as the shape of the aura), and the method to achieving it.

When I heard the scrupulous and helpful information, I could understand the technique that the holy sword was describing, contrary to when I had clumsily practiced the Light Sword on my own.

If the key factor for the Light Sword was friction, then the Spatial Rift Mind Slash focused on the compression of mana.

You would compress the mana to its limit; this technique was derived from the basic question: 'what would happen if I continuously suppress the compressed mana?'

The aura would follow both sides of the blade and collide at the tip, where it would be continuously stored.

I failed at directing that power in the direction that I desired previously, but after I maintained the power in its entirety, it would be able to exhibit a tremendous force if I were to hit my target.

For example, if it were to impact a magic barrier, there would be a huge explosion.

It was highly likely that the person using such a technique would also die.

It was a technique that you could call disastrous and filled with holes.

However, when the holy sword attempted this technique, I figured out a new method of application.

The holy sword would maintain the compressed power in the tip of the sword, and I was able to confirm that a piece of the aura protruded forward for a brief instance.

It was smaller than a needle, but it was still aura.

No matter how thin it is, it would cut through bone and steel at a mere touch.

It was an unseeable extension at the blade's tip.

“What do you mean the Spatial Rift Mind Slash? The name has nothing to do with the technique.”

[But from the outside, it looks like an invisible sword that passes through space. That's what's important.]

It did look like that.

Since I had just slashed downwards, there hadn't been any sign; yet it had cleanly cut through the distant rampart.

Even I, the wielder, had been astonished; how bad would it have been for other people?

It would look like I had cut the rampart with just my will.

“However, if you consider the amount of willpower or mana that this uses, isn't it too ineffective? Only a small bit of aura is used compared to the amount of aura that's put in.”

[That doesn't matter. Aura is aura. Just the fact that it's aura means it has enough power. Of course, there's a lot of mana that's wasted, but because of that mana, they won't be able to detect the Spatial Rift Mind Slash. Therefore, you'll be able to cut through your enemies without them being able to respond.]

This was also a valid point.

I, the wielder, had been surprised by the considerable power contained within the sword, but even I hadn't noticed the slender aura that had actually cut through the rampart.

Though its mana consumption was high, it was much less than that of the Light Sword.

In terms of practicality, it was much better than the Light Sword.

I couldn't say anything more.

“It's amazing.”

[Of course it is! Who am I? I'm the legendary holy sword that was blessed by the great God of the Sky, Ahoubuch! Hahahaha.]

The holy sword started to boast again.

Rather than listen to that, I decided to use what I had learned and show it to him.

I went in front of the residential district's fountain. Then, I drew and raised the soul sword.

The application of aura wasn't much different from the Light Sword.

On the contrary, it was simpler and easier.

My mana would be refined and shaped into aura according to my will.

I compressed that aura at the edge of the sword.

[From here on, you need to familiarize yourself with the technique, Warrior. You must learn when to project the aura forward.]

Just as the holy sword said, I maintained the aura after compressing it at the tip of the blade.

I didn't just stay still after the blade was covered in aura.

I continuously drew out aura, and pushed it to a single point.

It escaped my control, and the aura burst out; as the aura's power became progressively stronger, its strength continued to become harder and harder to control.

Because of that, the flow of mana began to shake finely.

But at some point, a tiny fraction of the aura protruded forward.

The protruding aura quickly scattered and vanished as it escaped my control.

I somehow succeeded.

It was a split second. And it was only as long as a finger at that.

I had precisely matched my timing and extended the aura, like when I had swung the holy sword.

To a length that could cut through the distant rampart.

I suddenly realized that the holy sword's level of swordsmanship was far above mine.

[Ho... I didn't think you'd be able to do that on your first attempt. Regardless of how much you explain it, the majority of people can't even attempt it. As expected, you don't have ordinary talent, Warrior. I love you, Warrior.]

[Warrior.]

While the holy sword suddenly began flattering me again, Seregia spoke to me.

[When do you think you'll be able to complete the technique that you used just now?]

“What's with you all of a sudden?”

[I'm just... feeling greedy. I want you to master the technique as quickly as possible and use it.]

What a peculiar greed.

Is that the desire of a swordsman, or the desire of a sword?

To think she wants me to demonstrate the technique as soon as possible.

[Around half a year should be enough time. Since the Warrior's extremely talented, and he's been practicing a similar technique up until now.]

The holy sword explained to Seregia.

What do you mean by half a year?

I don't have any plans on dragging it out for that long.

“One week.”

[I'm sorry?]

“I'm going to master it within a week. That way, I'll be able to study magic as well.”

Chapter 173

Tutorial 30th Floor (3)

It didn't take a long time before I was familiar with the grandiosely-named technique, Spatial Rift Mind Slash.

Nevertheless, the holy sword's technique was similar to the Light Sword. If you were to quibble over it, it was actually easier to use.

[I still don't understand.]

Seregia spoke sullenly.

While I practiced the Spatial Rift Mind Slash with the soul sword, Seregia was also at my side.

However, it seemed like she was getting disappointed as our understanding of the technique broadened.

“It's not that difficult. I'll explain it simply by comparing it to something else.”

Contrary to its grandiose name, the technique was ultimately just a technique that extended the sword's edge by compressing aura.

It was an aura slash that extended so finely that it couldn't be seen by the naked eye, inducing an optical illusion that looked as though you had cut through space.

That's all.

Applying the aura was extremely simple.

You just need to think of it like a swelling, triangular zit.

You would press down on the pustule from both sides, forcing its contents to explode outward.

With a pop.

[What do you mean by a 'pop'?!? Do you really have to explain my lethal technique by comparing it to something so filthy?]

"I'm not wrong, am I?"

I ignored the grumbling holy sword and continued my explanation.

"And the split second that the pustule is fired, you swing your sword. Of course, you need to know exactly when the pustule will be fired, how far you want it to go, and also how to maintain it for a certain amount of time. That's all there is to this technique."

[When you put it that way, Warrior, my technique seems way too mundane, and it also feels filthy. Warrior.]

I explained the method of utilizing the technique and its applications thoroughly to Seregia.

She couldn't try out the technique herself since she didn't have a body anymore, but Seregia's passion for swordsmanship hadn't waned.

On the contrary, her desires were much more transparent than when she was a human. She earnestly wanted to improve her understanding of the technique.

Of course, the holy sword wasn't quite happy that his technique was being analyzed thoroughly in the process of explaining his technique.

He was pretty displeased.

[Then why don't YOU try using that simple technique! Since you've practiced a lot already, why don't you try using it properly! It would be fine if you used it on that house over there, wouldn't it!?!]

The holy sword was pissed.

I may have hurt his pride.

Rather than confront the infuriated holy sword, I decided to do as he said.

I was standing in front of the mountain right now. The distance between me and the building that the holy sword had pointed out was certainly not small.

Around 150 meters.

I had pulled off the technique successfully many times in the past few days, but I had never tried to use it at this distance.

But whatever.

I didn't think of it as impossible.

I just haven't tried to apply it differently.

It's been five days since I started practicing the technique, and I've already become familiar with it.

I drew my sword and enveloped it in aura.

I felt the aura compress at the tip and briefly waited.

I still couldn't use it at a moment's notice because it needed a bit of time before the reaction I was looking for came.

Eventually, I found a specific pattern in the lump of condensed aura.

I matched the timing based on prior experience and swung my sword.

It followed my diagonal sword swing and a scar carved itself onto the wooden building 150 meters away.

It looked as if it were marked by the talons of a monster that only appeared in legends.

That was satisfying.

[...I-It's still not perfect! Look at that. Aren't the traces of your sword strike too uneven? It's proof that you didn't control your aura properly!]

The holy sword was silent for a short while before he continued to argue.

Just as the holy sword said, the traces of my sword strike were definitely uneven.

As I said, it looked exactly like a talon mark.

I have to make the traces cleaner and smoother.

“It'll be fine if I practice some more. There are two days left, aren't there?”

I had promised that I would succeed within a week, and there were still two days remaining.

Perhaps that was the reason the holy sword was acting sharp and fastidious.

The holy sword did confidently assure me that I wouldn't be able to completely familiarize myself with the technique within a week.

Disregarding that...

There's something else on my mind.

“Should I try combining it?”

The sword was engulfed with flames.

It still wasn't possible to combine the Spatial Rift Mind Slash and the Light Sword technique.

However, it seemed like simply fusing fire to the aura would be fine.

In that state, I attempted the Spatial Rift Mind Slash again.

Even though it looked similar, it required a different method of control since I had mixed the two techniques. The aura did as it pleased and went wild.

I had to guide that aura to the tip of my sword.

It was more akin to using my strength to roughly shove the aura, rather than using a technique.

And I slashed down with my sword once again.

I had swung my sword at a leisurely pace, yet I heard an unsettling sound effect emanate from my sword.

And the two-story wooden building in front of me earned another lengthy scar.

If I were to describe the difference between the two slashes, the second one was interspersed with flames.

[This crazy...]

[You're truly amazing. I don't know what else I can say. You're amazing, Warrior.]

The holy sword and Seregia both reviewed it side by side.

Seregia just complimented me like normal.

And the holy sword... it sounded like this asshole was going to cuss at me?

Honestly, it's not a very practical technique.

Using the holy sword's original technique would be much more effective, and smoother.

If I were to add fire, it'd just add more weaknesses.

The aura consumption was also enormous.

More importantly, controlling it wasn't easy.

Seregia and the holy sword hadn't noticed, but the second technique didn't hit my initial target.

And this type of mistake could be fatal during a battle.

However, there was one advantage that offset all those disadvantages.

It looked cool.

Others would see it as a slow sword swing, but it would appear as though my slash had severed a distant object while simultaneously igniting it on fire.

It was pretty good for showing off.

[What are you even going to do by learning magic? Please just learn swordsmanship. If you're also skilled in magic, Warrior, my position is at risk.]

I ignored the holy sword's whining.

The holy sword's position is solid.

Who would dare aim for the position of a frivolous demonic sword?

[What are you going to call that technique?]

The holy sword stopped complaining and finally contributed something.

The technique's name was important.

Once upon a time, I had thought it foolish to name your techniques individually.

Giving them names were like limiting your own potential.

However, as I familiarized myself with the Light Sword technique, my opinion changed.

If you don't hammer in that fixed perception, the technique would be too difficult to even practice.

Attaching names to these techniques was definitely helpful in recalling and exercising the technique.

[How about Spatial Rift Blazing Mind Slash?]

What insincere naming sense.

You just added "blazing" to the original technique name.

And.

"You can't use mind slash."

There wasn't any problem to the holy sword adding the name 'Mind Slash' to his technique.

However, there was definitely a problem adding 'Mind Slash' to my own technique.

[It's perfectly fine to call it a mind slash. Most people will see it as a mind slash anyway.]

The holy sword advised that I use the name mind slash, but I thought

differently.

I wouldn't be able to call this technique 'Mind Slash,' regardless of what others may think or see.

Familiarizing myself with the name 'mind slash' will be detrimental to me later on.

If I wanted to attach 'mind slash' to it, I can't allow my sword strike to be as rugged as the scar on the wooden building.

I would only recognize this as a 'mind slash' when I'm able to precisely cut off a person's head without drawing my sword.

And 'Spatial Rift Blazing Mind Slash,' really?

It's too long, and it's lame.

[Well, if that's what you think.]

Mind slash, huh.

Mind slash.

I sat next to the fountain and thought about a mind slash.

When I saw the technique the holy sword had unleashed on the 26th floor, I had truly felt that it was a mind slash.

And I had attempted it by myself in Kiri Kiri's field.

As a result, the only thing I was able to confirm was that I couldn't even attempt the mind slash yet.

At the time, I thought I could use the mind slash.

I'd succeeded in keeping a calm mind while executing the Light Sword technique.

I had earnestly attempted to use the mind slash.

My method of attempting it was both simple and stupid.

I formed mana in the air.

It was like lifting mana from my palm, like how I had drawn and returned the short sword lodged in the tree.

I condensed the mana midair and moved it.

It wasn't my body nor was it my sword; I projected the mana in the air, and made it solid, forcibly controlling it. At the same time, seeing the movement that was controlled by that force was extremely difficult.

And I swung my sword.

The condensed mana and the sword in my grasp became one.

As I swung my sword slowly, the mana in the air follow the same trajectory.

That's how I materialized my will into the air.

I succeeded in hitting the falling Thousand Arms with my mana.

However, that was all.

All my strength went into it, but I was only able to slightly nudge the free-falling Thousand Arms.

Ultimately, that was all.

However, what if I were to combine it with the holy sword's technique here?

Let's try it.

I gathered aura in my palm.

Forming mana outside the body and forming aura had different levels of difficulty.

On the surface of my palm, aura about the size of my thumb was formed and rose up.

That was enough.

I molded the aura into the shape of a triangle and compressed it at the end of a single point.

It was the same as the holy sword's technique.

I didn't gather the aura at the end of a sword; I just gathered the mana that I had formed in the air.

I momentarily focused my strength at the end of the aura, a slender branch of aura stuck out for a short while.

Even though I was focused, it was difficult for me to see it in a split second.

It wasn't even the length of 1 cm.

[...What did you just do?]

“After I amassed the aura, I used the method of the Spatial Rift Mind Slash to try to project a part of the aura.”

[You really do all sorts of things. My goodness.]

[How effective is it, Warrior?]

“I probably won't even be able to kill a sewer rat.”

I can't use this.

Even if I were to increase the output from here, it doesn't seem like I'll be able to get a better outcome.

It wasn't a problem with the amount of mana I had, but rather a problem utilizing it.

I pondered about it a bit more.

In order to use brief protrusion of aura from the holy sword's technique, the Spatial Rift Mind Slash, you had to swing your sword.

And if you swing your sword in a large arc, you would be able to quickly slash across a wide range using a small amount of mana.

What would happen if I were to swing the aura in the air towards the front?

The difficulty is just too high.

I had only removed the sword as a medium, yet its difficulty rises absurdly.

Amassing the aura in the air and using that to mimic the Spatial Rift Mind Slash was too much for me.

After centering the aura on the central axis, I had to match the timing and swing it?

That's impossible.

Extending the aura and swinging it simultaneously was impossible.

I can only do one or the other.

If that's the case, taking out the swing is the right move.

Let's solve the problems preceding the swing.

While the aura's moving diagonally, I'll focus on the essential task of

extending the aura.

The further it moves diagonally, the better.

If that's the case, it'd be better to rotate the aura.

I enlarged the aura that floated above my hand a bit more, to about the size of a fist.

And I started to slowly spin it.

As the aura spun, I realized I made an error.

I didn't have a way to condense the aura that rotated in one direction.

In order to project a portion of the aura, you have to pressurize the aura.

However, in order to pressurize the quickly rotating aura, I'd have to concentrate on producing an opposing reaction.

It needed a collision of force.

If it's not clockwise, then let's try counterclockwise.

I dispersed the aura that was above my hand and started over again.

This time, I shaped the aura into a sphere.

The aura within the sphere was divided into three bodies.

The three bodies simultaneously rotated in opposing directions and on slightly different axes, rubbing against each other to emit heat.

Rather than it being the holy sword's Spatial Rift Mind Slash, it was closer to the method of utilizing the Light Sword.

The aura particles used the process of friction to generate heat, and at

a single point the collision between particles was maximized, creating pressure. Using that pressure, a piece of aura was momentarily projected.

The friction, as well as the rotation, was running smoothly.

Though, there was one problem.

The rotational speed was continuously accelerating.

I wasn't using my strength sustain the rotation anymore, but I had fastened the sphere onto its central axis so that it wouldn't escape my control; yet the rotational speed was accelerating once again.

There was so much light that it was difficult to open my eyes and look directly at it.

The heat went beyond my palm and started to singe my wrist.

It was like a fist-sized sun.

This is really dangerous, though.

It was like an airplane's engines, ringing out across the residential district.

The intense light tormented my two closed eyes.

[Warrior, stop. Please stop! What is this all of a sudden? If you keep going and that explodes, you'll really die!]

In an instant, the aura transformed into a miniature bomb as the holy sword urgently tried to stop me.

I also wanted to disperse it like the holy sword said, but it wasn't possible.

If that violent energy escapes my control, I have no idea what'll happen.

I didn't know whether it would explode or disseminate in all directions.

However, whatever the result, it would bring about an extremely dangerous situation; that I did know.

The activity of intense thermal energy had created a bomb.

So that I wouldn't be swept by the fierce air current, I held onto the fountain with my left hand and endured.

I could use my mana and stand my ground, but I didn't have any extra mana at my disposal.

[Warrior, you'll really die!]

[Time Confinement]

I used my Time Confinement and temporarily halted time.

It's too late to stop the sphere.

It was impossible to naturally disperse that energy.

In order to destroy the sphere, all its energy has to be used up.

Even within the world that had been stopped by Time Confinement, the white light sphere was slowly spinning.

How fast is that thing spinning?

This is driving me crazy.

I don't know whether that thing will endure the entire duration of Time Confinement.

I repressed my uneasiness and focused on the sphere's movement.

In any case, the sphere was moving slow enough that its spin was apparent to the naked eye.

The chance to calmly look at the slowly-moving aura was really valuable.

The single sphere was composed of three autonomous bodies, and I was able to observe that the three layers were colliding and rubbing against each other.

Its flow.

I watched for quite a long time.

Right before my Time Confinement was over, I counted the numbers.

One.

Two.

Three.

At the same time that I counted three, the effects of Time Confinement ended.

The sphere started to rotate at a rapid pace once again, and the world began to shake.

In the midst of this, I manipulated the sphere.

I had prepared this method and waited for the effects of Time Confinement to come to an end.

And through that method, I was successfully able to pressurize a part of the aura that formed the sphere and project it.

In the next moment, a giant echo was accompanied by a burst of intense light.

It was accompanied by a wave of mana, and I couldn't tell exactly what had happened.

After the burst of light, I felt that the temporarily-projected aura had already dissipated.

Before I had been engulfed by the aftereffect, I had hurriedly used Blink repeatedly to escape the range of its effects.

Because Blink had negated the force that would be applied to my body, I was able to land safely, rather than be swept away and tumble about.

From the direction of the sphere, a thunderous sound belatedly rang out.

Despite being quite far away, I felt the heat strongly.

It was to the point that even I, who had Fire Resistance, felt pain from the heat.

I had expected that the length of the aura that I had projected from the sphere was about 30 centimeters.

However, it rotated and continued to accelerate even further, so as soon as I directed the aura from the sphere, its length was longer than several meters.

And during that brief instance, the giant bulge of aura rotated several hundred times using the sphere as its center, no it rotated several thousands of times.

That was the result.

At the center of the residential district, the entire fountain area was razed to the ground and burning.

Kwang!

I didn't know if the aura that I couldn't collect and lost control of had diffused in all directions, and exploded, but another boom rang out.

A part of the aura had been projected; since an equivalent energy had been consumed, the explosion hadn't been that large.

With that, the sphere had completely disappeared.

I started to analyze the aftermath.

The sphere had rotated repeatedly, and at some point, it increased its revolutions per minute by effectively “grabbing” onto the central axis.

It was difficult to stand my ground in the face of the storm.

The sphere had over-accelerated and its revolutions per minute drastically increased the force of the technique.

In a split second, everything in my vicinity would be torn apart if that technique were to use the aura blade as its center.

Like a blender.

Also, the technique was accompanied by an intense heat and light.

Subsequently, it becomes extremely difficult to maintain the central axis, to the point that I can't deal with it at my level.

Obviously, the ideal path of action would be to use the aura projection to consume as much of the sphere's energy as possible. Then, immediately after using the technique, I have to escape from the blast area.

After using it, the remaining energy in the sphere explodes.

So, if it's possible, after using the technique, it'd be best not to leave too much energy within the sphere.

Thereafter, if there's an excess of energy in the sphere, I have to

escape as quickly as possible.

And the only noteworthy thing is that it would end like this.

It had plenty of force and great potential in a wide variety of combat situations.

In conclusion, I have two questions: how do I decrease the excessive force, and how do I control it?

I have to reduce the danger of the technique as well as tame its excessive force.

At my current level, I have no chance of controlling it.

Later, after my skills have progressed further, I'll try it again in the safety of the waiting room.

More importantly, my magic circuits have become a mess; even if I were able to take the risk, I wouldn't be able to attempt it again.

I took out medicine for burns from my inventory and said.

“I think this is enough swordsmanship. Let's study magic starting tomorrow.”

[...So if you're a person who can do something like that, why are you trying to learn something like magic?]

* * *

[The God of the Sky agrees with someone's opinion.]

[The God of Light is happy.]

[All of the Gods of the Temple of a Hundred Gods are watching you.]



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THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- VOLUME 7 -

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**[Light Novel Bastion | Rebirth Online
World | WangMama]**

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튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



Chapter 174

Tutorial 31st Floor (1)

[Mister.]

[What?]

[Do you know what I saw on the 30th floor?]

[What did you see?]

[It was just a heap of ashes.]

[...Take comfort in the fact that you probably weren't planning on staying in the 30th floor.]

[Mister.]

[...My bad.]

* * *

“Then let's get going.”

[Come now. Say it like it is, Warrior. Rather than departing, aren't you running away?]

This annoying bastard always says things better left unsaid.

I arrived at the bonfire room before I went to the portal for the 31st floor stage.

I breathed in the fresh air, and my head felt a bit refreshed.

“It feels like I’ll survive now.”

My original plan was to study magic for about a week after wrapping up my swordsmanship training.

However, I ended up leaving the 30th floor residential area on the second day, contrary to my plans.

[Who sets fire to the town like that? Warrior, did you not wet yourself?]

I shoved the annoying holy sword into my inventory wordlessly.

[It’s nice now that it’s so much quieter, Warrior.]

It’s just as Seregia said.

On the last day of my swordsmanship training, the residential district went up in flames.

After living in stages where it didn’t matter whether there was a fire or not, or in the waiting room that could restore itself, the very concept of fire had faded from my conscience.

Regardless of whether the town burned down or not, I had escaped the region of flames and begun my study of magic.

However, the residential district’s buildings were made of wood, so the longer the fire continued, the fiercer it got.

The fires had become too wild for me to put out now, let alone extinguishing the flames later. I had no choice but to escape from the residential district.

[What do you think about studying here, and then going?] Seregia asked.

“No. It’s fine. I’ve read over the runes once already, so I can just memorize them as I go through the stage.”

It seemed like it would be better to study magic in the next stage's waiting room.

My body itched ever since I entered the bonfire room, as I wanted to go straight into the next stage.

Instead, I created an sphere of aura in the air about the diameter of a finger.

And I slowly – at an incredibly slow pace – rotated it.

I planned to get a bit comfortable with using the aura sphere by repeatedly rotating it, stopping it, and rotating it in the opposite direction.

If I clear the stage while maintaining the sphere, my proficiency should rise quickly.

Before I went on to the next stage, I removed the holy sword from my inventory.

“Are you going to keep messing around?”

[I'll stop messing around. I, Ahoubuch, promise that I'll become your loyal, and cute holy sword, Warrior. I love you, Warrior.]

I kind of wanted to put him back into my inventory after hearing about his cute such-and-such, but I decided to just depart.

I stepped atop the portal.

[Welcome to the 31st floor stage.]

The 31st floor stage was somewhat unusual.

I may be inside of a cave, as there were rock walls all around me.

Peculiarly, the rocks were all red.

And they were dimly glowing.

Are they a type of luminous stone?

[They're magic blood stones.]

What are magic blood stones?

Since the stage was an unfamiliar environment, I asked telepathically.

The holy sword replied frankly.

[They're a type of rock found inside a dungeon. You don't seem them often. The fact that the ceiling, the floor, and the walls are all made of magic blood stones means that this dungeon's level is no joke. Honestly, this place is no different from demon world. Please be careful.]

At least when the holy sword explains something, he explains it plainly.

This guy also has the tendency to be an explanation freak.

Just as the holy sword said, who is firmly strengthening his position as a Pokedex, I decided to be a bit more tense.

The 30th floor residential district was a kind of line.

The 31st stage and after were stages prepared to give challengers an even harder challenge, especially after leaving the completely safe and pleasant 30th floor residential district.

Whenever you pass through a residential district, the difficulty spikes dramatically,

The challengers on normal or hard difficulty had realized a long time ago that after you pass through a residential district, the difficulty shoots up dramatically.

I tensed up and focused. Soon, I felt someone's presence in front of me as I was walking slowly.

Because of the corner, I couldn't see him.

I could sense two people through my mana.

One of them was 2 meters tall, and the other was significantly shorter at 150 cm.

Both of them had already sensed my mana and were displeased that I was spying on them.

Both of them swiftly accelerated and approached.

While I was preparing to respond, a message appeared.

[The 31 floor's challenge is starting.]

Explanation: You have entered the devil world ?? ??? region. Once every 100 years, the demons of all regions gather in one place, and only the victor of the competition has the chance to challenge the Demon King; this ?? ??? areas, possessing a unique culture have always produced a powerful Demon King.]

Presently, in the ??? ?? region, the current Demon King has ruled for 400 years in the ?? ??? region, and has been considered the strongest Demon King, generation after generation.

Win the competition, and then prove that you are the greatest challenger in your ?? ??? region.

Finally, challenge the ?? ???'s ruler, and prove that you are the strongest demon of ?? ???.

[Clear Conditions]

??? ?? Pass the first round of the region preliminaries.

[TL Note: I did my best to make it understandable, but the author is purposefully omitting certain things.]

What an interesting explanation.

The two approaching enemies revealed themselves.

They each had large horns on their heads and wings protruding from their backs.

“This isn’t a dungeon that’s close to the demon world; it seems like demons have actually come looking for me?”

[Yes. They’re truly classic demons. Melee fighting type. They are weak to the water and holy attributes. They have a high resistance to mental attacks, high physical resistance, and have a moderate resistance to magic. Their danger level is 5-stars. At your level, Warrior, they’re about 1 1/2 stars.]

He’s progressively evolving into a Pokedex.

The demons marveled at the holy sword’s explanation, and one of the demons exclaimed.

It was the tall one.

“You rude bastard!”

What’s with him.

Of course, it was rude to spy on people with my mana, but how could a demon be so narrow-minded and get offended over that?

“You dumb bastard!”

“Right back at you.”

The tall demon looked shocked after hearing my response.

He looks kind of dumb.

“Y-You shameless bastard!”

He really is dumb.

Why is he being like that?

Is there a problem with the translation of the knowledge before Babel skill?

He was begrudgingly standing there until the short demon beside him spoke.

“Hey, newcomer. If you’re too late for the qualifier, you should show your sincerity to your seniors and think about joining them. Who do you think you are, to mock us like this!”

Preliminaries, join up, sincerity.

Those are words you don’t usually see together.

[Warrior, use that, that.]

What is that?

[You know, that thing. The one that goes ‘kaboom’. Don’t you have that thing that you used to burn down the residential district?]

Boom, huh?

That’s an interesting way of putting it.

I don’t think the holy sword knows the term ‘kaboom’, so the knowledge before Babel skill probably just translated the meaning of the term to ‘kaboom’.

“No. I have a lot to ask them. And if something goes wrong with that, it can be dangerous for me as well.”

I raised my head, and gazed at the demons again.

The demons were looking at me as if they were asking, ‘why is he muttering to himself?’.

I’ve barely just met these stupid demons, so I can’t let this opportunity just pass by, now can I?

* * *

“So you’re saying that if you kill other demons, you get a token, and you have to gather a thousand of those tokens in order to pass the preliminaries?”

“Yes, yes. That’s right.”

The two demons were kneeling before me, telling me information about this place.

Of course, before I had asked them for information, I needed to do a bit of reconciliation.

The short demon was called Kakarang.

The tall and stupid demon was called Ubo.

Kakarang was the one talking for the most part while Ubo kept his mouth shut.

“Ah, by the way.”

“Yes. Yes. Please ask.”

“What do you see me as?”

“I’m sorry? You, of course, look like a strong, beautiful, wicked, and great demon.”

So I look like a demon.

Is it because they were hit, and if not, do they really see me as a demon?

[PR Note: It's safe to assume he beat them up.]

It's possible, if it's possible for the system to change my identity from a human to demon for this stage.

"Even though I don't have any horns, nor do I have any wings?"

"Jeez. Do you think that all demons have to have horns and wings? I'm different from those conservative geezers."

Based on what he's saying, it seems like there are demons without horns and wings.

However, there should be differences in skin color, physical appearance (ears, eyes, mouth, and nose), and body type.

It's a bit strange that he's no suspicious of me at all.

Was this set up by the system after all?

[It seems like they seem you as a demon, Warrior. I don't know why they're under that sort of delusion, but it's a relief,] the holy sword said.

Well, I guess it's a relief.

"Then, keep talking."

"Yes. I understand. First, I'll tell you about the current situation with the preliminaries. The preliminaries have gone on about the same way for two years already, and we've never made it very far."

Based on what the short demon said, the preliminaries have become a heated competition amongst the great factions.

Rather than several demons participating, acquainted demons started

to make groups amongst themselves, and eventually , some groups had grown to command more than tens of thousands of members.

In order to protect themselves from hostile groups, the other demons would join other groups or start making their own groups.

That's how the originally individual preliminaries had become a power struggle.

"Besides, they say that the level of the competition really changes starting from the second round of the preliminaries. That's because they're the strong who take the tokens one by one. That's why even if the representative of the group gather a thousand tokens, they continue to gather tokens with their comrades. Even if they gather more than a thousand tokens, the strong individuals remain, so their group identity worsens as time goes on."

So the time limit for the battle for power exacerbated the conflict.

They would competitively stockpile their forces, and the competition would be rife with betrayal, plots, covert fights, and trickery.

It's a situation where wars of words and marriages of convenience come and go.

To the point that I couldn't believe that this was a competition between regions or an event.

"About you guys."

"Yes, yes. Please ask."

"To be honest, it doesn't seem like you guys can pass the preliminaries. Why are you guys out here?"

"Ah, are you perhaps a foreigner? All the demons in this region are forced to participate in the event. And before the event has come to a close, we cannot escape from here. If you want to live, you have to stay here, even if you have no desire for Demon King's position."

So that's how it is.

Then if you're a strong person who really isn't interested in the Demon King's position, you could just stay in the first round of the preliminaries, since it'll become unnecessarily dangerous the higher you go.

"Fine, do you have anything else to tell me?"

"I do. There's a lot. Uh... by the way. Could you please take us with you? We'll definitely be of help to you."

It seems like they want me to carry them on my back.

Well, it seems like it won't matter.

I've already heard all the fundamental information, and I can just learn the rest as I fight.

I just need to check one more thing.

I stood up from my spot.

"Are you leaving? In the future, people from each group will stick real close to you. There's no way that the groups will leave a newcomer alone. They'll probably either try to appease you or attack you. If you tell me what you want, I'll guide you, ugh."

I pierced Kakarang's neck with my hand.

And I continued on, slicing my hand downwards.

Kakarang was split from his neck down to his hamstring, and died.

The external appearance of the joints weren't much different from a humans.

However, I need to check the locations of the organs.

I looked inside the split body, and there wasn't really anything different or strange about it.

"You, you bastard!"

The tall demon, Ubo yelled belatedly, and ran towards me.

There wasn't really anything to check now, so I cleanly lopped off his head with a straight hand.

It was a pain chopping off someone's head barehanded, especially because he much bigger than me. But it wasn't hard for such a slow demon.

I waited briefly, and the two demons' bodies started to evaporate into the air.

The corpses soon completely vanished.

In their place, a piece of stone appeared.

Just like Kakarang had said, it was a token.

It's just like when you defeat your enemies in a game and loot the items.

I also confirmed the most important piece of information.

So I guess I just need to gather a thousand of these stone pieces.

I roughly put the tokens into my pant pocket.

And I continued walking.

[The God of Death is snickering unpleasantly.]

[The God of Chaos is watching you.]

[The God of Deception is watching you.]

[The God of Games is bored.]

Chapter 175

Tutorial 31st Floor (2)

After taking care of the two demons and continuing to walk, I came upon a small door.

There was a single number written on the door.

[7]

I didn't know what the number was indicating, and my curiosity didn't go away as I opened the door.

As soon as I opened the door, a small room appeared.

If I were to tell you how small it was, it was about as small as the single room apartment I used to live in.

And in that narrow room, twelve demons were gathered and facing each other.

It was an entertaining scene.

The demons were divided into two crowds, and each of the demons was carrying a weapon; they were thrusting their weapons forward and at the edge of confrontation.

One side had five and the other side had seven.

It seemed like I had opened the door and come in at the moment a fight would break out.

The agitated demons' gazes gradually centered on me.

“Ah, don’t worry about me, and keep doing what you were doing. I’ll wait a bit.”

Based on what the two demons had previously told me, the rules of this event are similar to a battle royale.

You have to kill a thousand demons and take their tokens in order to pass the preliminaries.

However, the two demons had said that most demons were already forming their groups and within these groups, there were large groups that fought intensely amongst themselves.

If that’s the case, how should I analyze the conflict in this tiny room?

There was a lot I was curious about.

Therefore, rather than meddling in their fight, I decided that I would take a step back and watch.

I’ll be able to more or less sate my curiosity if I were to ask about this and that to the victor after the fighting is over.

With that in mind, I closed the door and leaned on it.

The twelve demons were still staring at me idiotically.

Perhaps there’s a rule that states that an outsider can’t watch while they’re fighting.

“Why aren’t you guys fighting?”

I’d prefer if they started fighting immediately.

I wasn’t just curious about this place; I was also curious about the demons’ strength.

Of course, I had easily beat up the two demons from before, but since they were roaming around the entrance, they might’ve just been

nobodies.

Both the demons I had met prior to the 31st floor and the ones I had just met had considerable mana.

But I didn't feel a chaotic spirit or a wicked demonic energy.

I was also curious as to why I couldn't feel that from the demons.

At that moment, one of the demons spoke to me.

"Please help us!"

Among the demons with red skin, the demon with blue skin spoke out.

It was a delicate blue-violet color skin.

The demon was wearing a skull necklace around her neck.

Amongst the demons here, she was the shortest and also the only woman.

She was part of the larger one of the two groups.

In other words, she was part of the group that held the advantage.

Thus, when she spoke, I couldn't immediately understand the situation.

"Why?"

"I-I'll give you a token!"

I wanted to ask why she had such a desperate expression when she had the advantage, but it seemed like the girl was under the impression that I'd ask for compensation to help.

I briefly thought about it.

Is giving me a token synonymous to dying for me?

Probably not.

She'll give me a stone piece that she's keeping, so she's asking me to fight with them.

At that moment, the group of demons that the girl's group was confronting yelled.

Their voices overflowed with composure, unlike the desperate-looking girl.

"You actually came from that direction. Are you perhaps a newcomer? Or are you one of those lousy demons who were thrown out to the entrance? Regardless of which, stay out of this, if you don't want to die with them."

I was right; the demons that I had met nearby the entrance were lousy, as expected.

[These demons don't look much different from those demons before,] Seregia said.

I agree.

Even if there were, they'd be minute differences.

That small difference looked a little suspicious to me.

I felt like it was the difference between a normal person who trained in a training hall, and a normal person who hated exercising.

The demon that threatened me looked displeased when he saw how I didn't respond to him.

"You should choose well. We have an alliance with the Kraagor group. If you defy us, you'll have to pay the price. No, that's not it. If you chase these guys out and capture this room with us, I'll also give you a

position. This room can accommodate seven people anyway.”

Kraagor group. Room. Accommodating members.

They are keywords for information that can satisfy my curiosity.

I would decide my next move, and would then enact that move.

It seemed like the silent holy sword realized that, and started droning, emitting a vibrating sound.

And that vibrating briefly stopped.

[Warrior, may I try it? As a performance test. Yes? Please. Teehee.]

This bastard always readily makes a “cute expression” mixed with a nasally voice.

Aside from his manner of speaking, he had the voice of a middle-aged man’s, so I feel goosebumps whenever I hear it.

I wanted to shove him into my inventory immediately, but I also agreed that I needed to test its performance, so I let it go.

Right before entering the 30th floor, Kiri Kiri had told me that I could now buy the items that were locked.

In the meantime, I had gathered a lot of points, so I bought several items.

The first things I bought were books regarding magic.

Aside from that, I bought elixirs, liquid medicine, and basic gear.

Finally, I bought a weapon enhancement scroll.

It wasn’t a scroll that would strengthen a normal sword’s sharpness or durability.

When I thought about the holy sword's performance, I didn't think that I needed to strengthen those.

Instead, the scrolls that I had bought were all scrolls that would endow an exclusive magic onto an living sword.

I had applied two of those scrolls onto the holy sword.

They were the fly magic and the blink magic.

Since both of them were high-rank magic, the holy sword hadn't been able to use those skills himself; using the scrolls, I had increased the abilities of the holy sword.

I had already used it in a test run on the 30th floor residential district, and all that was left was a field-test of its performance.

"Fine, try it."

[Yes. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. You know I love you, Warrior, right? Yes. I also know that you love me too. You're so shy, acting like you've never met me!]

The holy sword activated the magic as he spoke some nauseating phrases.

When I clear this floor, I have to find a scroll that can apply silence.

While I was thinking that, the holy sword applied the fly magic, and slid out of the sheath all on its own.

And said dismally.

[I can kill them all, right? Hoo. Hoo. Hoo.]

"Eh, nope. Only kill the five on that side, the ones that said something or another about a group such and such."

[I'm sorry? But that side has fewer people!]

“Yeah, the smaller group.”

The demons momentarily stiffened.

It was way too easy to tell that they were terrified and tense.

When the demons saw the sword leave the sheath by itself and fly into the air, the demons simply shook.

Their composed attitude just a little while ago disappeared.

That's strange.

[Holy sword Ahoubuch, taking off!]

The holy sword that had been drifting in the air suddenly accelerated and flew towards the demons.

Even to me, his speed was quite fast.

The first demon he targeted was somehow able to react to the holy sword's speed.

The demon raised his shield and brought it before the holy sword's path.

However, the holy sword used the enchanted magic.

Blink.

The holy sword leaped over the shield, piercing cleanly through the demon's neck.

The demon's endurance or mana hadn't been a problem at all.

The holy sword's aura was flowing.

As soon as the first target toppled to the floor, his comrades turned

around and started to run away.

However, they couldn't shake the holy sword's pursuit, and he hunted them down, one-by-one.

The holy sword had completely changed his stabbing pattern, and even suddenly stopped in the midst of flying and slashed at them using the hilt as a pivotal point.

The performance test was a success.

It didn't even take the holy sword thirty seconds for it to take care of the five demons.

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Demon's blood! I need more warm demon's blood!]

This insane holy sword had used magic, and unlike usual, loudly yelled out with his voice.

Because of that, the remaining seven demons could also hear his voice and were soon struck with fear and began shaking.

"Stop it, you crazy bastard."

I grabbed and retrieved the holy sword that was acting like a blowfly that had eaten mosquito repellent (flying in the air and emitting light)

* * *

"If it's that important, you don't really need to give it to me."

"No, we'll give it to you! Please let us give it to you!"

'Please let us give it to you!' was what came out of the desperate demon girl's mouth.

With this, I've gotten a total of eight tokens.

If I add the token I had from the beginning, I have a total of nine.

Among the six tokens that I had received, I stored five of them into my pocket.

The tokens disappeared immediately after I put them in my pocket.

I put the remaining token into my subspace bag.

Based on the demon girl's explanation, there were a couple of rules regarding the tokens.

1. The tokens will be automatically set to the location that you first stored your tokens.
2. The set tokens cannot be removed until you die.

In my case, my pocket in my pants is that set location.

It didn't matter whether I needed to store a thousand or even ten-thousand tokens; my pants pocket have become able to store an indefinite amount of tokens.

And they can't be retrieved until I'm killed and they drop.

Therefore, if I want to exchange them or sell them, I have to store the tokens somewhere else.

The final rule regarding tokens was...

"I also said this before, but the value of the tokens is tremendous. You must take up our request without fail..."

"I get it. I said I heard you."

The demon girl kept repeating those words.

She says that the tokens have tremendous value.

If you're in a life-threatening scenario, she says that if you give a token to your enemy, in most cases, you can beg your enemy for

mercy and come out alive.

It's not official, but it seemed to be an unspoken rule.

By giving up a single token, you treat a difficult matter as if it never happened. It felt something like that.

It actually is worth your life.

The tokens that the demon girl had passed to me was also dropped by someone they had killed.

"Then you didn't think to give your tokens to those guys back there?"

"Yes."

"Can I ask why?"

"It's because those guys would've just come back later. Or they would've sent their other comrades. If you lose your tokens like that, you'll ultimately be left with nothing."

That's true.

I had already heard why they were fighting in the first place.

As there are rules regarding the tokens here, there are also rules regarding the 'rooms.'

Each room has a limited amount of people it can accommodate.

Just like it said on the door, this room can accommodate seven people.

Next, a minimum number of people are guaranteed to live.

You won't feel hungry and you won't use up your stamina.

You don't even need to sleep.

That means that the activities that sustain your life are unnecessary.

It unexpectedly seemed to have the same effects as the waiting room.

Though, it was different in that it didn't have a healing function.

In this place without light, crops, or even animals, meekly shutting yourself inside these rooms is the most surefire way to survive.

That's why the demons fight over the rooms.

"But you managed to obtain a pretty good room," I said without thinking much.

The demons gathered inside the room weren't very strong.

Honestly, they were really weak.

It didn't matter if their bodies were durable, if they had sharp senses, or if they had an overflowing amount of mana that was characteristic of their race.

They were ordinary people.

Before the event had started, they said that they were demons who were involved in business.

The seven demons gathered here said that they were from the same town.

Demons running a business? It feels like something's out of focus.

I could understand the reason that they had shrunk before their enemies, despite them having a numbers advantage and not suffering from an immense level difference.

Thus, I was surprised that they had actually occupied a room.

It looked like it was in quite a good location too; I wonder how they took possession of this room?

“We paid the rental fee... with tokens.”

“Is there perhaps no rental service for guards?”

The demon girl pointed at the sprawled corpses on the ground and spoke.

“These demons work under the guy who leased the room.”

I didn't understand immediately.

Only after the demon girl had elaborated on her explanation could I understand.

The demons that had died over there had leased the room to these guys but returned to launch a surprise attack.

If they didn't want to die, they would have to leave the room, or continue to give them tokens.

It was a really effective way of collecting tokens.

If you're given a token, you have to either let them go on their way, or you have to reimburse them for its value. As long as they don't break either of these rules, it was a method that enabled them to scrape up and gather all of their remaining tokens.

I stood up.

The demons' eyes reflected terror at my sudden movement.

Despite helping them, they were afraid of me.

It felt strange.

The fact that demons look at me and feel afraid in itself felt strange to

me.

And it also felt unfortunate.

“Do you have a map by any chance?”

They had one.

I received a map that detailed the rooms, as well as the passageway that connected these rooms.

“And tell me where the group that that guy was talking about is.”

The demon girl looked at me quizzically and marked their location on the map.

I checked the location, took out the token that I had put in my subspace bag, and returned it to the girl.

I left the room after telling the flustered demon girl that it was the price of her map and information.

[Where are you going?]

“Where the groups are.”

The groups stockpiled several tokens in order to advance together with their comrades.

Plus, the tokens are used for trading and can be used as a method of bail for one's life.

Even the groups who had no interest of advancing were stockpiling the tokens.

The bigger and more powerful the group was, the more tokens they'd have.

A little while ago, the tokens that I could acquire from that small

room was seven at the minimum.

At most, it would be ten, maybe twenty.

I didn't want to gather a thousand tokens that way.

It was tiresome and it would take a long time.

I have to rob from those who had hundreds of them from the start.

I told Seregia and the holy sword my idea.

Seregia was momentarily silent and asked me.

[Is that really the only reason?]

I wanted to know the reason why she asked.

It's already been three months since I've started traveling with Seregia.

She always stayed together with me.

That was plenty of time to know me by now.

That's why I responded honestly.

"I don't want to attack people who aren't my enemies."

[Among the enemies up till now, there have been some who have begged for mercy, Warrior.]

Of course, I killed them without thinking.

[There were also a lot of people who turned their backs and ran away.]

I obviously chased and killed them.

[There were also people who would die just from being grazed by your sword winds.]

I didn't concern myself with their weakness.

[I want to know what the difference is between those demons and the others.]

If I look back, I feel like I've been like this.

Seregia always wanted to learn more about me.

Therefore, after listening to the reason behind my decision, she should use that reason to infer my aim and my personality.

Maybe that's her habit.

"Enemies are people who try to kill me, attack me, try to steal from me, or get in my way. I haven't considered the circumstances of my enemies in the past and that's how it'll continue to be."

A person who appears as my enemy even once, or members of that group, had all been considered my enemies.

And I've never compromised with my enemies.

Even after an interrogation, I would always kill them.

It wasn't an issue of morality.

This was a an issue of survival.

This is the Hell difficulty, where even the smallest weakness can lead to a life-threatening consequences.

Being merciful to those who were my enemies, or those who have the possibility of becoming my enemies, is too dangerous.

[I see. I understand.]

After finishing our conversation, I started walking again.

As I walked and walked some more, I started to doubt my own answer.

There was an exception.

The people I had met on the 16th floor.

Though they were definitely my enemies, I reconciled with them and spent time with them in peace.

Even though one of them was a doppelganger who had hidden itself.

It was confusing.

That line that I had drawn wasn't as clear as I had originally thought.

I looked inside for any hidden reasons.

Rather than reflecting on my thoughts, it felt like I was inferring the principle behind my own conduct.

A little bit later, I had to correct my thoughts.

This was a problem of morality, but at the same time it was a method of survival.

I did this to keep myself sane.

After what happened on the 18th floor, I wanted to minimize the harm to people who weren't hostile.

The things that happened that day had traumatized me.

Therefore, I divided people into two groups: those who are enemies and those who weren't.

And I was even more ruthless to my enemies, in exchange for not hurting people who weren't my enemies.

Due to those hidden reasons, I didn't pursue the, at minimum, seven tokens that were right before my eyes, and just left.

I even returned one of those tokens in exchange for their information.

It got deeper and deeper the more I thought about it.

This will definitely become a weakness.

Do I have to deal with this newly found issue, or ignore it?

Chapter 176

Tutorial 31st Floor (3)

I was lost in my thoughts as I followed the map; before I knew it, I had reached my destination.

This is the room of the people who had sent the attackers to the first room I had arrived at.

[39]

Contrary to the previous room which could only accommodate seven people, this was a room that could house quite a few members.

They had that many more combatants and were stronger.

That meant that they had a force capable of protecting the room.

I was walking around nearby, and a demon who appeared to be the gatekeeper approached me.

Just by looking at him, you could tell that he didn't have the attitude of a guard.

“Who are you! This room is full. If you don't want to die, go back and take a different path.”

“A different path?”

“Yeah, you can't pass through this room!”

I spread out the map and checked the paths in the surrounding area.

If I don't go through this room, I'll have to walk back quite the

distance.

Honestly, it isn't an issue to me.

Especially because I have business in this room.

I heard the sounds of screams echo out from inside the room as well as the smell of blood, so I was sure that I came to the right place.

“This is my last warning. Get lost! We also have an alliance with the Kraagor group. You won't die painlessly if you start an argument pointlessly!”

It seems like I did come to the right place, as expected.

I didn't need to go through the hassle of checking, since the gatekeeper so kindly told me.

“Ahbooboo.”

[My name is Ahoubuch, Warrior.]

The holy sword slipped out of the sheath, and started flying again.

Whether there are five enemies, or thirty-seven, it was all pointless before the holy sword, which was clad in aura and flying at high speeds.

It didn't take very long before the demons within the room were all incapacitated.

I approached the gatekeeper demon that the holy sword had deliberately left alive.

I asked the demon, whose shoulder had been pierced by the holy sword and embedded in the wall.

“So, how do I find that Kraagor or whatever group?”

The half-panicked demon shook just from my approach, but I was somehow able to calm him down and get him to mark the map.

After telling me the location, the embedded holy sword promptly took care of him.

There were three other demons inside the room, who looked as though they had been captured and tortured.

I passed out a few potions to them.

They came into possession of a vacant room, so they wouldn't die as long as they stayed here.

They also wouldn't have to worry about the group exacting their revenge.

Since I'll take care of everything.

That's what I told them, but the three demons just kept shaking.

They couldn't even look me in the eye, so I couldn't be sure that they understood me.

I left the room and started walking again.

And I resumed pondering over the concerns that I had briefly pushed aside.

To be exact, I was looking back at my memories, and was watching them in third-person.

It was like watching a movie.

I analyzed myself, as if I were inferring a main character's values and troubles within a movie.

As I recollected how I had thought and acted in the past, I needed to figure out how I had changed, as well as how I was changing.

At the end of that long retrospection, I could focus on one thing.

From a while back, I had helped those who were weak.

There were a lot of memories of me doing so.

Or did I not?

There was a small difference between helping other people, and trying to help someone.

Maybe not.

Let's think about it a little more.

I needed a lot more time than I had expected to retrace my past.

I had soon arrived at one of the rooms that those Kraagor group guys were staying at.

The demon that I had met just a little while ago said that the Kraagor group possessed more than ten rooms, both large and small.

This was the room that was closest.

[24]

Their numbers were a slightly smaller than before.

"Hey you, stop right there. Where are you trying to go, all bloodied like that?"

"This is a room where the Kraagor group is staying, right?"

"That's... true, but what business do you have here? Have you perhaps come to see the Room Leader?"

I found the right place again.

“Ahbooboo.”

[I told you, it's Ahoubuch!]

It took less time for the holy sword to clean up than it took to walk over to the room.

As a result, I could head over to the next room without even pausing.

Since I already knew where all the rooms that were a part of the group were located, I didn't need anything else.

When I thought about it, rather than helping the weak, it seems like I had a different goal.

After crossing a certain line, I couldn't just let someone I considered an enemy go.

It wasn't just in the Tutorial where I had to kill my enemies; it was on Earth as well.

Those hostile or deceitful towards me.

Even if they didn't directly try to inflict me any harm, if I see the people around me get hurt, I would gladly intervene.

Of course, the result of that wasn't always great.

Though I could say that I had more interest in those who would become my enemies than those who were weak, my desire to help the weak was earnest nonetheless.

Let's go back to square one.

Do I correct my weakness or hold onto it?

That was my concern.

Let's assume that I fix my weakness.

I'll put aside whether fixing it is possible for now.

It would certainly be to my advantage in clearing floors if I didn't have to differentiate between killing the virtuous and the wicked or the weak and the strong.

It would also reduce the level of danger.

Let's take a look at the current situation. If I were to have killed all the demons indiscriminately, I would already have more than a thousand tokens.

However, the amount of tokens that I had gathered up till now only numbers one-hundred and seven.

If I wasn't selective about killing and focused on clearing quickly and safely to grow...

There'd be a high chance that I'd go insane.

And if I were to not deal with my weakness?

It'd conversely become that much more dangerous.

Let's think about this carefully.

My current idleness leads to danger and a crumbling morality, and I tried to figure out which side the balanced scale would lean towards when I added this element of danger.

* * *

"Ahhh!"

"Boss, boss! We have to surrender before we all die! Boss? Hey, where's the boss!"

"He's over there running away by himself, you dumbass! Catch him!"

“Hey! Catch the boss over there!”

“It’s too late to catch him, you idiots. We have to fight on our own.”

“Who are you calling an idiot? How are we supposed to fight that...”

[Hahaha! Burn! To the point where the blood in your body boils!
Make your blood even hotter for me!]

[Holy Light! Burning Field! Fire Wall! Poison Fog!]

The holy sword flew around erratically, casting all sorts of different spells. One of the spells created a poisonous mist, which immediately created an explosion.

It seems like the poison mist had contained flammable gas.

Of course, the holy sword hadn’t been affected by the explosion whatsoever.

The demons also hadn’t been hurt much by the explosion in the air, but its sudden roar and piercing light intensified their fear.

[273]

This was the headquarters where quite a few demons of the Kraagor group resided, but the holy sword took care of them all while playing with some here and there.

While coming to their headquarters, I had a chance to eavesdrop about the Kraagor group’s wrongdoings from the demons that were a part of the group.

However, at least at this very moment, the enemy demons looked pitiful.

I looked at the crazily radiant holy sword.

It seems like he’s finished cleaning up.

He had taken care of all the demons that could be called enemies.

It was quite a large room, and each demon was extremely powerful and skilled.

However, they weren't very dangerous.

If they were at the level where they were single-handedly annihilated by the holy sword, which simply loved killing people, there would've been no real danger if I had intervened myself.

I'm sure of it.

This wasn't dangerous for me.

I had already become a lot stronger, but I wasn't satisfied with that because I wanted to grow even further.

I'm confident.

Regardless of what difficulties show up along the road, I'm confident that I won't die in vain.

As I thought, it doesn't make sense for me to give up subjectivity just because of an increased risk of danger.

Using any means necessary and throwing away the last shreds of your morality was the way for the weak to survive.

I also did so.

I had sliced my arms and legs with a dagger, and had placed my hand into a bonfire.

For faster growth, I had to overtax my body, and my mind.

When I had first met Idy, who had been stronger than me, I took advantage of her kindness and attacked her.

When I had killed the goblins on the 4th floor, I had killed them all, regardless of whether they were injured or had surrendered.

Even while assuming that they were a conscripted militia.

Back then, that was correct.

If I hadn't done so, I would've been the one to die.

However, is that still true?

It's certainly not.

I'm currently standing in the position of the strong.

I'm this relaxed right now, so I didn't need to be unnecessarily cruel or meek.

I didn't really need to kill all the enemies who weren't my enemies, and frantically gather the tokens.

So long as it's not a situation where I don't have enough tokens, and I have no choice but to kill them.

Of course, the risk of danger will increase since I'm limiting my means.

However, I'm in the middle of wishing that the difficulty of the current stage was harder.

I actually welcome that increased risk of danger.

Someday, I'll definitely come face-to-face with something that I can't handle.

Therefore, even if I were to drop down to the position of a weakling, I'll overcome that obstacle no matter what.

That's what this strength and my effort is for: that time.

I'll protect what I must at that time, and it's a strength that will let me think 'I was right.'

That's what this stage clear is for.

That's what I thought, and pledged again.

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. The bells of ruin are ringing out! Warrior, the purification ritual ended with a blessing from the sky.]

The holy sword said, as he flew in front of me, blood dripping from his blade.

There were definitely demons nearby that weren't dead, who were crying out and closely lined up.

I had been told about the wickedness of the Kraggor group, and those demons who performed such wicked deeds were strewn all over the place and dying.

The line of my morality may seem extremely deep underground, but it's probably better than not having one.

I'll just keep doing what I've been doing.

After setting aside my concerns, I was refreshed.

[The God of Devotion feels sorry for someone.]

[The God of Adventure is satisfied somehow.]

[The God of Slowness is extremely happy.]

* * *

"I-I'm not connected with this place. I-I was dragged here against my will. It's the truth. Please believe me."

"I know. I already know."

I watched the trembling demon as I cleaned the demon blood off the holy sword.

If I could, I would've just sheathed the holy sword, but it would smell if I did that.

“I-It's the truth. It really is the truth.”

I thought about what I could do to make the trembling demon, who was pleading his innocence, understand that I trusted him.

There weren't any suitable methods that came to mind.

There were a few demons inside the Kraagor group headquarters that weren't related to the group.

Of course, those demons were all unconscious; the only demon who had regained consciousness was right before my eyes.

“D-Do you want a token by any chance?”

Perhaps he thought that I wanted something else since I was silent.

Honestly, I want information more than tokens.

There were a few demons that were unrelated to the group within the Kraggor group rooms.

I wanted to know the reason that the Kraagor group would capture other demons and put them in the rooms, even though it would take some of their space.

“Ahem... This is the only token I have. Please be merciful...”

When I saw the demon suddenly dig deep into his pants, and take out a token, I hurriedly took a step back.

Why were you hiding it in such a dirty place?

This is driving me nuts.

I didn't even have a clue as to where he had hidden the stone piece, when he didn't have any pockets...

No, I can guess where he hid it.

The angle at which his wrist and elbow were bent gave away the location of his hands in his pants.

The demon seemed a bit tormented as he retrieved the token, and his scream had a bit of pain mixed in.

Also, that demon was a man.

I felt disgusted.

I didn't want to touch a token that smells like shit.

Chapter 177

Tutorial 31st floor (4)

The demon that thrust the smelly tokens towards me was an old demon named Ma HaPa.

“I don’t need it. Put it back.”

“Yes, Yes.”

I turned my sight away from MaHaPa who was struggling to put the tokens back in his pants and groaning.

I couldn’t take the embarrassment and disgustingness.

The streets were littered with dead demons strewn about like trash.

The demons with ferocity and strength made me think this was really hell.

The perpetrator that made this hell was drunk from the blood and singing.

I couldn’t understand the words.

It was because the Babel Translation Skill couldn’t translate it, or because the words didn’t mean anything.

“Abubu.”

[It’s Aubutz, Hero!]

I gripped the handle of the holy sword who flew towards me like a dog to its master.

The handle was sticky from the blood of demons.

I didn't feel any other displeasure.

The holy sword was the one that massacred the demons, but the one wielding it was me.

"Cool off your head, it was too much."

I opened the inventory, and threw the holy sword carelessly into the inventory.

The holy sword pleaded and screamed as it was being thrown in, but I ignored it.

"Serezia, do you know anything about the god of Sky?"

[Yes. The religion of the Empire was the god of the sky, so I know a little.]

Serezia answered.

It was unexpected

Recently Serezia said little.

Even before she wouldn't say a lot, but was the type to engage in conversation and only be satisfied after saying what she wanted to when she wanted to say it.

But recently, she wouldn't take part in the conversations and would ignore everything as though lost in thought.

I asked without expecting much, but thankfully she answered this time.

"Is the god of the Sky an evil god?"

[The god isn't an evil god. More of a neutral god. I shouldn't comment

on gods, but the God of the Sky isn't one that cares about good or evil. The god cares more about position.]

A god that cares about position.

From the name Sky, does the God of the Sky want to rule over everything?

The reason God of the Sky bestowed the Holy Sword to the Emperor was to punish his arrogance...

The Evil King in the 26th floor stage was an arrogant being looking down on the demons that summoned his as less than pests.

Enough for the God of the Sky to hand the holy sword to the Hero and subdue him.

It was a plausible assumption.

It also gave a link to why the Holy Sword blessed by the God of the Sky was overtly ruthless and longed for the blood of others.

The fear stemming from the extreme violent and ruthlessness is the most efficient way to suppress and stand above others.

I told Serezia my thoughts.

[You're probably not wrong. The interpretation of gods are different for each theologian, and this kind of generalization would make the believers hostile, so you should take care not to say it in front of others.]

While I conversed with Serezia about the God of the Sky, Ma HaPa had put away the tokens somewhere and spoke to him.

"I, If... you don't need the tokens, w, what do you require..."

What could I need from this poor trembling demon?

Information.

“I have something to ask.”

I had one question from passing through various rooms.

The demons capable of answering were too scared to answer the question and all of them refused to answer.

Rather than answer my question, they chose to faint or begged for mercy.

“Coming through the Kragor group’s rooms, I saw a few demons being kept captive.”

Just like the demon Ma Hapa before my eyes.

“From what I know, the rooms are essential for survival, and the rooms are highly valuable. And to keep someone captive in the rooms with limited space is a waste. It’s better to exile or kill them. But the rooms I passed through always had a few demons kept captive.”

As I progressed, Ma Hapa’s faced turned dark.

It was the same face I saw every time I asked this question.

“What’s the reason you were kept captive in this room?”

As I expected MaHaPa started showing signs of extreme anxiety and was flustered.

I’d have normally given up at this point, but I wanted to hear the answer this time.

It took quite some time to calm MaHaPa down.

After promising multiple times not to turn MaHaPa, I could calm him down.

And I also got the answer to my question.

The answer wasn't as serious as I thought.

"So they use living demons to store the tokens."

"Yes... When the group needs to store tokens, they take demons without any connections like me and force us to take in the tokens. For when they need the tokens."

The acquired tokens couldn't be retrieved until the demons that acquired them die.

When they need the tokens, they kill the captive demons and take out the tokens.

They're basically livestock.

No, maybe worse.

Tokens are hard to keep because of their characteristic and importance.

Because of them being traded at a high value, and as you can leave the space as soon as you gather one thousand, it's easy to decide to steal them.

If the head demon of the group chose to keep them himself, it was cause enough for them to be the target of skirmishes and assassinations.

As he would be the top target for those that want the tokens.

To deal with these problems, they stored the group's tokens in a few select demons while keeping them captive and under surveillance.

"from what I hear, tokens are traded one at a time mostly. Where do they use the large number of tokens?"

I asked wondering if they were used for business transactions or diplomacy.

“S,Sometimes... there are demons that do not wish to stay in the 1st preliminaries, and wish to go up.”

MaHaPa glanced at me while he talked.

Yeah, like me.

“Those demons usually massacre every demon they see from the starting point. Then the group contacts them, and gives them a massive number of tokens and make them leave the 1st preliminary area.”

It's easier to send off those who disturb the ecosystem huh.

Most of my curiosities were solved.

One thing was left.

Then how many tokens did this demon named MaHaPa have?

This was probably the reason why the demons who heard my question couldn't answer my question and trembled.

To their eyes, I was someone who massacred every demon I saw for tokens, so they couldn't answer my question.

Fearing that I would kill them for tokens as soon as they answered.

Instead of asking MaHaPa how many tokens he had, I asked him to write down everything he knew on the map.

After looking over what MaHaPa told me, I started on my way.

As I was about to leave, MaHaPa grabbed me.

“H,Hey...”

No idea what it is, but he probably has a request.

Since he gave me a lot of information, I thought I would be ok to listen to his request.

“Talk. What is it?”

“C, Could you protect... us?”

MaHaPa pointed towards the demons knocked out cold, and himself and answered.

“Krago Group is gone, but once the other groups learn of us, they’ll try and take us. Please... help us...”

To sum it up he wanted protection.

I thought about it but shook my head.

“Sorry. That’s a bit much.”

Too cumbersome.

After shaking off MaHaPa, I started walking out the room.

The new destination was the base of the Olphon Group.

Olphon group was the one ruling this domain.

The other groups are all subordinate alliance groups, so the Olphon group for sure the largest group in the 1st round preliminaries.

[Hero.]

Suddenly Serezia called me.

“Yeah. Why.”

[I would like to tell you something of concern.]

“What is it.”

Something of concern. Could it be something dangerous that I hadn't thought it.

But Serezia's concern was something completely unexpected.

[Soon, I might not be able to talk at all.]

Soon, I was able to understand her words.

Instead of saying less, soon she would be unable to talk at all.

But I couldn't understand the reason.

[I don't know for sure myself. My self-consciousness is becoming faint. The self-awareness as your sword is becoming larger than my self-awareness as Serezia. my consciousness is becoming slow and everything besides combat is becoming faint. Even when I talk, I'm having trouble concentrating on topics other than combat.]

What is this.

[As if I were becoming a rock or a tree. No, I should say like becoming a sword. I'm actually sword right now right?]

Serezia didn't say anything after that.

I called her several times, but no answer.

I stopped from disconcertion.

I tried to understand her words, but eventually pulled out the holy sword from the inventory. The holy sword muttered about the act of shoving him in the inventory, but said this after hearing what Serezia had said.

[Don't think too much about it. It's the process of becoming a sword. Isn't Serezia a sword not?]

“No, you're a sword. You talk fine.”

[I'm an Ego Sword. Whereas Serezia was turned into a sword upon her death. There's a difference.]

“Then is she never going to be able to speak or know who she is?”

[Well. Wouldn't it depend on her? If Serezia wants to keep her human mind, she could become like me. She would probably be able to give advice on combat and answer simple questions. But Serezia seems satisfied with being a sword right? That's a little worrying.]

For me, it was a bit ridiculous.

Dumbfounded and aghast.

Once a human possess a sword, they lose their self-awareness and become a sword?

Even for Serezia who said she wished she was born a sword, that was weird.

[It's not completely absurd. Most of the souls made to possess objects by Dark Magicians go through this process.]

“How does it turn out usually?”

[Usually. Their consciousness crumples, and they lose their self. As they become stabilized, they become captivated by the words their enchanter whispers to them and long after that for eternity. Most magical swords and cursed rings are produced this way.]

Hearing the creation of magical swords from a magical sword helped me understand quickly.

So that's how it's done.

I hope Serezia doesn't become like Aubu.

I'm worried.

Once I clear this stage, let's get some advice from KiriKiri.

Personally, I'm attached to Serezia.

She was similar to me in many ways.

From her thought process to preference and principle.

The times spent with her were comfortable and dear.

I wondered if I would be able to meet someone so similar to be in the future.

But there were differences between me and her.

Serezia adjusted herself to the fate of becoming someone's sword, and I was pleased.

That was the difference.

If I were in the same circumstance as her, would I be able to accept that fate?

If it came to it, I would be a cursed sword.

A sword rebelling and trying to kill its owner.

Thinking about it, the situation now wasn't that different.

As I thought about it, its situation was amusing.

I felt as though me, Serezia, and the holy swords were three swords. Each pursuing their own will.

Instead of belittling myself, I tried to have more constructive thoughts.

I didn't want to become a tool of gods.

Even if I didn't know what they wanted from me or would request from me.

So, I placed importance on my goal and will.

But tied to my side were two swords with their own agendas.

If more than just will was required to overcome becoming a tool.

If having my own will wasn't enough to prove I wasn't a tool.

What more do I need to achieve?

A few answers came up.

I wasn't sure if they were all correct, there were probably also many answers that I haven't thought of.

But if I fulfill them one by one, I would be able to achieve all the answers.

That's what I thought.

As I was about to finish organizing my thoughts and about to move, I felt a large wave of magical energy.

A magical circle appeared on nearby ground.

The air above the ground started to warp, and soon a demon appeared.

From having used it with Serezia early, I quickly recognized what it was.

It was a teleportation circle.

As the shaking mana calmed, a shadow appeared above the circle.

It was a demon.

A strong ferocious force, an enormous and ominous evil magic.

It was the first demon-like demon I've met since coming here.

The complex thoughts from earlier melted away.

I waited for the demon to finish.

A moment later, the demon, instead of lunging at me and using magic, it opened its mouth.

“You’ve finally stopped. Olphon would like to see you. You’ll need to come with me, newbie.”

Chapter 178

Tutorial 31st Floor (5)

He who introduced himself as the Olphol group devil reactivated the magic circle.

The destination he came from.

[Just kill him.]

I asked the holy play the reason.

Why?

[Just cause.]

This guy probably needed more probation.

Although it didn't seem right to put him in the inventory right away.

Instead, I decided to lock him in the inventory for a good one or two months.

In time, the devil completed the activation and gestured to me.

“Come and stand on the circle. Newbie.”

What reason was there to hesitate when they wanted to summon me to their base.

I walked to the circle and stood on it.

[It might be a trap, hero. What are you going to do it isn't a teleportation circle.]

It's a teleportation circle.

[How can you be sure?]

I've rode it before. Twice.

[Normally you can't confirm the type of the circle by riding it twice. What are you going to do if it doesn't head to their base and somewhere dangerous.]

It's fine. If it is, then I can cancel the teleportation. If I do, it'll send me back to this place.

[...is that possible?]

It was.

I tried it the first time I rode the magic circle with Serezia.

Because of that, the sickness that overcame Serezia from activating the circle three times in a row was tremendous.

Back then, Serezia acted as though there was nothing wrong with the magic circle.

Not knowing it was me that caused the issues with the circle.

The demon spoke before he activated the circle.

“Newbie, I'm saying this for your own good, but listen closely. Do not be rash in front of Olfon. It's not as though there were demons who tried their hand at the Demon King's seat, and it wasn't a small number that was brought forth before Olphon. There will be dire consequences if you show arrogance believing in your magics.”

“What kind of consequences?”

“Well. Who knows, but where you'll be headed is down instead of up.”

What the fuck does that mean.

Is it some sort of ambiguous expression.

“Newbie, your goal is probably to challenge for the seat of Demon King.”

“If you want, you could put it that way.”

“The one you will meet now has already been on the Demon King throne.”

My questions weren't fully answered yet, but the demon started the magic circle.

The space in front of my eyes warped.

The space shook here and there and at a certain point, it started to rip with a certain starting point in the air.

Like a paper ripping, the space ripped.

Past the ripped space, I saw another space.

From the crazy amount of mana flowing out, I knew it was the place Olphon was at.

[It's not a teleport circle?]

“...It's possible.”

“What is.”

The demon responded to my embarrassed soliloquy to the holy sword's words.

“No. It's nothing.”

[Hero. Hero? That's not a teleport circle? It's a dimension gate? Didn't you say you knew from just seeing the magic circle? Wow, world. I wouldn't know in my dreams. That the all-knowing hero would make a mistake like this. Hah, if you live for a few centuries things like this happen after all. Fu. Fu. Fu. Fu.]

Leave it at that.

[Eebebebe.]

I promised to find a silence enchantment scroll after I clear this floor.

And passed through the gate with the demon beside me.

Once I passed the gap in space, the ripped space healed itself.

It looks like a great high-level magic.

How long would it take me to learn that.

My thirst for magic is continuing to become larger.

It was then, a voice from a distance in front of me could be heard.

It was the words of the demon sitting at the head of the table in this banquet-like hall.

Numerous demons were filling the space.

Unusually, there was no difference in height of the seats the demons were sitting on.

89 demons exactly.

Each one had a strength that would be hard to find elsewhere.

But from the presence of the demon at the head of the table made everyone else seem small.

“Welcome, newbie.”

It was monotonous and soft.

The voice wasn't loud either.

Rather, it was quiet.

But the strength carried by the voice, the mana gave it that presence.

The demon talking to me was sitting at the same level as me, but his presence felt as though it was above my head and also behind me.

“You have a cute magic sword.”

“Didn't your mother tell you that it's not good manners to listen in on other people's conversations?”

The mood in the banquet hall completely changed at my words.

It went past intimidating and became outright bloody.

That's no good for banquets.

It felt as though I made a mistake in ruining the mood.

“You know nothing about me.”

‘Was there a reason I had to?’

The mood started to attack my body outright.

The sense of the mood ready to cut.

If it was a normal human, they would've actually been cut to pieces and died.

“I was born in the third class, in the depths of despair. I have no

mother and father. I was born alone, existed alone, and prove myself.”

Prove oneself by existing alone.

Would that be enough to prove oneself as a sentient being.

Self-respect is just self-respect.

There was something more important.

The demon in front of my eyes was born with an advantage from birth.

“So that means you’re immune to mom-jokes. That’s good for you, mate.”

Kwang!

The mood exploded.

The demons exuded intimidating force at the same time, and from that clash came an explosion.

I thought to myself as my hair was flying back in the wind from the explosion.

It wasn’t something I should be saying when I blew up the 30th floor from experimenting, but to cause an explosion by not being able to control that.

What idiots.

The demons were screaming and denouncing something about me.

Unfortunately, I couldn’t understand the words.

Whether it was colloquial that demons here used, or ancient words of the demon race, but it didn’t translate well.

But thankfully I could guess at what it meant.

After some time went by, sitting at the head of the table, Olphon opened his mouth again.

Olphon's face didn't seem that angry.

The only thing I could fathom was weariness.

"From the report, I thought a great magician appeared. But what really appeared was an idiot with a rare magic sword. Talk, newbie. What fuels your stupidity?"

Magician.

He must've thought I was a battle magician controlling the sword through magic.

Then once he realized the ability was fully from the holy sword, been disappointed.

And the magic and strength he can feel from me wouldn't be enough to satisfy him.

That's always the problem with these idiots.

"Out of those that I've called here, there were many who truly wished to challenge the Demon King. There actually was one that was able to challenge the Demon King. But what are you. I have no idea what you are thinking by coming here. What is your purpose in coming here. Do you wish to die, or are you just raving with madness."

What I want.

Well.

"For now, it's taking care of the Demon King."

"Your jokes are no longer funny. It's impossible for you to kill the

Demon King. It's true for anyone else for that matter."

"impossible to kill the Demon King?"

"Yes."

Impossible to kill the Demon King.

Would the Demon King be immortal or a mind-form or that sort of thing.

I asked Olphon who was strangely good at describing things.

"Just like the words, it's impossible to kill the Demon King."

What kind of stupid answer is that.

"The current Demon King is the strongest of all time. That is true. I can assure you. Before he ceases to exist, there will be no demon who can trump him and take the throne of Demon King."

"A stupid answer till the end."

"Why do you think so?"

Why do I think so?

I'm calling a stupid answer stupid, what else can I call it.

"You all are always like this. You think that's everything probably because you're born with unimaginable strength and power."

"...What does that mean?"

"You have no interest in figuring out how to use that power better, and just ponder how to achieve more power. And."

"And?"

“You overtly trust the absolute amount of power.”

The strength of the demons here surpasses mine.

It wouldn't be comparable even if 89 Lee HoJae's were here to fight the 89 demons.

89 Lee HoJae's wouldn't be enough to surpass that one Olphon.

That sort of glaring difference.

But.

I'm already certain.

I'm the absolutely the strongest one here.

The position isn't made by my muscles and mana.

It wasn't from the experience of swordsmanship and shield techniques either.

It also wasn't the talent and sense I had.

What could you see as the standard for strength when those with the strength by which one wave of the hand fells the sky, and rips the earth.

To standardize it through the absolute quantity of mana was a stupid thing to do.

From my perspective, an objective standard should be victory.

A higher win rate means more strength.

The strong doesn't win, the victorious is strong.

As I've said multiple times, I'm unwaveringly the strongest here, and

the probability that I'll beat the demons there surpass half.

“It seems you've really come here to die.”

As I gathered my spirit, Olphon said upon noticing.

He was that nonchalant even though I'm explicitly preparing for battle.

He doesn't know how to utilize this strength, and have never learned how to see true strength because he's been drunk on his own strength.

He couldn't even become the target of my Opponent Designation skill.

Just prey with bulky amounts of strength ready to be hunted.

How long will they disappoint me.

“Let me ask one last thing.”

Demons are hurt by explosions caused by magic.

Obviously, they're not hurt by explosions caused by their own.

Just like a moment ago.

But they were grievously wounded by the explosion made by the holy sword and me.

Physically and mentally.

It's probably because of the Holy energy in our mana.

The holy energy exploded in every direction along with the explosion and attacked them.

I had prepared something nice for the explosion.

Before I entered the 31st floor, I made a sphere of aura.

I had slowly rotated and maintained that.

Even this moment.

I added a sphere to that every day.

There were three spheres rotating above my head.

“What is it that you wanted to ask before your death?”

I smirked at Olphon’s still nonchalant voice.

“Are you used to pain?”

I’m fucking used to it.

At the same time as my words ended, the transparent spheres lit up in white flames.

Just before the spheres rotating at high speed started to create friction and explode, I gave up confining it.

[The God of Light is excited!]

And I lunged at the demons.

Boom!

From the strong explosion behind my back, my body was covered thoroughly in the impact.

I persevered.

I saved my blink.

Instead, I used Talalia’s wings and Fortitude.

The two skills raised by stats relative to the opponent's strength.

The demons couldn't gather their senses amidst the continuing explosions.

The strong light and sounds quashed their sight and hearing.

The holy energy mixed with mana pouring down upon them was no different from white phosphorous shells.

I took out the soul sword on my side.

Meanwhile, the magic initiated by demons that came to their sense blocked my path.

Shield, Barrier, Trap, Hallucination, the magic that binds my legs, and attack magics made to intercept filled vision in disarray.

Just like a barrage game.

I'm insanely good at this.

[Hero, can I join in? Please, Please!]

"Take care of the little ones! The ones in the middle are all mine!"

The holy sword went around the magic and towards the demons in the corners.

Before I lose my pretty to the holy sword, I need to make it past these magics.

Rather than taking a step backwards away from the magic flying towards me, I ran forward.

Chapter 179

Tutorial 31st Floor (6)

The festival of various magics in front of me.

The key is breaking past this and doing the most damage to the demons in front of me.

The holy sword went around the volley of magic and will take the small fry off to the side, so I just need to deal with the demons in the middle.

The main perpetrator of these magics and also those that are recovering the quickest from the effects of the explosion.

I swung the soul sword filled to the brim with aura and I cleared up a fireball coming towards me.

Before the fireball lapsed, it exploded as if it were natural.

As I was expecting it, I lowered my upper body to evade it and kept on running.

It wasn't just one or two magic spells that were flying at me.

There were tens just in my view.

There would be magic hidden behind other magic, and those that were hidden through special means from sight.

It's been a while.

Memories of the 1st and 2nd floor popped up.

I really thought I was going to die then.

Obviously, there is a vast difference between the me then and now.

But there's also a vast difference between the arrows from then and the magic missiles here.

If I'm hit properly, I'm definitely dead.

If I'm hit, I need to make sure it just grazes me, and sacrifice the parts I don't need to minimize damage.

I also have a constraint that I need to reach the demons while dodging the magics.

I raised my focus.

It wasn't as much as the God's Power of Time Confinement which was closer to time freezing, but I can do something similar with just my concentration all the time.

I located and counted each magic that I could see within the slow moving world.

And I calculated the velocity and course of those magics.

If there was one good takeaway, these magics were unfolded by the demons taken by surprise.

I won't run into death disguised as life while making my way through the cracks between the magic spells.

I didn't think they would be able to create a trap on a united front during that short time.

It wasn't an underestimation of their intelligence.

It was an assessment of the attitude they showed towards me before this battle.

And I trust my judgement.

As soon as I stopped concentrating, the magics flew towards me.

I crouched and lunged forward.

The magics flew dangerously close to my body.

Out of them, the sharp ice spear grazed my arm, but I was fine.

It was bearable.

The next moment, while I was charging at the enemies, I used blink for a step forward.

It was just one step, but the effect was outstanding.

While moving at high speed, using blink made me suddenly stop in place.

In front of me where a web of magic without any sort of gap.

But the magics didn't reach my body and went off in a separate direction.

This was the one spot that magic wouldn't touch my body with just enough space for this moment.

In barrage games, the key is to find these points and get to them safely.

I made my way forward again.

The wall of magic evaporated slowly, and a gap appeared.

This is the hard part.

I was already halfway towards the demons from where I began.

Even now, the demons were spewing magic.

The barrage would be thicker as I get closer.

There was a safe route.

But that was a longer path.

If there is a right path, there is a need to take it no matter how dangerous and painful.

A magic that seemed to be of the wind-type was flying towards me at high speed.

To be specific, there was nothing else besides the wind magic flying towards me from the front.

Everything else was aiming towards my escape routes.

If I can force myself through the wind magic, it's an open road.

Not that it's easy.

I don't know which damn demon cast that magic, but that's a super high-level magic.

The wind blades were rotating from the magic core in the middle.

It's basically a drill with blades of wind.

But I need to break through it.

If I go around, it would take too long.

I would be stumbling back, making the path here completely moot.

So, I need to break it.

Using a proper technique is not possible.

I don't have the minimal amount of time to initiate a technique.

Just before, I was twisting my body with abrupt acceleration and abrupt breaks to make it forward.

It wouldn't make sense to overwork my magic circuit.

My position is awkward.

I can't be sure I'll be able to muster the strength.

Just as I've evaded the magic missiles, I need to dodge again after breaking through this.

I need to prepare for that.

And after that as well.

There's only one way.

[Iron Wall]

[Talalia's Wings]

I wrapped my body in Talalia's wings and Iron Wall which raises the defense of my body temporarily.

I haven't don't this in a while.

I thought it was something that I wouldn't have to use again.

I curled my body so that Talalia's Wings would cover it completely.

I used my arms to cover my chest and head, and legs for my midsection.

And

[Blink]

I used blink to collide straight into the wind magic.

There was no chance of winning colliding against the wind blades.

I slammed against the magic core in the middle with my body.

Right after the collision, there was an explosive sound and shockwave, but I couldn't feel anything besides a thud.

I didn't hear or feel anything.

My consciousness shook.

My sight was uneven as though I were drunk, and my hearing was completely dead.

My sense of balance was in danger as well.

I didn't have a way to know how much damage I took.

But I stood on the ground, and there was a wide-open path in front of me where the extinguished wind magic was.

I ran along the path.

I couldn't recover the temporarily paralyzed senses.

Hearing, midsection, right shoulder, under the left knee, all of the magic circuit and the ones I couldn't verify weren't able to send me information.

The few senses left were whispering untruthful information to me.

The wavering vision and sense of balance.

I felt as though I would end up rolling on the ground from a wrong step.

It would be normal for anyone to lose control of their body and collapse on the ground.

Even ones stronger than me, of higher level, better swordsmanship, and with multiple various skills.

Nobody can run straight in this situation.

But I can.

Because I'm used to it.

I've been through the pain and chaos multiple times.

And at the end of the advance, I prepared the next step.

I closed a vast amount of distance between the demons and me.

The things blocking my path weren't magic missiles.

Shields, barriers and trap magics.

I had no intention of breaching each and every one.

I didn't have the skill.

I'll just explode everything.

The demons behind the magic, as a set.

I made a diagonal slash with the soul sword while keeping my running pace.

What does it matter if my body isn't normal, or if I can't feel the mana along the magic circuit.

The trained swordsman should know how to make a precise slash with their eyes closed.

I can also, without being able to feel anything from the magic circuit, can finish my skills.

“Die in flames you shits!”

Light Blade (光剣) , 2nd form – Slash.

[The God of Light is Cheering!]

The maximum force I could output unfolded right in front of the demons.

Even if they made magic shields and barriers, I definitely poured enough destructive power to surpass it.

The space filled with ominous black and red was filled with a white flash I created.

The light blade’s 2nd form, slash.

It looks simple, but once you get into the details it’s not a simple technique.

The light blade’s stab creates light and heat through the friction of aura and sends the explosive energy along with the one-point stab towards my front.

And the slash is a continuous stream of energy.

Unlike the stab which creates a flash and explosion for one moment, the slash needs the energy to be maintained from start to end.

The line, not a point, radiates a larger area with energy.

It spreads it over a larger area, but because it makes use of the fast blade movement and holds the energy instead of exploding it over a

specified amount of time, the impact becomes greater.

If you hear until here, it's a magnificent technique.

It's more amazing when you use it yourself.

It explains its own might when you look at how it sent Olphon and the demons besides him to hell equally.

Just that the difficulty of employment is too high.

It's hard enough holding the energy at its zenith, but you also have to swing it.

In the process, you have to govern the energy from going wild when it is amplified.

You also can't forget to send it forward while you're holding the energy.

And making sure it all heads forward while the aura particles go every which way.

It's an insane difficulty.

But no matter what happened, I succeeded again this time.

The result was the giant craters and the tens of thousands of tokens to prove it.

The tokens Olphon and the demons under him have gathered.

From seeing the mountains of tokens, you could fathom how many demons they exploited and killed.

Good for me.

Thanks to that, I don't have to go around collecting, and can just gather the tokens I need here.

[You have cleared Tutorial, Hell Difficulty 31st floor.]

[All status ailments and injuries will be healed.]

[You have gained 6000 points for clear rewards.]

[You have gained 6000 Points for first clear rewards.]

[There are multiple Gods showing interest. Gained 7200 Points.]

[There are multiple Gods showing negative reception. Minus 1300 Points.]

[All of the Gods in the The Hundred God Temple are observing you.]

[A small number of Gods wish to gift you a special skill instead of giving you extra rewards.]

[Current Vote Poll: Agreement 1 vote. Disagreement 0 vote.]

[You have acquired Aura Mastery Lv.3.]

[Aura Master lv2. has been integrated into Aura Masters Lv.3.]

The clear message appeared.

After finishing the battle, while I was gathering the tokens the dead Olphon and demons dropped into my pocket's, the message suddenly appeared.

The travel portal appeared beneath my feet.

I first checked the extra rewards.

It's been a while since I've received a skill as an extra reward.

It was unexpected since I've been getting points or useless items of late.

Aura Mastery Lv.3

The magic circuit skill had turned into Aura Master Lv.1 after surpassing skill level of 30.

Not so long ago, I had raised Aura Master skill to level 2.

And I've received the level 3 this time as a gift.

...to be gifted a skill just one level higher.

The fuck is this.

Stingy.

If you're gonna gift, gift big.

The vote results for extra rewards were one yes and zero nos.

So, put it in another way, one god wanted to gift an extra reward, and they agreed to it themselves.

And since nobody disagreed, it passed.

Who was that, the agreement?

[The God of Light announces it was him!]

It was the God of Light.

I've gotten an offer to become the apostle of the God of Light after clearing the 26th floor.

I didn't know much about the God of Light, so I waited to hear KiriKiri's advice before making a decision.

[The God of Light announces it was him!]

It seems that he wanted to appeal himself because of that, and gifted the skill as an extra reward.

If he's gonna gift, why not go big and gift a God Power.

[The God of Light announces it was him!]

Argh, I got it. I KNOW.

I saw it. I SAW THE MESSAGE!

Stop it!

[The God of Light announces it was him!]

[The God of Light announces it was him!]

[The God of Adventure is displeased.]

Chapter 180

Tutorial 32nd Floor

[The God of Light announces it was him!]

...

...Is it over?

I wasn't sure, so I decided to wait a moment.

...

Hmm...

Seems to be over.

The messages announcing that the Aura Mastery skill was gifted by the God of Light himself finally stopped.

The continuously ongoing messages indirectly reflected the God of Light's personality.

It wasn't a very loveable personality.

Since the bombardment of messages finally stopped, I continued with my thoughts.

The 31st floor stage was cleared.

I've gathered 1,000 tokens, and by making it through the preliminaries, I've completed the clear conditions.

But I haven't seen the so-called strongest Demon King anywhere.

It was unsatisfying to just take the portal.

“Abubu.”

[It's Ahoubuch. Hero.]

“Can you go wake the demons dying over there so I can ask them some questions?”

Aubutz squealed happily and flew toward the demons.

Holy sword... no, the cursed sword Aubutz likes to keep his enemies just at the tip of death.

He hasn't clarified, but it's probably because he wants to relish the warm blood.

Blood goes cold once they're dead.

So he lets the enemies slowly die of hemorrhaging.

If possible, I intend to fix that bad taste as soon as I have the chance, but for now, it was rather helpful.

None of the demons I've dealt with were alive.

I walked over to the holy sword who was applying healing magic to the dying demons and waking the unconscious

demons with various magics.

I could hear the grief-stricken cries with each step I made.

[Hero! It's all set. Ask whatever you want!]

I pointed out it was an overdone setup and proceeded to question the demons.

“So, if you collect a thousand tokens, you automatically get summoned to the 2nd preliminary area?”

“Yes. Yes. It is so.”

The demon answering my questions was fortunately the same demon that brought me here through gate magic.

He had quite the different attitude from his otherwise pompous image he’s been cultivating, but I couldn’t embarrass him by pointing that out.

Who could keep their calm when there was a cursed sword piercing their left shoulder and humming along to the beat of their heart?

I carefully took out the crazy cursed sword from the demon’s shoulder.

[Uahuaahhkh. Hero! It was perfect! It was a perfect moment! The moments when his heartbeat slowed little by little.]

I casually tossed the crazy sword spewing insanity into the inventory.

Based on the demon’s explanation, you have to pass through multiple gates to challenge the Demon King.

And to go onto the next stage, you must follow the summoning circle that appears after you collect the tokens.

Obviously, there wasn’t a summoning circle in front of my eyes that would lead me to the next stage.

It seemed like this stage ended here.

I ignored the fleeing demon that dashed as soon as I shifted my gaze away, and stepped atop the portal.

I stepped out of the black and red colorways of the space covered slathered in demon blood and into the bright green field.

The field was green like always, and the bunny was active as always.

“Hi! Been a while! It’s been a while!”

“Yeah, it’s been a while.”

“Then, cake for commemoration!”

The last bit came as naturally as a greeting.

But the expression on Kiri Kiri’s face said otherwise.

Her pursed lips tremored, and the tip of her nose wrinkled busily.

The eyes twinkled with abnormal desire, and I could hear the vigorous sound of nose breathing.

I was certainly later than normal because I had to pass through the residence area of the 30th floor.

Even so, it hadn’t been more than a few days; KiriKiri probably intended to use it as a reason to greet with a long time no see.

To respond to her rather simple wits, I bought a cake.

“So, the next floor is the 2nd preliminary?”

“Yup.”

I left KiriKiri alone, who was completely absorbed in the cake, and thought to myself.

The second area of the gathering of Demon King candidates was the 32nd floor.

Then it means I’ll eventually be able to challenge the Demon King.

If I thought about it positively, it would be so.

If I think about it negatively...

“It might be too easy. If I make it higher, there won’t be another like Olphon right?”

“Nope.”

It was so.

First of all, there was no reason to meet Olphon on the 31st floor and take care of him.

It’s much easier to massacre demons on the outskirts and gather 1,000 tokens that way.

In addition, if you get called before Olphon, you could gain his acknowledgement and proceed onto the next area.

Olphon said that there were demons like himself.

To clear the 31st floor, try not to be noticed by Olphon’s underlings.

And once discovered, avoid being summoned.

And once summoned, earn his acknowledgement.

This would be enough for the strategy to clear the 31st floor.

I took out a notepad from the space pocket and wrote it down.

I need to show this to Lee Hyungjin later.

Lee Hyungjin has been recently progressing through the latter half of the 9th floor.

The reports he sent me and the speed by which he was progressing through the level was enough to make me yawn, but I placed great significance on him reaching the end of the 9th floor alive.

Once he clears the 11th floor, it'll be a continuous stream of solo stages.

The stages afterwards would be a breeze to pass through.

“KiriKiri.”

I called KiriKiri who had finished the cake and was proceeding to lick the plate.

“Hmm? Yeah!”

Based on Kiri Kiri's expression peering at me from the side of the plate, it seems as though she expected me to buy her another cake.

Sorry, but I just had something I needed to ask.

“Uhh... that.”

“Yeah, Seregia.”

KiriKiri can read my mind and watch over my performance on the stages.

So, I don't need to go on and on with explaining my frustration and questions.

“The holy sword is correct.”

“So how does it end?”

“She probably becomes a sword. A sword with a clear volition.”

“Shouldn't you see Seregia as a living sword right now too?”

Kiri Kiri whipped her head side to side and explained.

“No, that's not what living swords are. And not all swords with a will

are living swords.”

“Then?”

Kiri Kiri put down her plate.

From her rolling her eyes and biding her time, it looks as though she was organizing her thoughts.

Because she knows that this is important to me, Kiri Kiri makes sure that I am able to understand her words by choosing her vocabulary carefully. I’m always grateful for her considerations.

“Houuujaee probably doesn’t know from just using normal swords, but there are notable swords that possess will every now and then.”

“Different from living swords?”

“Yup. Not like talking and using magic through intellect. Just nesting a willpower into the sword. And the will of the sword synchronizes with the owner and shows its effects that way.”

“What kind of effect?”

“Thaaat... isn’t something that’s set in stone. It’s something swordsmen can infer from using the swords themselves.”

Now it was apparent that Kiri Kiri wasn’t being careful; she just didn’t know much about the subject.

You can infer from using swords...

“The soul inside the soul sword matches your propensity, possessed the sword while in frequent use , and is friendly to you, so the effects will probably be positive. What, how, and how much is something that I don’t know.”

Upon hearing Kiri Kiri’s words, a new question came up.

“So, is that why you suggested the soul sword back then?”

Kiri Kiri had suggested that I buy the soul sword when I’ve harvested Seregia’s soul and entered Kiri Kiri’s field.

Did she suggest it because she knew that once Serezia’s soul possessed the soul sword, her soul would be helpful and have a high rate of synchrony?

That’s what I thought.

Kiri Kiri shook her head.

“Nope.

“Really?”

“Yup. I know of things that happen and will happen, but I don’t know much about things that are uncertain of happening.”

“That’s how it is huh.”

I took a minute to think about Kiri Kiri’s words.

While fragmented, being able to predict the future is probably linked to various information associated with the Tutorial.

For example, what will appear in the next floor.

She said she isn’t able to predict the future of uncertain qualities.

The variable of Serezia and the variable of me tied together into a soul sword can’t be predicted.

Would that apply only to Kiri Kiri, or every...

“It’s the same for every administrating God.”

“...Yeah?”

“Gods with power related to prescience can only see fragments of the clues to the future. Although, I don’t know if the God of Slow can peek into it.”

Gods too cannot decide the future.

It was precious information.

What it means is, it’s expensive information.

“Is that something you can tell me?”

“Yup.”

“Explain.”

“Can you imagine what it would be like for someone to follow a predetermined path?”

It was the same question that popped into my head a moment ago.

“It would be despairing. It wouldn’t have a positive effect to Houuujaeee, and that’s why I’m giving you advice in advance. That it’s not so.”

I was grateful for those words.

“Plus, you don’t need any tips until the 35th floor, so you have room to work with in the information department.”

Kiri Kiri softly closed her eyes and held her chin high upon finishing her words.

She was being proud with a smile on her lips.

When Kiri Kiri herself felt that she did a good job, she always seemed satisfied and proud.

Well, it was good advice considering the price of the information.

It was something to be proud of.

“Thanks, Kiri Kiri.”

Kiri Kiri didn’t show it but she was really happy.

And became a step more arrogant.

Both her nose and shoulders went up about 5 centimeters.

Kiri Kiri’s heavy nose-breathing reached my face.

Like the breeze from a fan, it was enough to flip my hair back.

Finding Kiri Kiri amusing, I laughed by myself for quite a while.

[Welcome to the 32nd stage.]

[The 31st floor stage beings.]

Explanation: You have entered the demon realm ?? ???. The ?? ??? has been known for producing strong Demon Kings through a special tradition of placing all demons in this area into one space every hundred years in a battle royale. Only the victor may challenge the Demon King.

The current Demon King of ?? ??? region has been ruling for four hundred years and is evaluated as the strongest in the ?? ??? region.

Prove that you are the strongest challenger in the ?? ??? region by winning the contest.

Lastly, prove that you are the strongest demon in the ?? ??? region by defeating the ruler of ?? ??? region.

[Clear Criteria]

Make it through the ??? ?? region's 2nd preliminaries.

Based on what I heard from Kiri Kiri, the 32nd floor's theme is no different from the 31st floor.

It will be run the same way.

Only the number of tokens I have to collect has changed

The number of tokens I have to collect now in total is ten thousand.

The number is absurdly high, but the demons that have made it through the 1st round and have reached the 2nd round all have over a thousand tokens each.

If you think about it, it makes it easier.

While the method was similar, the 32nd stage was constructed differently compared to the 31st floor.

Unlike the 31st floor layout of small rooms and connected pathways, the 32nd floor was one enormous interconnected area.

It seems to have been unified into one space because the number of demons in the 2nd round was small.

And the demons driven into the space were making a very desirable atmosphere.

Even though I appeared, none of the demons were paying any attention to me.

It wasn't indifference.

They were just too busy.

Their bodies weren't busy.

Having killed a thousand demons and entering the 2nd round with

their thousand tokens gathered, the demons were

busy examining each other with an air of hostility.

It felt good.

This was exactly what I wanted.

It was easy to notice.

There's no group here.

Each of the hundreds of demons here are each other's enemies.

What I couldn't feel from Olphon, who had a massive amount of mana, I could feel it in each of the demons here.

Tenison, spirit, intent to kill, fear, apprehension, excitement, delight.

The violent emotions shook, and they hid their evils schemes behind the emotions.

They monitored each other and were preparing for an imminent brawl.

The demons' standoff was maintaining an exquisite equilibrium.

How did this come to be.

How long has this been going on for.

Maybe I was summoned right after a vigorous brawl, and everyone was taking a breather.

Everyone was fired up, but nobody was moving.

Everyone knew.

In such a tense situation of hundreds of demons keeping an eye on each other, whoever makes the first move will be

the primary target.

So, they're waiting for their chance.

For someone to make a move.

For this standoff to break.

While sharpening their intent.

I was summoned into an amusing situation.

The only one that can move in this situation is me. Only me.

Slowly and in a carefree manner, I moved my feet.

And I approached the middle of the space.

Every time I took step, the demons jittered.

My movemets hid the targets from others' lines of sight.

The demons debated whether to move on the blindsight I created, or to wait until the blind spot I created disappeared.

The mana that were competing for control of the space were shaking because of my movements.

It wasn't just disturbing sight and mana.

The small speculation weakens concentration.

And the gap created like that, appears to be a giant hole to the enemies confronting each other with spirits raised.

Large enough to easily take the opponent's life.

“Kuaaahk!”

“Kyak!”

“W,Wait! Kuk...”

“Kek. Phuaa... this can't be. Because of one crazy newbie. Ugk...”

“Kyaaa!”

Every step lead to the shattering of paused confrontation, and battles began.

Several demons died off.

It was a good feeling.

It felt as though I had become an eye of the storm.

I had soon reached the middle of the area.

I stood there for a moment.

The area was quiet again.

The demons showing openings have become consumed, and the demons who showed an opening by consuming those demons were consumed as well.

The only demons that were left were those unshaken by my movements and with an eye on their surroundings.

And me.

I had no intention of keeping this standoff.

Rather, I wanted to splendidly shatter it.

I took out the space pocket from the inventory.

The tens of millions of tokens gathered from killing Olphon and his underlings.

I tired of collecting them and casually shoved them into the space pocket.

Standing on the middle of the area, I flipped the space pocket in my hands.

The red-black tokens started to fall onto the ground.

The tokens on the ground soon surpassed tens, hundreds, thousands, and reached ten thousands.

And even so, the tokens kept on pouring out.

What is the goal of the demons here?

To gather ten thousand tokens and make it to the next area.

The mounds of tokens falling to my feet like a waterfall gripped their eyes and hearts for a moment.

The ambition brought about by the agitation created giant divisions incomparable to before.

The stance of demons was shaken for a moment, and the demons all aimed for each other's openings.

The simultaneous battle made more openings, and more battles.

The cries and screams of demons could be heard from every direction.

Greed and fear

The most desperate emotions collided and as a by-product blood and death trickled down.

From the midst of the extremely satisfying situation, I quietly smiled.

[Hero, Hero. Me too! Me too! Let me in!]

Like a child jumping up and down begging for candy, the holy sword whined.

Pulling out the holy sword from my waist, I ran into the raving waves of battle.

[You have cleared the 32nd floor.]

Chapter 181

Tutorial 34th Floor

As I stood on the portal headed to the 34th floor, a message appeared.

[Before you enter the stage, select your party members]

[Current party members (1/1)]

-Lee Hojae

It was the same theme from the 31st stage, but the number of participants kept on changing.

The 31st floor was a solo stage.

The 32nd floor was meant to be done with a group of 5 and 33rd floor with 10.

But the 34th floor stage was a solo stage.

The theme didn't change, but it raised the difficulty by expanding the number of participants.

And once at the 34th floor stage, it returned back to a solo stage.

Based on Kiri Kiri's prediction that I'll be up against the Demon King on the 34th floor, the 34th is the one that

actually needs more party members.

If there was one that made it past the 33rd floor by becoming more of a supporter, that person wouldn't be able to make it through the 34th floor.

Ruthless construction as always.

Before I entered the stage, I organized my thoughts.

As I finished my preparations and was about to get up from my seat, I heard a strange voice.

[urgh... Urgh...]

“The fuck is this? Do you wanna go back into the inventory?”

It wasn't a surprise since it was common for this crazy holy sword to start convulsing randomly.

[It's not me! Hero, it's not me making the sound.]

“Sure, sure. I'm sure. Do you still practice female voices?”

[Of course! Since you, the hero, like it!]

“It would be better if it was an actual female's voice, but I don't want to hear a man masking a feminine voice.”

[Anyway, it's not me making the voice! Its Seregia!]

After the holy sword's words, I examined Seregia who was bound to the soul sword.

[Ah, Ah... Um...]

The voice came again.

I was sure.

Just as the holy sword said, the voice was Seregia's.

I didn't realize it was her voice, because it sounded tired and listless, unlike Seregia's typically strong and clear voice.

I thought it was the holy sword mimicking a female ghost.

“Seregia?”

I called Seregia, but no answer came.

After keeping an eye on the soul sword for a little while, I became nervous.

“Aubu. Do you think we need to some urgent care or something?”

[What urgent care? Are you gonna do CPR on the handle? It’s because she’s trying to say something, but it isn’t working out. Let’

As per the holy sword’s words, I put the soul sword on the ground and waited.

Seregia’s voice came through a few words every minute.

It was practically senseless mumbling, but as time went on the voice became clearer.

[Ah... Uh... H, Hero. Hero...]

Seregia finally succeeded in saying proper words after mumbling on for some time.

“Yeah. Seregia. I’m here. Take your time.”

[Wish. I have a wish.]

Seregia finally spoke her wish after being silent for days.

I tensed up in case her wish was to become human again or to leave the sword.

If so, I would need to ask Kiri Kiri about the means to do so.

It would be at a large expense, but I was willing to do so if it was what Seregia wanted.

I don't know how much of a help Seregia synchronizing completely to the sword was, but I wanted to continue having conversations with Seregia.

[Hero...]

“Yeah. Speak your wish without worry.”

[...Snacks.]

“Huh?”

[I want to eat snacks.]

I was speechless.

Seregia went silent after declaring she wanted to eat snacks.

The holy sword explained.

[There seems to be a human conscience appearing from the process of becoming one with the sword. The obsessions of the previous life or something like that seems to have brought forth a desire for snacks that she used to like.]

Normally, wouldn't family or aspirations come up first?

Or at least playing basketball.

Snacks, straight out of the blue.

Maybe I need to set up a ceremonial table for her with snacks.

[Welcome to the 34th floor.]

[The 34th floor's challenge begins.]

Explanation: You have entered the demon realm ?? ???. The ?? ??? has been known for producing strong Demon King through a special tradition of placing all demons in this area into once space every hundred years, and only the victor may challenge the Demon King.

The current Demon King of ?? ??? region has been ruling for four hundred years and is evaluated as the strongest in the ?? ??? region

By making it through the main round, you have proved that you are the strongest challenger from the ?? ??? preliminary area.

Now prove that you are the strongest challenger by battling the challengers that have made it past the main round and head toward the challenge round where the Demon King awaits.

Lastly, prove that you are the strongest demon in the ?? ??? region by defeating the ruler of ?? ??? region.

[Clear Criteria]

Pass the ??? ?? Final Stage

The area I was summoned to was a wide-open space.

The space carried over the theme from the 31st floor: an underground space filled with red and black colorways.

If I had to specify one interesting thing, unlike the 32, 33rd floors, there was just one demon in sight and.

“Hey, Newbie. How are you doing?”

His attitude was relaxed.

The demon greeting me was laying on his side and had a cigarette in his mouth.

His posture was full of openings, but I didn't want to exploit those openings.

The demon seemed to have no intention of fighting me.

I felt no fighting spirit or apprehension.

"This is quite unexpected."

"What."

"The stages before this point were packed with intense competition. So, I didn't expect a sight peaceful as this."

It wasn't just the demon in front of me.

They couldn't be seen, but there were demons lying lethargically all around this large space.

Even though I spread my mana and detected them, they didn't react in any way.

It was strange considering the demons here have made it up here killing countless other demons.

"It's possible."

I waited for the demon to continue.

But instead, the demon quietly continued to smoke.

"...From what I've heard, you don't need to collect anymore tokens."

"That's right."

"Then what do you do here? Just go ahead and challenge the Demon King?"

The demon pretended not to hear me.

Only after he was done with his cigarette did he scratch his head and began to explain.

“Well... since I took on the guide role, I’ll explain the basics. There’s no need to collect tokens here. The moment you wish to challenge the Demon King, a summoning circle will appear. That’s it.”

“Then, what do you do here?”

I repeated my question from before.

Thankfully, this time I was able to get an answer.

“It’s for the demons to challenge each other and assess their strength. Also, it’s for demons to gather their strength before challenging the Demon King.”

“It doesn’t look it.”

“Yeah well.”

I waited for a while, but the demon didn’t say anything after the “yeah well.”

So, I had to ask again.

“Why are you so carefree?”

“It wasn’t like this from the beginning. The demons here tried everything to improve before challenging the Demon King. They measured their strength by dueling each other. And we chose who the strongest demon amongst us was.

And the demon chosen through that went on to challenge the Demon King.”

“And?”

“And what else? The challenging demons all died to the Demon King. Like I said, the challenging demons were the strongest ones here.”

That’s why they gave up.

‘It meant they gave up instead of trying to improve.’

The demons stronger than him all challenged the Demon King, but all of them died.

Even if they duel the each other here and cultivate their strength it’s obvious that they’ll end up dying, so they don’t challenge the King.

Since they don’t bother challenging, they don’t try to grow stronger.

More and more gave up to the point where everyone ended up giving up.

It’s a common tale.

“Yeah, well. We just wait until the event is over. It’s boring, but what can you do?”

I felt déjà vu.

During my time as a pro-gamer, I had visited another team’s dorms.

It was a team that was last in the pro league and soon-to-be disbanded.

The players there were just like this.

I didn’t like them.

Even if they believed that ‘we’re going to lose anyway, and no matter how many times we try it won’t change it,’ they can still try

And their efforts will come back to reward them.

But they didn't try.

They burned time making their rut a habit.

It was enough to make me angry by just looking at them.

I found no reason to attack them.

They weren't opponent or prey.

They couldn't even become a punching bag for practice.

It was no different from a corpse lying on the ground.

Instead of wasting my time, I wanted to challenge the Demon King.

As soon as I thought that, a summoning circle appeared before my eyes.

It seemed to be a different form than the one from the tutorial.

“Newbie, you're going to challenge right away? Don't go. You'll die. Do you really want the Demon King's throne so bad? How about just waiting here for the event to end? You can get a spot for yourself by just making it here.”

The demon talked at a pace never seen before.

What would be the reason for saying those words?

Is he concerned for my life who he saw for the first time?

Or does he want to justify himself lying on the dirt and squirming like a worm?

That it's not possible, that this is the more effective and comfortable route.

Is that how he wants to comfort himself?

I didn't see a reason in responding to the pointless attempts at dissuasion.

I just got up on the summoning circle without any words.

Once on the summoning circle, my surroundings were enshrouded in light.

As the light faded away and my vision restored itself, I could see the changed surroundings.

There was a giant throne a little higher than my line of vision, and there was a giant Demon sitting atop the throne.

[You have entered the last phase of the 34th floor.]

"A challenger at last. Welcome."

The demon sitting atop the high throne looking down at me had a familiar face.

It was the demon I met on the 26th floor.

"You're recycled too huh."

"What does that mean?"

I thought it would be like this.

That the Demon King appearing on the 26th floor and the Demon King of the 34th floor would be the same.

They had the same title, and the information I gathered from the demons exactly described the Demon King I had seen.

So, it was fully plausible.

But aside from that, it was a little unpleasant.

The opponent I had killed with my own hands standing there. Alive.
With no remembrance of event happening.

It's natural that he doesn't remember.

It didn't happened to this Demon King.

I shook away the train of thought.

I knew the unfortunate fate of the Demon King being a captive of the tutorial, but I didn't need to equate it with her

"It's a delight that a challenger has finally appeared to comfort my boredom. I'm curious. How did a little squirt like you make it up here?"

A forced smile welled up.

I couldn't feel any sort of tension from the Demon King sitting atop the throne.

Just like when I had met Olphon.

It's probably the same for the demon I had met just before.

They pronounce the result as it were predetermined, and they deem the process before the result insignificant.

It was a stunning portrayal of arrogance.

They believe they are able to do something even the Gods cannot do.

Is that why they are demons?

Those sorts of thoughts came to mind.

“Speak up. Since the results are certain, feel free to talk before you die. If you are able to relieve my boredom, I won’t kill you before the event is over.”

It was amusing.

There was a big difference between the 26th floor me and the me now...

But the Demon King’s guard is still relaxed even after seeing me.

What would he have thought of me on the 26th floor.

He probably thought he could squash me as easily as a bug.

And because of that complacency, he was in danger of being recalled in the middle of the summoning, and forcibly tried to bring the power of his true being.

And died.

I didn’t want the same thing to happen again.

On the 26th floor, I used the light blade to finish him off as soon as he was summoned.

If I didn’t so do, I couldn’t assure my victory.

But now, I have room to play around.

Enough to hold back while fighting that Demon King.

Enough to induce him into bringing out his whole power.

I calmly pondered how to make him angry.

And I found it.

“Aububu.”

[It's Aubutz, Hero!]

Chapter 182

Tutorial 35th Floor (1)

The holy sword did his job well.

The holy sword flew over to the Demon King who seemed quite interested and proceeded to whisper something that infuriated him.

The subsequent battle was one-sided.

Even if there was a gap in power, it was the same Demon King he had defeated on the 26th floor.

I was faster and stronger than before.

I could react to the Demon King's movements, and my attacks dealt significant damage to the Demon King.

I defended against the Demon King's attacks and mixed in counterattacks to buy time.

And when the critical moment came, I used the light blade to finish the battle.

It was the basic strategy of swordsmanship.

It was something I noticed before, but this sword technique is effective against those that are stronger than me and groups of enemies.

I suddenly felt thankful to the Knight I met on the 16th floor.

“So.”

[Yes?]

“What did you say that made the Demon King so mad?”

The Demon King had sprung at me like a madman upon hearing the holy sword's words.

While it helped accomplish my goal of making the Demon King give his all, it was rather rough to deal with a Demon King who gave no regards about his safety.

[That is.]

“Yeah.”

[A secret. Kyu.]

I felt a strong urge to hit the sword.

I could understand the Demon King's feelings. Just a tiny bit.

[You have cleared the Tutorial, Hell Difficulty 34th floor]

[All status ailments and injuries will be healed.]

[You have acquired 6000 points for clearing the level.]

[You have acquired 6000 points for being the first person to clear this level.]

[There are multiple Gods showing a positive response. Gained 4300 points.]

[There are multiple Gods showing a negative response. 1200 points deducted.]

[Extra rewards are given based on play records.]

[4400 points acquired.]

There wasn't an extra reward of note this time either.

There are a lot of Gods showing an interest in me, but not that many Gods that gift authorities.

Even the God of Light showed interest by gifting me extra rewards, but didn't gift an authority.

Maybe it was because of the constraint that each God can only gift an authority to one challenger.

I heard that it doesn't apply if the gifting is done anonymously like the God of Death did, but it didn't seem to be common.

Since I had nothing more to think about, I casually stepped into the portal.

"It was too easy?"

"Yeah."

"In truth, the Demon King is a considerably strong being. It wasn't that easy of a stage."

"I thought the Demon King who appeared on the 34th floor stage was around average difficulty since it was a solo stage. But the earlier bouts were too easy."

Kiri Kiri scratched her nose at my words.

She didn't seem to agree.

"On the 31st floor it's easily possible to gather one thousand tokens by just going after the weak demons on the outskirts. You could obtain tens, hundreds if you killed the demons who were essentially a safe. and the 32nd and 33rd floor were party-play."

"Uhhh... that's true."

“Didn’t you specifically say before that difficulty spikes after the 30th floor?”

My questioning put Kiri Kiri in a rough spot.

She had no idea how much I anticipated the stages after the 30th floor after hearing Kiri Kiri’s words.

If it was a mistake or she misspoke, Kiri Kiri will pay the price.

I won’t buy her cake

“Ahh! No! I haven’t misspoken!”

“Then?”

“The premise was wrong.”

“Explain.”

Kiri Kiri seemed torn on the explanation.

“Hng... it’ll be expensive to explain everything.”

“It’s not like there’s information I need to know right away. Just tell me.”

I didn’t need information on how to clear stages that badly right now.

I was easily clearing with just the minimum amount of information anyway.

“I’ll explain it as briefly as possible. First of all the Demons aren’t that weak. Even the ones in the outskirts.”

They seem weak...

“Not just the strength they have, but their high degree of intellect and

sly, atrocious temperament warrant an even higher risk.”

I thought of the demons I met on the outskirts of the 31st floor.

I never had trouble dealing with their intellect.

“That’s because Houujaeer is too strong. You took care of them before they had a chance to think. And some demons did hold onto their lives by leaving a good impression to Houujaeer.”

That was true.

Although, they were the victim.

“Being a victim doesn’t mean they’re virtuous. All the ones there are demons, and that holds truer. The reason why Houujaeer unconditionally took them as victims was because of their behavior. And that was deliberate acting on their part.”

Hmm...

“If Houujaeer was weak, they would’ve stuck a knife in your back without thinking twice.”

That might be true.

And the different in power between me and them were part of the reason why I wasn’t concerned with them.

Maybe it’s true that the demons recognized that I had no interest in them and wanted to avoid irritating me.

Looking back to when I was questing a demon who was a victim on the 31st floor, after I let one faint, the others fainted as soon as I asked them questions too.

“Then what about the demons like Olphon? They seemed rather stupid.”

“That’s... That’s also because Houujaeer is too strong.”

“Not because they’re too weak?”

Olphon and his underlings possessed frightening degrees of strength.

They had much greater pools of mana than I did.

Both them and I were aware of the fact.

“Because Houujaeer’s mana is mostly hidden away. That’s why they couldn’t discern Houujaeer’s full power.”

The mana circulating in the body flows out of the body every rotation of the magic circuit.

And the mana that flows out becomes a gauge for measuring the characteristics of the mana and how much mana the other person has.

Even their intentions.

But.

“I’m not at the level of pissing mana out anymore.”

Kiri Kiri shook her head vigorously.

“That’s not as easy as it sounds.”

Wasn’t that hard.

“They misjudged the amount and couldn’t read your intentions. So, they couldn’t help but look down on you. It would be hard for the demons to believe that the skill difference would be that large when the volume of mana differed that much.”

Is that so.

I was convinced by Kiri Kiri's explanations.

I never thought my opponents would misjudge me like that because of the mana I had put away in order to be more efficient.

Especially opponents like the Demon King and Olphon.

I pondered for a moment.

First, this will help me in the future battles.

It has a tremendous effect of the outcome of battle if the enemy can't fully fathom my power like Olphon and the other demons. But if my enemies keep looking down on me, it'll be difficult to fight the way I want to.

Do I need to intentionally let some mana loose to coerce them?

Against an opponent with much more mana than me?

The reason I hadn't done so until now was simple.

It's just not efficient.

Then would it be possible to let broadcast my intentions instead of mana?

That would solve the problem if I could coerce them without wasting my energy.

Hmm... I can't think of a way right now.

This is something I need to think about.

If possible, it would be very helpful.

I stopped pondering and looked at Kiri Kiri.

Since she took sated my curiosities, I opened the Shop window to gift her a cake.

“Wait.”

“Huh?”

“There’s something I need to tell you first.”

My hands froze just as I was about to buy her the cake.

Something more important than cake to Kiri Ki.

I had no idea what she was going to say, but my body stiffened in anticipation of bad news.

“Next floor?”

“Yeah, let me explain the next floor.”

I thought it was about changes in the system or some sort of problem, but it was an explanation for the next floor.

While Kiri Kiri has offered in-depth explanation of critical dangers, it was the first time Kiri Kiri had something to explain with a serious expression like this.

Does it mean it’s that dangerous?

I saw the worried expression on Kiri Kiri’s face, but a corner of my heart lit up from the excitement.

“The main theme of the next floor is surviving for a certain length of time.”

Survival with a time limit.

It sounded similar to the 12th floor.

Will there be a similar restriction like the sealing of the inventory window?

“The next floor will start from the 1st floor.”

Huh?

“First, you have to survive for an hour on the 1st floor. Then 2 hours on the 2nd floor. Three on the 3rd floor. And so forth.”

“It’s surviving on the floors I was on for a specific amount of time?”

“Yeah. From the 1st floor until the 34th floor. For approximately 24 days.”

I thought about the information Kiri Kiri gave me.

It’s not hard to hold out on the lower floors.

Even now, there were people surviving on jerky and water on the 1st floor.

“Both the inventory and items will be confiscated.”

“What about the items I take?”

“Same for those too. You have to do it with bare hands, without the starting weapons.”

That’s a bit harsh.

They’ll drop me on the 1st floor with just my bare hands?

Magicians and clerics will probably die here.

“The progress you’ve made until now will be gone too. You have to start again from level 1.”

“What?”

“Your body will return to the condition it was in back to when you first started the tutorial. Just for 35th floor though.”

I dwelled on Kiri Kiri’s words for a moment.

It felt as though the words weren’t registering in my brain.

I slowly understood her words.

And.

“Hey! That’s a bit harsh!”

“I didn’t make it that way!”

Kiri Kiri screamed back at me.

Fuck. I thought the Gods calmed down for a bit, but the fucking Gods were up to it again.

Are they even sane?

They’ll roll back the progress I’ve made until now?

[The God of Adventure is feels falsely accused.]

I didn’t care that the God felt falsely accused; I kept on thinking.

I can survive on the 1st floor.

The theme of the 1st floor are traps, and I won’t die if I make it past the traps.

The problems were the stages that began with fights.

For example ,the 31st floor begins with a run-in with two demons at

the entrance.

Going up against two demons with the body that just entered the Tutorial...

I'll die a hundred times even if I had the chance to fight them a hundred times.

"But you get to progress anew."

"Progress?"

"Since you return to level 1, you can progress again from level 1. You can gain skills too."

Basically, you can start again from the beginning.

But there was still a problem.

There wasn't enough time

There were only 24 days to make it from the 1st floor to the 34th floor.

Could I make enough progress to survive through all the stages in just 24 days?

I wasn't sure.

"There's one thing I want you to promise."

Kiri Kiri grasped the tip of my clothes while I was thinking hard.

"This was why I told you about the stage in advance."

"What is it?"

"Please, it's an earnest request."

I could predict the next words out of Kiri Kiri's mouth when she said request.

"Don't overdo it. The 35th floor stage focused on how to deal with yourself when the progress you've made is gone rather than surviving against your opponents. You need to keep that in mind."

How you deal with yourself...

Does it want me to feel ashamed or something from seeing myself become incompetent overnight?

"The 35th stage isn't something you can clear with just strength. You have to focus on survival using supplementary skills like conversation and hiding rather than strategy and fighting to clear it."

Even so, there aren't many stages that are dangerous from the moment you enter.

Furthermore, the enemies that appear in the beginning are passive.

Not just passive, but they can become friendly depending on how I behave.

Even thinking back to the 16th floor, the doppelgänger was one example.

So, if I don't overextend myself, I can guarantee my survival.

But.

"I dunno."

Too bad I don't work that way

Chapter 183

Tutorial 35th Floor (2)

[Round 24, Day 2. 23h 55m]

[Huh? Really?]

“Yeah, really.”

[Really? Really?]

“Yes, really.”

[Really? Really? Really? For real?]

I threw the holy sword who was obnoxiously making nasal voices into the inventory.

It's been doing that ever since it heard that I won't be able to bring him out for over 24 days.

It's not like I couldn't understand how suffocating it was to be confined in the inventory for all that time, but what could I do?

The system wouldn't let me access my gear.

[Does that apply to me as well?]

Seregia abruptly asked.

“Yeah, you too.”

Seregia didn't say any more.

It seems as though she fell back down into her deep consciousness.

Thankfully, Seregia still speaks up like that every now and then.

It startles me because her timing is random and out of the blue, but it was better than nothing.

I put the soul sword into the inventory as well.

Since the gear will all be confiscated, I didn't need to prepare anything and stepped atop the portal.

Past the campfire room, I entered the 35th stage.

[Welcome to the 35th floor stage.]

[Round 24, Day 3. 0h 0m]

“Phewwww.”

I tried not to make any unnecessary noises, but I couldn't help but let out a long sigh.

It was an expected sight.

It was just as Kiri Kiri had said.

I knew it was going to happen, but the shock came again.

I was standing at the entrance of the 1st floor stage.

A straight dark pathway.

There were faint lights embedded in the ceiling every few meters.

The three-meter-high ceiling.

The floors and walls made of rough stone material.

I shed a lot of blood on these floors.

A chill ran down my spine.

It wasn't because I was stuck in my past trauma.

It was the feeling, not the familiar sight.

My feet hurt.

No, hurt as much as.

I could feel the hard floor

The feeling of exhaustion in my feet from standing on the stone floors felt very foreign.

The leather armor I was wearing until just a moment ago was all gone, and I was wearing the thin clothes from when I first entered the Tutorial.

The smooth modern clothes that I hadn't seen for a long time were unfamiliar.

My body was also unfamiliar.

The inhalations were brisk, and my beating heart felt fragile enough to burst at any moment.

I couldn't feel any strength in my arms and legs.

My vision was dark.

Though the lights were faint, they were just barely enough for me to discern the straight hallway.

It was no longer the superhuman body that I was used to for the last two years, but the typical body of a NEET – living life as though I were crippled and spending time alone in my room.

[The 35th floor stage begins.]

Explanation: Your body returns to the time it was the weakest. By walking in the footsteps that you have once already made, survive in a different way.

The stage has 34 gates in total, and each gate mostly coincides with those that you have passed through before.

Everything you have achieved here goes back to naught. Each time you pass a gate, water and jerky will be given to you through the pouch.

If you survive for a specified amount of time, you will be sent to the next gate.

[Clear Criteria.]

1. Survive

It was no different from what I had heard from Kiri Kiri.

If there was one thing different, it was the information about water and jerky.

Without me realizing it, there was a small pouch tied to my waist.

I opened it, but nothing was inside.

Seems like they'll store water and jerky here as I proceed with the gates.

Seems like that's plausible.

Now, what do I do?

[The God of Remorse is watching you.]

The God of Remorse.

That wasn't a familiar title.

It's possible that the God of Remorse is the architect behind this 35th floor stage.

Remorse.

I'll keep that in mind.

I put aside thoughts about the god for now.

It wasn't something that I needed to concern myself with right now.

Instead, I needed to focus on how to survive this stage and proceed past it.

First, there is no need to move right away.

The theme of the 1st floor is arrow traps, and the traps don't go off unless I approach them.

Let's prepare here, then move.

Next, I'll need to check my condition

“Status.”

[Lee HoJae (Human)]

Str: 10

Dex: 13

Sta: 11

Mana: 21

It's been a while since I've seen a status this bleak.

There's no level being shown and I'm level 0 just like when I entered the Tutorial.

The numerous skills I've had are all gone.

It really is a do-over.

What I need to focus on in this bleak status window is the mana.

Mana: 21.

During my time on the 1st floor, I didn't know what mana meant, nor the implications of it being 21.

But now, I know exactly what it means.

The norm for most people is to start at 0 or 1, and the highest is around 10 for the mana value.

A mana value of 21 is a ridiculously high value.

And because of that, I very rarely ran short of mana when I've used skills.

To be fair, it's also because I've used Authorities instead of active skills.

I closed my eyes and tried to feel the mana inside my body.

It was scattered throughout my body.

I proceeded to move a slightly large piece.

It absorbed the smaller mana fragments that it passed by and congregated into a large lump.

It was like rolling a snowball.

Once I felt enough mana was gathered, I moved it along a circuit.

[Acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 1.]

[Acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 3.]

Unlike the other challengers that did not know how to advance their skills even after obtaining it, I fully understand the fundamental workings.

Without the help of the system, I could force open the blocked mana circuit.

One error was that the mana circuit in my body back then was smaller than I thought.

The mana being forced through the circuit brought small pains and tremors, along with a sensation as if small ants were crawling in my skin. My whole body started to tremble.

In addition, there were clogs along the path here and there.

Normally, one would slowly melt those away and widen the path by circulating mana hundreds or thousands of times, but I didn't have the luxury of waiting for that.

I bore a path through the blockades.

“Kuhk.”

[Acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 7.]

Blood poured out of my nose and mouth.

It wasn't like a small nosebleed.

It was more accurate to say I threw up blood than I had a nosebleed.

A small puddle of blood soon gathered at my feet.

“Phewooooook. Phewooooo.”

Because I couldn't breathe while throwing up blood, my lungs struggled for air.

My lung capacity was pathetically awful.

I spat out the blood in my mouth and moved the mana again.

Just recognizing and moving the mana does nothing.

You need to find pathways to manifest mana outside of the body.

A lump of mana moving at high velocity clashed against a blockaded wall.

And along with it a Boom sound.

As if I were the victim of a hit and run, I felt a strong pain at the back of my head.

My vision went dark.

And the next moment, I felt nothing.

Along with the pain, my senses died, and my focus dissipated.

Fuck. Pain Tolerance.

I forgot I didn't have Pain Tolerance.

Without the tolerance skill, my body released hormones to sedate itself upon feeling a strong pain signal.

I forced myself to focus.

I couldn't feel any sensations, but I tried desperately to guide the mana along the circuit path.

Soon, part of my senses came back.

I was lying on the ground, writhing in agony.

I couldn't keep a clear mind through the pain that came from every bone becoming misaligned and my muscles twisting.

It was too strong of a stimulation without Pain Tolerance.

“Ku... ahhhk...”

A groan escaped my clenched teeth.

My face felt as though it would explode from the blood pressure.

If not, my eyeballs would pop out at the bare minimum.

[Acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 16.]

[Acquired Will Lv. 4.]

[Acquired Awakening Lv. 7.]

Without knowing how much time had passed, the pain slowly eased away.

I waited for the pain to completely dissipate.

After I was confident that I was completely fine, I squirmed my arms and legs.

Thankfully, they move fine.

I thought I would be crippled if this went badly.

And if so, it would be very bothersome until I cleared the 35th floor.

Once I looked around, the formerly-small blood puddle had enlarged.

My body was sticky, as if blood had oozed out through my skin instead of just my nose and mouth.

It wasn't a small amount of pitch-black blood.

If I express it how I used to, I probably dipped my ankles in the Samdo River

[Acquired Pain Tolerance Lv. 2.]

I got Pain Tolerance up to Lv. 2 in one go.

It really, honest-to-god fucking hurt.

It was enough to make me worry if my body would die from the shock.

Pain Tolerance doesn't reduce the pain itself but blocks the shock and sedation of the senses.

A great deal of anxiety had welled up inside me upon being greeted by the acute pain without any form of tolerance.

I was more worried that this body would actually die from the pain rather than the pain itself.

The sensation of pain was quickly dissipating.

But it left me feeling washed out.

I felt drowsy from my lack of strength.

But I also felt refreshed.

With the airways unobstructed and probably because bodily waste was gone, my mind felt clear.

And the mana inside my body was circulating without any obstructions.

Once I recover my stamina, it would be much better.

I decided to sit down and rest.

According to Kiri Kiri's information, I'll be on the 1st floor stage for a total of one hour.

[Round 24, Day 3. 0h 27m]

More time had passed than I had initially thought.

I thought it would be a few minutes at most, but I must've writhed in pain for a good half hour.

My reward was Mana Circuit Lv. 16.

It was good enough for now.

I decided to be content with it for now.

If I did anymore right now, it would take too much time; plus, I was afraid I might die from shock.

I needed to respect my weak body.

To take the next step, I needed to relentlessly circulate my mana and prepare myself.

I finished up my thoughts and got up.

I was going to rest a bit more, but I needed to get moving since more time had passed than I initially thought.

Once I started to move forward, each step was excruciatingly difficult.

My legs shook, and my back bent backwards

As I moved, I could feel the aches here and there in my body.

My body's current condition required a few days of rest no matter how you look at it, but I pressed on.

Fuck. What I wouldn't do for a bottle of elixir.

[The God of Remorse is watching you.]

The message about the God of Remorse appeared again.

The message appeared as soon as I wondered if I was irrational in forcing the mana circuit, as if the God was just waiting for it.

Was it waiting for me to have a regret or something?

I started to wonder what the Gods wanted to say throughout this stage.

Was it to look back through the stages that I've been through and find a new solution for the regrets that I've had?

Or was it to take everything I've achieved away, leaving this sad body with me to make me feel sorry for myself?

To ruminate over the terror and pain from the beginning and realize how meaningless of a being that I was?

Whatever it was, I was pissed.

I clenched my teeth and forced my legs forward.

My left leg wouldn't move properly.

I proceeded along with one leg limping.

Ping.

Accompanied by the launch noise I was waiting for, the arrow went off.

My eyes followed the white flash of the arrowhead reflecting the light.

I wasn't certain if my eyes would be able to track and locate the arrow's path, but it was enough.

The first is left shoulder.

I snatched the shaft of the arrow with my right hand.

I imbued mana on my hand and fingers to make sure the arrow wouldn't slip through.

It felt as though my hand was on fire from the intense friction, but I ignored it.

Ping.

The second one is the heart.

I swung the arrow in my right hand.

Tik.

The arrow I swung hit the flying arrow's tip and made it swerve from its path.

Ping.

The next one aims between the brows.

Without the need to swing my arrow, I tilted my head to the side.

The arrow passed through the air and flew into the distance.

The fourth comes a bit later.

One beat pause and...

Ping.

I threw the arrow downwards, past my knee.

The arrow that came low aiming for my ankle was impaled by the arrow I had and embedded into the ground.

I still had my natural abilities.

And the abilities, once the system recognizes it, becomes skills.

[Acquired Slash Lv. 11]

[Acquired Intermediate Weaponry Lv. 4]

[Slash Lv. 11 combined into Intermediate Weaponry]

[Acquired Intermediate Throwing Lv. 1]

[Acquired Combat Concentration Lv. 21]

“Status.”

[Lee HoJae (Human)]

Str: 10

Dex: 13

Sta: 11

Mana: 21

Skill: Combat Concentration Lv. 21, Will Lv.4, Awakening Lv. 7,
Intermediate Weaponry Lv. 4, Intermediate

Throwing Lv.1, Mana Circuit Lv. 16, Pain Tolerance Lv. 2

The once-bleak status window was soon filled.

Unlike the weaponry skill and combat concentration skills, the Pain Tolerance skill just skipped to Level 2.

It's probably the difference between a skill about knowing technique, and a skill requiring familiarity with the technique.

The only merits I can take away are skills that don't require the help of the system to acquire or use.

Let's examine it for a bit.

The main objective is survival.

For that, I need to proceed carefully and defensively, and procure the minimal amount of jerky and water by passing through the gates.

But that wasn't my personal goal.

I want a proper clear.

For that, I needed a more active progression.

The 35th floor stage lasts slightly longer than 24 days.

Only 24 days.

How much could I progress through in 24 days?

In that time, could I develop enough to defeat the enemies I'll be facing again?

Authorities, Level Ups, Clear Rewards, and even the items you could buy in the store weren't available.

But I have experience and information.

I calmly organized my thoughts.

Fun

This is going to be a lot of fun.

I slowly took my breaths.

The air in the hallway was cold.

The cold inhale soon became a hot exhale.

[The God of Remorse is watching you.]

Let's see how it goes.

To see if it goes your way or mine.

Chapter 184

Tutorial 35th Floor (3)

One hour on the 1st
floor.

Two hours on the 2nd

.

I thought there was more than enough me to complete both the 1st and 2nd floors.

I've lost my previous stats and skills, but there were some skills I was able to recover.

And I also had the experience of clearing them before.

But it was a miscalculation.

My stats were the same as level 0 stats.

And from the skills I've recovered, the only thing that would be of actual help was just the Mana Circuit.

The only thing mana could do in this situation was to coat simple weapons along with my hands and feet to strengthen the hardness and sharpness.

It reinforces and matures the body by just circulating within.

It's also possible to exert it in explosive strength.

It wasn't much different from the inner strength described in martial arts novels.

I was proficient in controlling mana, and it was the basis for my self-confidence – the confidence that made me think I could clear the 1st

and 2nd floor within the given time if I just strengthened my arms and legs.

One thing I hadn't thought of was needing to expend more mana to protect my limbs than just strengthen them.

The first time I'd started to handle mana was during the latter half of the 6th floor.

Back then, I had a body strong enough to be called superhuman.

It was a body capable of handling internal and external combat at an adequate level.

And because of that, I was able to use my mana more offensively.

But this body right now, which was prone to break at a moment's notice, needed more attention on my part to make sure it would survive the speed before I could make it move at a speed I would be satisfied with.

I needed to rely on inner power rather than pure hand-to-hand combat.

In addition, I needed to circulate the mana at all times in order to amass a larger amount, so I didn't have much mana to work with.

So, I didn't even make it to the Boss's chambers before the hour was up, and I had only been able to make it to the middle part of the 2nd floor.

But on the 3rd floor, I finally succeeded in making it to the Boss Room.

I was becoming more used to using my mana efficiently.

Not to mention I had three hours this time.

[Round 24, Day 2. 5h 15m]

[Pond of Recovery]

Note: If you drink or apply this on a site, it will have a healing effect.

Maybe even for baldness...

It's been a while since I've seen a Pond of Recovery.

Honestly, I didn't even think I'd ever see one.

Since it's been so long since I've last saw one.

The Pond of Recovery was more of a special reward before you entered the Boss Room.

The pond is slightly different from the surreal recovery effects of the waiting room. The pond has the power to heal and assist the body's recovery.

Recently, there has been research on exactly what effects the pond water had, but when I was passing through the lower floors, I just used it to fill up my HP.

The taste was rather poor, so it was normal to just take a few sips and leave it be.

I just tossed aside my shoes and took a dip in the pond.

I needed to take my clothes off for a proper bath, but it was bothersome.

As I dipped my body, my body started to itch here and there.

It was the sensation of small injuries being healed.

I took my mouth to the source of the water spout and drank it in.

My body had been exhausted to the point where it could take it no longer in the past 5 hours.

I had managed to force it down with my mana, but my joints were starting to creak as if they were broken parts.

Once I paused before continuing to drink the water, the muscles that were trembling from exhaustion quickly recovered.

Even the broken parts from overexertion will have recovered.

According to the recent information published in the community, if you tend injuries from overworked muscles with water from the pond of recovery, it enhances the muscle-building.

Same for the mana circuit.

I soon felt full, as I was drinking the water as if it were liquor.

It was hard to drink much more because of the weird taste.

I took out some jerky from the pouch on my side and ate it.

I felt a bit better once I felt the salty sodium come in.

I took a brief break here and feasted on the jerky and pond water.

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: I got it, thanks.]

[Lee Hyungjin, 7th floor: It's nothing compared to what you've taught me. It's a novel feeling to be teaching you something for a change.]

I asked Lee Hyungjin who had made it to the 7th floor for information on the boss at the 3rd floor.

Thanks to the overpowered Authority of Blink, I cleared the boss room on the 3rd floor the first me without falling from the cloud bridge. I asked Lee Hyungjin, who had cleared it even though he fell from the cloud bridge for ps.

[Lee Hyungjin, 7th floor: I've told you before, but the important part is when you fall. When you fall, the illusions disappear, and the traps go off immediately when you hit the floor. So it all depends on how fast you cope with the situaon.]

I sent Lee Hyungjin a thank you for ps and closed the chat window.

I raised my completely immersed body and stepped out.

I felt thankful for the addional ps.

Lee Hyungjin was stuck on the 6th floor for quite some me.

I haven't had a chance to meet him face to face, but I could see his mental breakdown from the messages we exchanged.

I understood completely, since I was extremely stressed out when I was stuck on the 6th floor myself.

But it seemed as though his mood was much brighter from making it onto the 7th floor aer surpassing the wall that blocked his way for quite some me.

And he also found his self-confidence again.

It was an inference based on the chat message, but even so I felt relieved.

I hope that I'll have a chance to meet him during a comepon or a Day of Great Harmony

I should ask Park JungAh if there's any related informaon on those.

[Round 24, Day 2. 5h 24m]

I had 35 minutes left until the 3rd floor stage ends and I get moved onto the 4th floor stage.

It's my turn to have a go at the Boss Room.

I squeezed my clothes and stood in front of the stone walls of the Boss Room.

The doors opened with a heavy sound and the panoramic view of the Boss Room entered my sights.

As I walked into the room, I could hear the doors close behind me.

While they're slow to open, they close rather quickly.

As if telling me, 'Don't even think about leaving'.

But how could I not think about leaving after seeing this fucked-up place.

The fuck.

I crossed this?

When I was on the 3rd floor?

What I could see were two mountain tops rising far above the clouds in the azure sky.

The mountaintop I was standing on, and another that was at least a few hundred meters away.

The wind was screaming like a jet engine on takeoff.

Even the wind was that strong.

My weak body couldn't stand properly, so I needed to grip onto the ground in a bent position.

It was a dangerous situation to be in even just standing on the 15m²

of space atop the mountain.

It made me think that just surviving here for 30 minutes was enough to deem it worthy of the Hell Difficulty.

But the Hell Difficulty wouldn't be satisfied with just that.

A message appeared.

[Reach the designated destination.]

Mother fucker.

It's fucking shitty even though it's the 2nd time I seen it.

The destination they're referring to is the mountain top over there, theeeeere.

A ledge appeared midair.

Green.

The next moment, the green ledge turned yellow, then red.

And fell.

And then a ledge bridge appeared and connected the peak I was standing on with the peak far away.

The ledges were all green.

But soon, the ledge closest to me turned yellow.

I sighed and stepped onto the ledge.

And before the ledge turned red, I walked forward.

The sight at my feet was no joke.

Fuck, how did I do this before.

Even if I had Blink, it doesn't rid one of the psychological pressures.

I was slowly progressing, but the strong winds buffeted me left and right.

So, in the end I used the mana I was saving.

Using mana, I added suction power to the boom of my feet and made it easy to stay on the les.

And once I added mana on to my leg and waist muscles, it was rather manageable.

Speeding up from the slow walking pace, I started to run.

It was dangerous because of the wind, but it's better to just make a run for it.

Right now, the les fell at intervals of about 10 seconds, but later, the les fall every 3 seconds.

I needed to proceed as far as I could while the les were still falling slowly.

In the past, the wind swept me off my feet as I was running on these les.

I endured by just barely keeping my balance each time I was in danger of falling.

But this time, it was much more stable.

Ping!

Along with the launch sound, an arrow flew at me.

I covered the back of my hand in mana and struck it away.

I easily overcame a difficult moment and kept on running.

And then, I felt a small movement in the le underneath me.

Ah, it's that.

It was something I knew from having memorized informaon about the 3rd floor Boss Room once more.

Soon, the le bridge will careen up and down.

Instead of running forward, I chose to crouch down and sit on the le.

I made my hands sck onto the le.

Soon, the le bridge flew up and down as if it were a rollercoaster, but since I had been prepared, I could stay on without falling.

Aer the swaying stopped, I looked back.

I sll had a safe distance of about ten les.

I'll probably be fine If I sck to this pace.

The end was near.

When I glanced back, I saw about five les behind me.

The le bridge connued to sway up and down every now and then, but as I crouched my body and waited for it to pass, it wasn't that dangerous.

Thank god I had chosen to start running at the beginning.

Now if I can just pass the obstacle in front of my eyes, the 3rd floor boss room should be done.

The cloud bridge had a break in the les in the middle.

A gap of about 30 to 40 les were missing.

Glancing back, I check how many les I had for space.

I slowed down and prepared myself.

I counted to myself and ran forward as fast as I could.

I stepped down on the spot where the les started to disappear and leaped out.

Since I had poured mana in as if I was making an explosion, there was a big ‘kwang!’ sound from just the simple step down, and my body shot forward.

This should be enough to make me cross.

But as I soared in an arc progressed, I couldn’t but change my mind.

It was a bit short.

Just barely.

I regretted for a second thinking I should’ve, maybe, used more mana even if it would damage my legs.

But there was nothing to be done when I was up in the air.

I extended my arms as much as I could, but I couldn’t reach the other le by the breadth of one finger.

If it was a lile, just a lile further, I could’ve gripped the le and made it up.

“Shit, Fuuuuuuck!”

My swearing was cut short from the fall.

It was a mistake to open my mouth to swear.

Because of the velocity of the fall, my pronunciation was muffled.

Regrets were regrets, but since I already fell, I needed to prepare myself for what comes next.

The fall wasn't that bad.

It was a wide-open space, and all I could see were white clouds.

The wind licking my body was cold and fierce, but it was also refreshing.

Is this what skydiving is like?

I could understand why people pay exorbitant amounts of money to go skydiving.

My limbs, hands, feet, and head all didn't go into a panic from the impact of the fall and were fine.

Thank god.

The next important thing is ming.

Lee Hyungjin said the traps go off as soon as the illusions dissipate.

He said the fall went on for about two minutes.

So, I still probably have quite some me...

Thuk.

Huh? Wha?

I was falling from the sky unl just a moment ago, but I was lying on a pathway right now.

The illusion of mountaintops above the clouds were gone.

And a spear was flying towards me right in front of my eyes.

Hey, two minutes.

You said two minutes!

I HAVEN'T FALLEN FOR MORE THAN 20 SECONDS!

I francally threw my body and dodged the spear.

And the spear was embedded in the spot I was lying at a moment before.

Ping. Ping. Ping. Ping. Ping. Ping. Ping.

could hear the connuous launching sound.

Arrows this me.

Seven shots.

The exact locaon was all different, but all were from the front.

All of the arrows were aimed at my body.

I took the spear stuck in the ground and extended it in front of me.

[Acquired Intermediate Spear Technique Lv. 3]

I calmly hit away each arrow.

It was much faster than most arrows on the 1st and 2nd floors, but they're sll arrows.

Next, axes.

I blocked the axes falling from the ceiling with the spear.

The axes fell without a sound, but since they were right above me, I had already noticed.

I tried my best to knock the axes away, but the falling axes were much heavier than I had thought.

As soon as I blocked the axes, I made a circular swing towards my knee level.

Ting. Ting. The sounds were made as needles were flicked off.

The poisonous needles right after a flurry of noisy attacks.

It's a typical trap pattern.

Next are arrows.

There were no sounds and they were fast.

The launch location was at the 5 o'clock direction aiming for the back of my head.

And because of that, I noticed too late.

What I saw was a small palm-sized arrow.

It seems to be specialized for speed and silence.

Instead of responding by swinging my spear, I turned my head and pushed my face forward.

I clenched my teeth.

I wasn't trying to do something absurd like grabbing the flying arrow

with my teeth.

That's just asking for it to get stuck in your throat.

I just used my teeth as a small shield and put it in the pathway of the arrow.

The teeth, protected by mana, easily blocked the arrow.

But even so, my jaw and gums were burning.

The traps stopped aer the small arrow.

According to Lee Hyungjin's words, this is one set.

He said these kinds of traps repeat themselves on my way to the end of the Boss Room.

He also said he wasn't sure, but there wasn't a paern, and the types and order of weapons change every me.

Since my safety was assured for now, I looked over my condion.

And also, this situaon.

I come to a conclusion.

Damn, I should've just fell earlier.

I needlessly toiled away in a shiy situaon on top of the tiles.

It was because Hyungjin was crying away about the dangerous traps down here.

I think this is at an adequate difficulty to pass by with ease.

I'll need to reprimand him later.

Chapter 185

Tutorial 35th floor (4)

[Level Up]

[Strength increases by 1.]

[Dexterity increases by 1.]

I reached the end of the passageway as I got the level up message.

It seemed as though it was the end of the Boss Room because it was blocked by a wall.

And nothing happened.

Shit. Is there not even a clear.

Is it too much to ask for?

There's no clear reward or even stamina restoration.

[Round 24, Day 2. 5h 55m]

Just 5 minutes left.

It was close.

I leaned against the wall.

“Status.”

[Lee HoJae (Human)]

Str: 13

Dex: 15

Sta: 15

Mana: 22

Skill: Combat Concentration Lv. 21, Will Lv.4, Awakening Lv. 7, Dash Lv. 1, Natural Recovery Lv.3, SuperRegeneration Lv. 3, Intermediate Spear Technique Lv. 3, Intermediate Weaponry Lv. 4, Intermediate Throwing Lv.1, Mana Circuit LV. 19, Pain Tolerance Lv. 2

At least I leveled up.

If it weren't for the stat gains from leveling up, it would be hard to clear the later stages even if it was fine now.

I closed my eyes, sat down in a comfortable position, and guided my mana along the circuit.

It's probably because of leveling up just now, but my body's condition was good.

It was hard to believe the growth in such a short span of time.

I had a revelation in learning that the mana circuit expands quickly if the repeated overworking of the circuit act in conjunction with the water from the Spring of Recovery.

Obviously to 'overwork' the mana circuit, one needed a certain amount of skill; if one had that much aptitude, he didn't need to expand the mana circuit forcibly.

But thanks to that, I could improve quickly.

I still felt a bit uncomfortable while circulating the mana.

The original plan was to clear the 3rd floor Boss Room and attempt to

expand my mana circuit in the waiting room.

The process of forcing the circuit's blockades open and expanding the path puts a considerable amount of burden on the body.

So, I wanted to give it a go in the waiting room, which has a recovery function.

But even though I had proceeded to the end of the 3rd floor Boss Room, I still wasn't getting a clear message.

And because of that, there wasn't a waiting room.

Once a bit of time passes, I'll be moved directly to the 4th floor.

They precisely cut away the things they wanted to take away.

But why won't they make these kinds of things exactly as it was before?

I should wait on expanding the mana circuit until I reach the 4th or 5th floor's Spring of Recovery.

In the time left, I messaged Kim MinHyuk to let him know the new information I had discovered about the mana circuit.

[Kim MinHyeok, 30th floor: I got it. I'll keep a record.]

[Kim MinHyeok, 30th floor: But are you ok on the 35th floor? Lee HyungJin was worried about you.]

It seems he talked to Lee HyungJin in the short time span.

Lee HyungJin took on the responsibility of managing and taking record of the people in the Hell Difficulty 1st floor instead of me.

So, Lee HyungJin talks to Kim MinHyuk or other militia members every now and then.

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: I'm fine.]

If I wasn't fine, what could be done.

It wasn't like I could give up.

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: What about Jung-Ah? She didn't read my messages.]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: Even if you sent one, she won't be able to check. It's the start of the round, so she'll be busy for a while.]

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: That's a shame. You should work too. Work harder.]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor:... I'm busy too.]

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: Work more.]

Recently, Park JungAh has been super busy every time a new round begins.

It doesn't seem like her workload lessens when the start of the round has passed either.

As time passes, challenger survival rates are becoming slightly higher.

Since people don't die like before and new people enter every round, the population in the tutorial is becoming larger.

As the strategy is solidifying, the danger level of the tutorial stage is much lower.

Naturally there has been an increase in the number of people enthusiastically trying their hand at the stages.

So, the ones in a bind were the administrators in the militia.

Plus, there was the need to check for information on those that have

made it out of the tutorial from the newbies that have come into the tutorial during the new rounds.

They couldn't help but be busy.

The time seemed to have passed as I was talking to Kim MinHyuk, and I was on the 4th floor stage.

Upon seeing the scenery change, I got up.

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: I gotta move. I'll message you later.]

[Kim MinHyeok, 30th floor: Ok.]

[Round 24, Day 2. 6h 0m]

The time limit for the 4

I wasn't sure if I could make it to the Boss Room within that time frame.

Even if I do make it to the Boss Room, it'll be hard to clear.

The area of the 4th floor Boss Room is immense.

I couldn't be certain I'd be able to clear the Boss Room even if I had four hours to put into just that.

I'll just try and do what I can.

I walked along the pathway that seemed larger than before.

The biggest point of interest on the 4th floor was that it's the first stage with battles.

Unlike the earlier stages which are all trap-based, goblins appear, and you need to take care of them.

I thought of the moment when I first entered the 4th floor.

“Kuwaaaaaa!”

The same cry as before.

It was peculiar to hear it again.

Even to go through the traps I’ve been through before, but this was a bit different.

While they were Goblins, seeing the same reactions as before from living beings overlapped my vision with memories from the past.

The dark green skin.

The tightly squeezed muscles.

The large incisors.

The red glitter in their eyes.

The height going over 2 meters.

The heavy axes.

The iron armor.

The Goblin drill sergeant that appears first on the 4th floor.

It was the first enemy I’ve meet when I first came into the tutorial, and the first living organism I saw since the death of the people I met on the 1st floor.

“Heh, it’s been a while.”

The Goblin cocked its head at my words.

An adorable gesture for something of that stature.

Instead of accepting its charms, I quickly ran forward.

I don't have any weapons.

It's not like when I had a short sword and shield.

The only choice I can make now, is to run into the Goblin's range.

As I quickly approached, the Goblin quickly erased its doubts and got ready for combat.

He lowered his axe and waited for the moment I approached to swing up the axe from the left bottom.

It was a tricky timing and arc to deal with since I was running straight at it.

But if I take a step back, I'll be at the mercy of the Goblin's range.

I need to do whatever it takes to get close.

I made sure not to lose any speed as I dodged the axe by sliding low.

And as I passed between the Goblin's legs, I moved my hands.

I created a sharp edge of mana from my fingertips and scratched the Goblin's calves.

The Goblin was wearing iron boots, but unfortunately, it didn't cover his calves or thighs.

[Acquired Intermediate Brawling Lv. 8.]

Upon seeing the blood splatter from the Goblin's calves, I got up.

As soon as I got up, the Goblin's axe swung at me.

Instead of blocking the axe, I gripped the Goblin's right wrist.

And with the other hand, I stabbed the Goblin's side.

Obviously, it was coated with mana as sharp as a surgeon's scalpel.

Trying to attack me while I was close enough to hug the Goblin, he moved his head.

I hesitated for a moment when I saw the Goblin attempt to headbutt me.

Normally, I'd just take the headbutt.

But it wasn't a good choice right now.

While I could cover myself in mana, if I get hit by the stupid rock head, there will be quite an impact.

Plus, the Goblin was wearing a helmet.

Before, I surpassed the Goblin in strength and speed, but was behind in ability.

Now, I surpass the Goblin in ability, but my strength, speed and endurance were very inferior.

I needed to take care of my body.

So, I sat straight down.

There was nothing else I could do to dodge the Axe coming from the side, the headbutt, and the left hand waiting to strike.

I let my legs crumple, and as I fell, I raised one knee and kicked the Goblin in the balls.

“Kuwaaaaaa!”

Sorry!

Really sorry!

I aimed for the Goblin hobbled over in a strange posture.

I wrapped the Goblin's ankle and calf with my right arm and struck the Goblin's knee from the side hard with my left fist.

With a crushing sound, a leg bone popped out the other side.

The Goblin couldn't even cry out from the abrupt pain.

I lifted my body as I pushed down on the Goblin falling from being struck on both legs and the balls.

I took a mounting position atop the Goblin falling down backwards and swung with my fists.

All the while the Goblin tried to raise its hands to protect its face, but what I was aiming for wasn't its face.

I could feel the ribs breaking from my fist embedded in the Goblin's chest.

The Goblin spit out saliva and the last of its breath as it were writhing, and soon its arms fell down.

Thanks to that, I could easily cut the Goblin's throat with my two hands wrapped in mana.

That's the end.

The Goblin convulsed as its neck spewed forth blood and died on the spot.

The hit to the chest was probably quite effective, since it died without able to even letting out a scream.

I was able to confirm that a good strike will be able to deal a proper blow.

I couldn't help but feel the lack of mana available for shaping.

There was a difference in strength and speed, but it wasn't hard to take care of him.

Not only did I finish the battle fast, but I also didn't take any damage.

I wasn't sure if this body would manage to keep pace with my thoughts in combat.

It was true my body wasn't in top condition, but it's fine if I keep that in mind.

The 1st battle on the 35th floor was a success.

That's how I wrapped up the combat results.

I decided to take the axe lying on the floor.

I've never used an axe, but I thought it would be better to have a weapon than just bare hands.

If it doesn't fit, I can just toss it aside.

As I walked with the axe, I could see a little foxhole ahead of me.

It was a hole with a tent on top.

Inside the tent were five goblins.

Two spearmen, two archers, and one shaman.

The goblin shaman is more of a support for the other four goblins rather than an attacker.

Since it was the 4th floor, its magic power wasn't much to worry about.

It appears as though the goblin shaman discovered me, as it was shaking awake the other sleeping goblins.

That's the role of that goblin shaman.

I ran holding the axe in front of me.

The two goblin archers quickly started shooting at me, but arrows from just two archers weren't enough to be of any danger to me.

There was no need to block using my axe, and I just closed the distance while dodging the arrows.

As I approached near the tent, the two spearmen crossed the two spears and lowered them to block my approach.

The two archers behind tossed aside their bows and gripped their daggers.

It seems to be an attempt to prevent me from closing in near the spearmen.

I drew near one of the spearmen.

Instead of snuggling close, I quickly swung the axe and hit the head of the spear.

Normally, you need to ignore this and let it slide off.

But the goblin spearmen couldn't manage to do that.

While the spearhead was pushed to the side from the impact with the axe, I took a wide step forward.

The nearby archer swung the dagger at me.

I dropped the axe I was holding.

I grabbed onto the wrist of the archer and stole the archer's dagger with my other hand.

All the while holding onto the archer's wrist, I stabbed the archer's back muscles with the dagger.

I stomped on the spearman swinging his spear at me again and shoved him with my shoulder.

As his ankle bones broke and the goblin spearman collapsed on the ground, I stabbed his neck and sent him off.

Now there was a set of one spearman and one archer, as well as a shaman standing at a slight distance.

Three in total.

As I was about to rush toward the other pair of spearman and archer, I heard a scream from behind me.

“Uaaaaaa!”

The goblin shaman was running at me while screaming.

I tried to ignore him, but there was a blue energy forming on the staff.

The shaman's body was rather slow.

Without a problem, I suppressed him by grabbing his wrist and turned him around.

I embraced the goblin shaman from behind and held my dagger by his neck.

Then the spearman and archer running at me stopped in their tracks.

They apparently stop when I hold a knife to their ally's neck.

I didn't know this before.

After watching the hesitating goblins for a while, I stabbed the dagger deep into the shaman's neck.

And shoved the shaman toward the spearman.

While the goblins were stunned, I quickly close the distance and ended the battle there.

It was something I felt before, but there was a large disparity in skill between the Goblin drill sergeant that appears in the beginning and the other goblins.

After making sure the goblins writhing on the ground were no longer breathing, I walked out of the tent.

I took one of the daggers.

I greatly preferred daggers to axes.

I'll use the axe like a shield when I approach defensively and toss the aside the axe and use the dagger when I'm close.

"Huah..."

It felt refreshing.

While it was a clean victory, there wasn't a big difference between me and the goblins.

It was a pleasant feeling of tension.

And the refreshing taste of small battles here and there that I haven't had in a while.

Let's hurry and go to the next one.

[The God of Remorse is watching you.]

Chapter 186

Tutorial 35th Floor (5)

I stepped out of the spring and squeezed my clothes dry.

[Round 24, Day 2. 6h 25m]

The clear was easier than I thought.

I made it to the 4th floor stage's Spring of Recovery in just 25 minutes.

Regardless of the difficulty, it was much faster compared to the stages with long pathways.

In front of the Boss Room, the giant stone doors opened, and revealed a new world.

It was the mid-slope of a mountain.

Thankfully, I knew the road.

If you follow the road, a goblin fortress appears.

As I looked up from the beaten path, I could see the stars filling the night sky.

This is one of the places where stars are bright.

Just like the last time I was here, I couldn't help but admire the view.

I admired the night sky as I slowly walked.

There was no reason to rush.

It's going to be hard to get to the city with the goblin king in time anyway.

And even harder to kill the goblin king who will be in the center of the city within four hours.

Furthermore.

No message appeared.

There was no message telling me to take care of the goblin king or do something.

They've just put me in this world and let me be.

I expected this after clearing to the end of the 3rd floor boss room and nothing happened.

This 35th floor doesn't give separate missions for each floor.

Then what do I need to do.

In the time remaining.

I eventually reached the castle walls.

From up close, the castle walls were quite high.

Last time, I got up easily using the Blink Authority, but that isn't an option now.

I could jump using a chunk of mana, but it'll also cause a catastrophic sound.

And the goblin soldiers will notice.

Do I need to climb up the wall?

As I was pondering about this, I heard a shout from the top of the wall.

“Hey! Human!”

[Acquired Akemin Continent Language Lv. 10.]

Huh?

“What are you looking for in this late hour!”

Did he just yell at me?

Puzzled, I looked up at the goblin soldier atop the castle walls.

The soldier was looking directly at me.

I thought I was far enough from him to avoid his sight.

That was a mistake.

The goblins have good night vision.

Unlike humans, they can see this far without a problem.

And when I was here before, I had covert skills and the like.

So, I just assumed it would be like the last time I was here and wasn't noticed, and I didn't think to hide my body.

[Acquired Coverttness Lv. 17]

As I thought about hiding my body, I acquired the Coverttness skill, though rather late.

But the goblin atop the castle walls had already found me.

I pondered for a moment, then answered the goblin atop the castle

walls.

“I lost my way!”

I shouted proudly!

It wasn't a lie.

It was... an ambiguous expression.

The goblin soldier shook his head a few times and disappeared from the walls.

I was more concerned with other things than the soldier disappearing.

I acquired the Akaine Continent language.

It means I already knew the Akaine continent language.

It was probably because of the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel skill.

I thought the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel Babel skill was a magical skill that would translate foreign languages.

So, when I could hear, say, and use the languages I didn't know, I assumed I didn't know the languages.

But when I heard the goblin's words just now, I understood as soon as I heard it.

The system judged that I already knew the language and added it as a skill.

If the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel skill isn't just a simple translating skill, and is instead one that imbeds the language into my head, it's possible.

If it's a language stuck in one's head, it's possible to recognize it as

soon as one hears it.

Is that really how it is?

I'll need to ask Kiri Kiri.

A small side door next to the giant stone doors opened.

The goblin soldier said to me from behind the open door.

"Come in."

I listened to the soldier's words and walked into through the castle walls.

It was quiet inside the walls.

It felt weird as the memory in my mind clashed with the situation now.

"It's quiet."

"Of course. It's late."

And it felt weird hearing the goblin say that to me as it were a natural thing.

"How did you lose your way in the mountains this late?" "I dunno."

"What's your destination?"

The goblin soldier asked me as though he were talking to a friend rather than conducting an interrogation.

I thought he would ask about me or request identification, but the goblin didn't request anything.

I couldn't feel any apprehension from the goblin that guided me

through the fortress after closing the small side door.

Destination.

What was the name of the goblin city past the fortress?

I don't remember.

"City."

"I assumed so. For what? Probably trade right?"

"I have something I need to find out."

The goblin didn't ask me what it is that I wanted to know.

He probably thought I was a merchant sent for market research.

Instead, he asked something else.

"When do you need to be there by? There's a carriage going to the city tomorrow afternoon. If you want, I can let you on.

Excessively friendly.

That kindness was enough to make my stomach ache.

Naturally, I thought of the deeds I had done while I was progressing through the 4th floor.

Back then, I lit the four fortresses on fire and massacred the goblin soldiers.

And once I cut their numbers, I infiltrated the city.

[The God of Remorse is watching you.]

Well. Is this what that god wanted?

What terrible taste.

“Sorry, but your words are more than enough. Instead, could you tell me the way to the city?”

“Now?”

I nodded.

“I’m in a bit of a rush.”

The goblin looked at me with a terrified look.

And murmured with a cackling sound.

“Damn. You were wandering the woods and have to go right away. Human trade guilds are too strict.”

[Acquired the Kipain Area’s Native Goblin Language Lv. 10]

Turns out the language me and the goblin were using was a foreign language.

I learned the goblin’s local dialect through hearing him murmur.

“Ok but go up there and wait a bit.”

The goblin had gestured at the watchtower.

A watchtower looking out toward the city.

“The view is pretty good. Since the stars are bright tonight, you can probably see the city a bit. It’s quite the spectacle, so go see the sights for a bit.”

With those words, the goblin vanished to somewhere.

Is he bringing me a map or something, because I don’t need one.

Once at the top of the watchtower, I could see the moonlight falling on the city from a distance, just like the goblin told me.

The goal I had set not too long ago was wavering.

Kiri Kiri had told me to not overdo it.

That the 35th floor stage wasn't made to be completed through combat alone.

Is this what she meant.

Once the clear goals that were given to me were gone, I couldn't figure out what to do this time.

The first thing that came to my mind was in the end, combat.

As I climb higher, there will be numerous enemies just waiting for a piece of me.

And I can't deal with those enemies can't be dealt easily in this weakened body.

It's better to become stronger while I have the chance.

And the goblins below the watchtower over there will be the perfect opponents for a faster leveling.

But should I attack those that were sympathetic towards me just because of that?

I asked myself the same question I had before.

My answer was. No.

The reason was simple.

I'm stronger.

I have the right to choose how to become stronger.

Is it the same now?

In just a few hours, a few days, I'll be plopped onto extremely dangerous floors.

The time given to me is limited.

Because I'm running against time, I don't have the luxury of choosing.

But still, I'm the stronger one here.

I wasn't sure what the God of Remorse wanted to say.

But I was sure of one thing.

My strength is no longer tied to the tutorial.

While the tutorial did provide the opportunity and means to evolve myself, I have already completely absorbed the ways.

Even if I was immediately returned to my state two years prior when I was watching tv and doing nothing with my life, I can return myself to this state without a problem.

Obviously, it'll be harder outside of the tutorial.

But it wouldn't be impossible in 5 or 10 years.

The 35th floor stage made me certain.

It was a doubt that I had always harbored.

No matter how much I scream and shout about how well off I am, they were abilities and power given to me by the gods.

I was afraid that I would become nothing if and when my powers

were taken away from me.

But now, those fears are gone.

My power isn't something that is seen through the status window display of Authorities or skills or even the high stats and levels.

And because of that I could proudly say.

I'm strong.

No matter where I am.

Even when I'm faced with opponents much stronger than me, I will always be the stronger one.

[The God of Remorse is watching you.]

"How kind."

"You're welcome."

The goblin came back.

With a large satchel.

"You don't need a map right? Just follow the highway leading down straight. It'll take about half a day if you're on a horse. And these are some fruits, bread, and drinks. Snack on it during your trip."

I asked the kind goblin.

"Why are you being so nice to me?"

The goblin was a bit taken aback at my words.

"Just. Well. It's amusing. I also felt bad when you said you had to leave right away when you were lost in the woods until just now."

“Amusing?”

“Seeing a human. It’s been a while. Usually, human merchants take the fortress doors over there.”

He was interested as though he were seeing a foreigner.

He acted as though he saw humans every day on the way to work, but he I took the satchel from the goblin.

“Thanks.”

“No problem.”

I got him to repeat the directions.

The goblin opened the small side door toward the city, and I started off towards the road.

As I’ve walked out, I felt the goblin’s gaze on my back disappear.

I stopped for a moment and stretched.

Originally, I hadn’t planned on going to the city.

There was quite a distance to the city, and there was no reason to if I thought about the time I had left.

Especially when I had no reason to take care of the goblin king.

But now, I had a reason to go and see the goblin king.

I had something I wanted to ask.

I haven’t tried to exert my mana to its maximum capacity since start of the 35th floor.

There was a bit of mana I needed to save to further increase my mana

capacity.

Above all, it was dangerous.

I say this again, but it's dangerous.

But now, I had a reason to give it my all.

I mustered up as much mana as I could.

And instead of focusing it onto my limbs or back muscles, I spread it out in my body, and activated the circuit.

What I need right now isn't to strengthen or lighten my body, or even protection through mana.

But to awaken my body.

Pang!

As I kicked off, my body shot out like an arrow.

The cold dawn winds brushed my face, but I ran on.

Towards the goblin city.

“Phuek. Hooooo.”

When I took my breath, it sounded like a dog panting.

I wanted to breath as quietly as possible, but it wasn't under my control.

I checked again to make sure the goblins by my feet wouldn't come to.

Thankfully, both were dozing off in the dreamland.

Huaaa.

It was hard.

I ran through the plains between the fortress and the city, and snuck in by climbing the castle walls.

I did the same for the inner castle walls

And the same to get to the goblin king's bedroom.

Since I had already infiltrated into the goblin king's bedroom once before, I could find it without any trouble.

I didn't need to worry about being caught by the goblin soldiers.

If they could see through Level 17 Covertness, they wouldn't have appeared on the 4th floor.

Anything over level 15 goes beyond just quietly hiding and moving; it was enough to not be noticed while using up mana at the max potential right in front of someone's eyes.

[Round 24, Day 2. 7h 15m]

It only took 50 minutes to dash through the plains on horseback, and sneak past the city's outer and inner walls to this center spot.

I used everything I had.

In the aftermath of the violent workout, white steam emanated from my body.

I thought about using the rest of the mana to calm it down quickly, but I decided to let my body cool off by itself.

I quietly opened the door and entered the bedroom.

The bedroom was a bit humid and hot.

It smelled a bit.

It was a large enough room to where I couldn't immediately locate the goblin king.

Instead of using my eyes, I focused on my hearing.

If I can locate his breathing, I can easily find where he is.

Once my hearing is strengthened by mana, it can locate any minute noise.

Through my ears ready to hear any small noise in the room, I heard breathing.

There was a problem.

There were three.

Three including me.

There were two goblins breathing heavily on the bed.

That's when I realized some of my questions could be answered.

Why there were so few guards near the bedroom.

Why the room was so humid and hot.

And why it smelled.

I knew.

The goblin king was performing nighttime labor.

I remembered the goblin king's children.

And the sight of an old goblin king.

He had a white beard down to his chest, but he's quite vigorous for his

age.

I covered my face with my two hands, dumbfounded at the unanticipated situation.

Unable to do anything and agonizing over what to do, I coughed.

“Khm.”

Chapter 187

Tutorial 35th Floor (6)

“Khem!”

I coughed loudly to cover up the embarrassing situaon.

But unfortunately, the goblin king didn't display any sort of response to my coughing sounds.

Did he not hear me?

“Uhhuhhum!”

I made another coughing sound.

This me, thankfully the goblin king reacted.

He stopped moving, looked around, then started doing his thing again.

...Fuck.

“Uhhum! Uhhuhhum!”

I made a noise loud enough to stop a marketplace aune dead in her tracks.

If he doesn't hear this, it means his sense of hearing has problems.

Or he's just really horny.

Please fucking stop, please!

I finally met the goblin king face to face.

After jumping out of bed and rushing to grab his robes, the goblin king asked, “W-Who are you!”

A question straight to the core.

The problem was that it’s hard to answer that question.

It wasn’t because I didn’t want to reveal my identity, but because I couldn’t be sure of what my identity was.

What would be a good way to introduce myself?

I pondered for a moment.

“Assassin.”

It was a good choice.

Of course, not for the goblin king

The green face froze.

And the pitiful and old goblin dragged himself out of bed and changed his composure.

He couldn’t even gather himself from being surprised, but he regained his self-control upon hearing my answer.

It was a rather impressive sight to see him becoming dignified in the face of danger.

I honestly admired the goblin’s transformation from a man whose nightly duty was cut short into a king facing an assassin.

The goblin king yet again displayed his dignity.

“I don’t believe I’ve done anything to displace the human kingdoms.”

I agree with the senment.

The guards at the fortress weren't hosle towards humans, but rather he let me through without inspecon.

The city itself is amicable towards humans and they aren't skepcal either.

"Trade guild? Seems like they want to exert influence over the city aer killing me. But I don't know the method."

The goblin king connued with a calm tone.

It was a calm atude, but he wasn't calm.

What reason did he have to explain the details to an assassin?

None.

He's just connuing on to buy me for a plan.

He didn't try to call guards.

I made quite a ruckus in this bedroom.

If the guards outside didn't react to that, it meant that I had already taken care of them.

"It's not like there's rare minerals or specialty goods on this land either."

I needed a beer subject.

"I'm not an assassin sent by the kingdom or the trade guild."

"...Then who sent you?"

It wasn't the sort of queson an assassin would ever answer.

So, I could avoid answering without remorse.

“Who knows.”

The goblin king stopped speaking whatever came to his mind to try and think of ways to get out of this situaon.

Instead, he focused on me.

That was good.

“Rather, I have something I’d like to ask. I’d be pleased if you would answer.”

The goblin didn’t let down his guard but couldn’t hide the relief and hope in his eyes.

He probably thought I was here to deliver a message or a warning instead of assassinang him.

But my goal was honestly just to ask this queson.

“Have you done anything that would anger or annoy the gods? Or seriously endanger the peace of this world?”

Up unl now, whenever I saw a ‘terminate’ message, I didn’t have any doubts.

The targets were usually necromancers, doppelgängers, demon kings and other easily-idenfiable villains who endangered world peace.

But this goblin king is different.

His reign was superb, humane... no, the best thing I have seen out of goblins.

The city was peaceful and wealthy.

It was a stage without any major conflict.

But the tutorial requested the terminaon of the goblin king and ordered the murder of countless goblin soldiers.

I wondered why.

If there was no reason...

Did they make us aack this peaceful city without a reason, just to test challengers?

It was something I had to know.

It was possible that the tutorial stages have nothing to do with good or evil.

It wasn't something that I was unfamiliar with.

Fundamentally, the gods in this tutorial don't seem very kind-hearted.

The Earth is infested with monsters, and hell is unfolding.

If abducng people to make them superhuman in order to defend themselves isn't kindhearted, what is?

Even glancing through the community, people's atudes were mainly amicable when it came to the tutorial.

There are unfathomable numbers praising the gods, comparing them to gods nave to Earth.

It was all the more common in people who entered the tutorial aer experiencing the mayhem caused by monsters.

Some also researched doctrines of gods and idenfied themselves as believers of a parcular god.

But there are no Hell Difficulty challengers that praise the kind-heartedness of gods.

At least as far as I know.

The goblin king went silent for a moment at my question.

It was a weird reason.

Wouldn't one normally ask what that means?

"Do you happen to be a god's Apostle?"

His calm voice started to shake.

It seems as though he had something on his mind.

I nodded in affirmation.

To tell the truth, I wasn't an apostle.

But I was something similar.

[The God of Adventure is pleased.]

Huh? Why is the God of Adventure pleased?

All of a sudden.

[The God of Slowness rebukes someone.]

[The God of Duels vehemently denies someone's word.]

[The God of Death mocks someone.]

[The God of Adventure is embarrassed.]

I wasn't sure what they were doing, but I ignored them for now and focused on the goblin king.

The goblin king was noticeably anxious.

“What were you planning? Answer honestly.”

I asked him in an overtly apostle-like tone.

“I-It wasn’t created by us. I happened to acquire it by chance and hoped I could use it to fulfill my personal desires.”

Created. Acquired. Desire.

All the key words.

“Bring it.”

“Sir?”

“Bring it to me and show me.”

Not that I knew what it was.

“Yes sir.”

“Don’t even think about escaping or calling the soldiers. It’s annoying. I don’t have much time left, and if you cannot prove your innocence I’ll act as planned.”

This is probably enough intimidation.

The goblin king seems to think of me as an apostle sent to punish him.

“Please wait here for a moment.”

The goblin king left after those words.

I deliberated the dialogue in the recently-vacated room.

“Hey...”

It wasn’t an empty room!

The goblin's partner was still here.

She had put on her gown and asked nervously.

"Can... I leave?"

"Ah, yes. Feel free."

I said to the goblin female running out of the room.

"My sincere apologies!"

Of course, the goblin female ran out and closed the door before I could finish my apologies.

I waited for the goblin king while organizing my thoughts in the now, truly, empty room.

It took the goblin king a while to come back.

Just before I decided to go and catch the goblin king myself.

"If you were just a little bit late, I would have waited for you myself."

"How could I possibly run from an Apostle?"

It wasn't likely.

The goblin king seemed to be short of breath and was sweating profusely.

Probably because he was rushing to bring back the item.

Or, maybe because he was looking for the guards.

"It would have been interesting in itself if you ran."

"But not for me. Haha..."

He laughed as if his anxiety lessened.

But with a forced smile.

The goblin king brought back a small black sphere.

The sphere was large enough to fill my hand was smooth and had quite a he to it.

“I’ve already told you, but we acquired it by chance; we didn’t cra it.

“I think I heard something about you fulfilling your wishes with this.”

“I... did. But I haven’t tried yet.”

The moment before he tried, huh?

Is this stage meant to stop the aempt by dispatching a challenger to take care of the king?

If so, what happens aer his aempt?

And what is this sphere that makes the gods uneasy?

At the very least, the goblin king seems to assume that this sphere is the cause.

I examined the sphere, but I couldn’t make out a shred of mana in the sphere.

How did he plan to use this thing?

Instead, I injected my mana into it.

The mana couldn’t enter and was repelled.

As if it was full of a different type of mana.

Is it a stone that repels mana?

“How did you plan to fulfill your wish with this?”

“I heard that it was possible if you use the power inside. From what the magicians told me...”

Power within the sphere.

It meant that there's something inside here.

[All of the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple are watching you closely.]

[The gods of the Hundred Gods Temple are nervous.]

I tried to absorb the sphere's energy.

As if sucking out mana.

I didn't feel anything being absorbed.

It felt as though I were trying to absorb something when there was nothing.

But.

There was something coming inside me.

The 'something' that I couldn't feel kept coming.

Even so, I couldn't figure out what it was, nor feel it.

The hairs on my body rose up from the peculiar sensaon.

It was a dreadful sensaon, having something that I didn't know coming into me.

[The gods of the Hundred Gods Temple start a vote.]

[Approval : 94 votes in favor, 4 votes against, 2 votes are abstained.]

[The moon has passed with a majority. It now invokes force over someone.]

[The gods of the Hundred Gods Temple start a vote.]

[Approval : 95 votes in favor, 4 votes against, 1 vote is abstained.]

The messages started to appear for no reason.

Before I could understand the meaning, my body was moved.

Aer a brief flash, once I opened my eyes, I was no longer standing in the goblin king's bedroom.

I was at the entrance of the 5th floor stage.

What is this?

[Round 24, Day 2. 8h 40m]

It wasn't me to be moved from the 4th floor stage onto the 5th floor stage yet.

Then this meant I was moved by force through the vote of the gods.

Like the me the God of Adventure moved me on the 5th floor previously.

It wasn't a pleasant feeling.

I didn't like being moved in a particular way by the influence of others.

Apart from the unpleasantness, I wondered what the reason was.

It wasn't part of the concept of the 4th floor to move the challenger by force, so there is definitely a reason why I was moved.

And the first thing that came to my mind was, the black sphere.

And the power absorbed from the black sphere.

Something that I couldn't feel or be aware of but proved itself by diffusing into my body.

That energy was clumped in my right arm.

I couldn't feel the energy, but I have a precise understanding of my body and observe it closely.

It was possible for me to locate the foreign substance and set up walls around it to make sure it wouldn't spread to another area.

I focused on the energy clumped in my arm.

I heightened every bit of my senses and tried to feel something from the energy I couldn't feel.

Aer about an hour, I could organize my findings.

First, this energy has attributes similar to mana.

Second, the energy's identity wasn't hidden through magical means.

At least, that's what I could discern at my level.

Third, after examining this energy for an hour, I got a feeling.

It was an abstract feeling, but I was sure because of my experience.

The feeling from this energy was similar to the divine power of Authorities.

Chapter 188

Tutorial 35th Floor (7)

First, ignoring what it was that was absorbed into my right arm, I needed to handle of the current situation.

As soon as I obtained the energy, two rounds of votes took place; as a result I was forced onto the 5th floor stage.

I didn't have a way of knowing the topic of the votes, but I speculated it was because they no longer wanted me on the 4th floor stage in order to prevent me from learning something I wasn't meant to.

And that "something" is closely related to the energy absorbed into my right arm.

Regardless of what the energy is, it's certainly of importance.

If I thought of it that way, I felt I benefited from the ordeal.

But I was more offended that I was moved at the whim of the gods.

This unpleasantness gave me renewed conviction for my goal.

It happened before as well.

When I cleared the 4th floor and when I was abducted into the tutorial.

That's not all.

Even now, my actions are being controlled by them.

I couldn't stay in the waiting room beyond a certain amount of time,

and once the time passes, I'm banished from the room.

And once I'm on the stage, I need to squirm and struggle my way through clearing each of the floor's missions.

It was something that I accepted previously.

I even thanked them a bit for changing my life.

But once I took a disliking to it, it was something I could no longer bear.

"Hooooo."

I quickened my breathing to calm down.

Although it's hard, I need to restrain myself.

I'll have to suppress it for quite a while anyway.

Let's ask Kiri Kiri about this event.

Though, it'll be difficult to get a proper answer.

Next, this energy.

The energy absorbed into my right arm is moving according to my guidance just like mana.

It didn't seem to go crazy or have any negative effects on my body either.

Just that I wasn't able to accurately feel or recognize its existence, and that it's radiating the same sort of holy energy found in God's Authorities.

It could be a condensed form of Holy energy.

It's possible if the stone I received from the goblin king was a god's holy relic, or a token of an Apostle.

Anyhow, a sleeping energy in my right hand...

As if it were a sleeping black dragon in my right hand.

I was nervous that my 8th grade syndrome would flare up again.

I moved the energy to another spot.

There was a spot in a corner of my chest.

I was curious about this particular spot from polishing my mana circuit for the last 2 years.

In the circuit that connects the whole body, there was a dead space.

It wasn't like the cells died, or I caught a disease.

But just like dead space in an interior design, I had an empty space in my chest.

The space doesn't have any effect on any of the circuits, but it was still connected to all of the important circuits running through all of the limbs.

I stored the energy there.

If it's here, I won't have a problem of it colliding with mana that I would be utilizing.

After I stored it, it felt as I finally completed something.

Almost like this space was made to store this kind of energy.

My ignorance on the subject of the mana circuit hurt me deeply.

I didn't have a chance to learn from anyone about the mana circuit.

The very few chances I've had were with Idy and the Knight on the 16th floor.

They weren't that proficient in their own, and I needed to self-study to research the circuit pathways and application methods.

I couldn't ask other challengers.

They don't have any information on the mana circuit in the first place.

I was the first one to find the mana circuit, and the one to inform the The Order of Vigilance and the challengers in the community of its existence.

Moreover, most of the challengers didn't know how to use it even when I've given the instructions and methods of

applying the mana circuit.

The most that they've done was to attain Lvl. 1 or 2 mana circuit skills through the information I gave them, and vacantly wait for the skill to level up passively as part of their level up reward.

As a result, I also had much to learn about the mana circuit.

I didn't even have names for the circuit's structure or channels, and there was no way of finding new applications if I didn't know or couldn't think of in the first place.

I needed an opportunity to study it properly.

But I couldn't ask Kiri Kiri about the mana circuit in depth, and I wouldn't find any books on it through the Shop.

Neither Seregia nor the holy sword had information at the level I needed.

Ways to learn were limited.

I needed to learn from someone or grasp it during a fight.

Or learn through outcomes.

There were two that came to my mind.

The Juji on the 13th floor.

And the godmother on the 19th floor.

Out of them, I thought about the head monk, who I would encounter first.

Back then, his skills were better than mine, and he excelled at managing mana.

Some of the ways I manipulate my mana were from emulating and learning from how he managed his mana.

In addition, he has a similar body structure to humans and is also an Apostle.

Lastly, he didn't have any qualms about teaching the challengers.

A perfect environment.

I'll need to make meeting Juji on the 13th floor my primary goal for now.

It wasn't an easy task.

The path to reach the 13th floor Juji goes beyond the requirements of just clearing the 13th floor.

I needed to meet Juji within the 13 hour time limit, and rush in order to learn something from him.

Let's speed up my growth before then.

[Round 24, Day 2. 9h30m]

Normally, I was going to be moved onto this 5th floor stage at 10, but my plans were changed.

I was probably moved 30 to 35 minutes too early.

Then, would I be moved from the 5th floor stage to the 6th floor stage at 15 sharp or near 1430?

I couldn't be sure.

Let's just move for now.

I jammed my spear through the lizardman's jaw.

The spearhead pierced the jaw and came out through his head.

I left the spear in the corpse remorselessly and turned my back.

The enemy wasn't just one lizardman.

The tail attacks toward my torso.

I couldn't slip past the thick tails.

The tail's reach was too long for me to just back off safely.

Instead of backing off too much, I took a large step forward.

Since the tail is swung from the body as a pivot, the force dealt is weaker the closer I am to the center.

I wrapped mana around my left arm and shielded my body.

Kang!

The intense blow triggered a throbbing pain from my left arm and shoulder.

The pain surged down my chest and into my waist.

If the waist shakes, the center of balance shakes and destabilizes the lower body.

I forcibly quashed the pain and moved.

The lizardman was also affected by the blow's impact

As much as the tail attack was done with the full strength of his whole body, he couldn't be free from the recoil damage.

The largest weakness of tail attacks is that one has to turn their back to attack.

I attacked the lizardman's back as he was hurriedly trying to twist his body.

As I shoved my right fist into him, I heard the ribs shatter.

“Kehek!”

I wasn't satisfied with just that and buried my fist in him again.

Precisely onto his spine.

That incapacitated the last of the lizardmen.

I picked up one of the spears strewn on the ground.

I finished off a lizardman who was foaming and writhing on the ground.

“Hua...”

My arm was tingling from blocking the strike just now.

Not just the arm, but my body was lined with small and large cuts, pangs and aches.

The lizardmen were hostile.

They didn't turn away from battle.

They threw their whole body at me in hopes of succeeding in one attack.

In their minds, they probably didn't have the phrase "high-risk, high-return."

Probably just "high-return."

It wasn't possible be uninjured while fighting those that didn't care about how strong the opponent was, or how many of their peers died beside them.

Unlike the past, where I surpassed them in physical capability, I was lacking in physical strength. Even if my skills far surpassed them, I couldn't help but take damage here and there.

And this is just an assumption, but the lizardmen seemed to rush at me with ferocity unlike before.

From what I've heard from Lee Hyungjin who cleared this 5th floor like I had done before, the 5th floor wasn't supposed to be this difficult.

I haven't felt this before since I was far past the level of 5th floor standards, but the 5th floor is much more difficult compared to the 4th floor.

So, I formulated a hypothesis.

Based on the fact that half of the lizardmen on the 5th floor... or

rather lizardwomen, it made all the more likely that my hypothesis is correct.

My hypothesis became conviction when I heard their dying words.

My head was filled with a familiar face while fight them.

Idy.

Or Idaltar.

My heart was heavy from just thinking about her, who would be waiting for me in the 5th floor boss room.

There was a lot that came to mind, a lot that I was curious about, and even much more in what I would say to her when I come face to face with her.

I wasn't sure how to face her when it came to be.

I agonized over the meeting with her as soon as I saw the message that I'll be challenging the floors again from the 1st floor.

But even as the meeting neared, I wasn't able to formulate a clear answer.

And now, I chose to postpone the answer.

To think about it after I meet her.

After walking away from the lizardmen, who were the most erratic opponents up until now, I reached the Spring of Recovery.

This is the last Spring of Recovery.

From the 6th floor onwards, there is no Spring of Recovery.

It could appear again in the higher floors that I have yet to reach, but from what I know, the Spring of Recovery on the 5th floor is the last.

So, this was the last chance.

I went and laid down in the spring.

Sudden expansion of the mana circuit places extreme stress on the body.

Because I won't be able to enter the waiting room on the 35th floor stage, I needed to expand my mana circuit as much as I could in the Spring of Recovery here.

As I manipulated a larger volume of more highly concentrated mana than before, I felt the pain shoot through my body.

I brutally forced open the congested areas where the circuit slowed down.

Of the paths that were blocked, I rammed through with all my strength.

The walls didn't break down on the first try.

As they were walls that required time to melt away the blockades, it wasn't easy.

Every time I attacked the wall, I heard a 'kwangkwang' sound in my head and my body convulsed, but I repeatedly slammed at the wall.

As I repeated that multiple times, I could feel the walls weaken.

After preparing myself, I readied myself to attack multiple walls in one go.

The impact of breaking down one wall, and having the mana flow through is immense.

It's possible I would lose my mind and faint from just that.

But I didn't have much time.

I couldn't faint multiple times before trying again.

So, I chose to break down the weakened walls in one go.

Even if it was probably extremely dangerous.

No, it was extremely dangerous.

But it was something I could attempt because of the Spring of Recovery.

Kwang!

Along with the impact, the walls broke down and my mana in my body started to go wild.

The side effect of leaping over multiple stages and shedding the limits was larger than I thought it would be.

My head felt as though it would explode from just trying to make the berserk mana circulate along the path.

It wasn't something I could control if I hadn't had the experience up until now in my head, even if my body was not reset.

[Acquired Mana Circuit Lv. 20]

But because of that, I was able to reach Mana Circuit Lv.20 in one attempt.

If I thought about the suffering, I had to go through to raise my Mana Circuit skill level to 20, it was quite a feat.

Once I tamed the mana that was about to explode, the pain came flooding in.

The pain was as if a thousand hands were wringing my body dry as if it were laundry.

My muscles were frozen stiff from the pain, and because of that I couldn't even scream.

[Acquired Pain Tolerance Lv. 4]

[Acquired Pain Tolerance Lv. 5]

[Acquired Pain Tolerance Lv. 6]

It's been a while.

I've been through pain countless times and have suffered through it. But this level of pain wasn't common.

Moreover, my pain tolerance level was low, and my body didn't have the strength to handle this sort of impact.

With my consciousness fading out, I could only hope that my body and mind would safely make it through this agony.

Chapter 189

Tutorial 35th Floor (8)

I checked the time as soon as I opened my eyes.

More time had passed than I thought.

Now that I think about it, I didn't have Faint Resistance yet.

Because of that, I must've been floating on the spring water for longer than I expected.

I walked out of the blackened spring water.

A stench rose from the filthy water.

I couldn't believe all of that black filth came from my body.

What the fuck is that.

It's almost as if I shit through my skin.

I observed the changes from a distance.

First of all, the development of the mana circuit was a success.

It was exactly as I expected.

Rather, the body's development was astounding.

My five senses had significantly sharpened, including sight...

My skin, bones, and physique all reached a respectable durability compared to before.

The twisted joints from living as an invalid were gone, and my muscle flexibility improved significantly.

In addition, my stamina and strength stats rose quite a bit.

Above all, my senses for feeling and perceiving mana were sharper than ever.

It really felt like an overhaul of the body, like in martial arts novels.

Unlike before, when I went back and forth between raising levels and training for prolonged periods of time, I transformed my invalid body to this point in just a few hours.

It was no different from completely reconstructing it.

It was enough to warrant the pain and agony that came before I passed out.

In addition, I also gained higher levels of Pain Tolerance, as well as just one level of Faint Resistance.

You could see it as attaining a slightly better result compared to my original goal.

Most of all, my heart was calm.

Maybe it was because I had expelled all the bad elements in my body, but my heart was as light and tranquil as my body.

The troubles that harrowed my mind before passing out were still present.

But I felt as though I could deal with those troubles without much worry.

I manipulated my mana as I walked.

I finished my testing after checking the mana circuit and verifying it

by encapsulating the tip of my finger with aura.

Definitely a result I was satisfied with.

It wasn't comparable to my body before entering the 35th floor, but with this I no longer had to struggle with the body's inadequacy.

I brushed the filth off my body and dried my wet clothes with mana.

The stench was immense, but I also blew it off with mana.

Normally, I used deodorant or changed into new clothes.

But right now I don't have access to the inventory or any items, so I needed to dry and deodorize each item to get rid of the stench.

It was an unconventional experience.

After making sure I was in presentable condition, I left the spring and started walking.

As I walked on, I soon reached the 5th floor boss room.

Once I saw the room, I had mixed feelings.

Would it be the right choice to open this?

Or should I just bide my time and pass onto the 6th floor?

In truth, the answer was already set.

I had no intention of backing away.

If I don't open this door, even if it was the correct choice, I'll rue the day forever.

My hesitation was about Idy.

But the remorse after the choice had nothing to do with her.

It was my problem.

I put strength in my hand, and gave a hard push.

The enormous door opened, and an overly familiar face greeted me.

“It’s been some time since I’ve had a challenger. Keruk, Keruk.”

A message telling me to defeat the enemy in front of me didn’t appear like the last time I entered the 5th floor boss room.

There wasn’t even the wall blockading us from each other.

I ended up coming face to face with her, who was giving me a blank gaze while sitting on the floor.

“I... daltar”

“Keruk?”

Idaltar’s eyes glistened from the words that escaped my mouth without me thinking.

To be fair, Idaltar’s eyes always glistened, but even so, they glistened even more.

“You know my name. Keruk, Keruk. Did you hear it from my brethren?”

My heart beat briskly from the thought of almost accidentally having called her Idy unintentionally.

Her real name ‘Idaltar’ and the nickname ‘Idy’ was how I was distinguishing her.

“Keruk, then you probably haven’t heard good things.”

She was quite unusual in the tutorial because Idaltar was one of the few beings who was somewhat familiar with the system.

Since she was imprisoned alone in the 5th floor boss room, it was probable that she needed to have some knowledge regarding the general state of things.

Obviously, she knew that her kind were outside this boss room.

But there was one thing that bothered me.

When I first entered the room, Idy said that I was the only challenger in quite some time.

“Was there another visitor in this room before me?”

I wanted to ask if she remembered others before me.

“Keruk, Keruk.”

Idy keruk’d and swayed her head to say no.

“Then why.”

“That makes it seem more legitimate. Keruk, Keruk.”

Idy was...

No, Idaltar laughed, keruk-ing as if she found something funny.

The Idaltar in front of me seemed to overlap with the dying Idy in the Temple of Dinosaurs.

Her freedom was limited by the Constraints; she had little choice in what to think and say.

Her memories were tampered with, and she couldn’t even attempt to try and remember her past.

And she knew these facts.

But she laughed as if it was unavoidable; my memories of her overlapped with the reality in front of my eyes.

Rage and sadness leapt up inside me chaotically.

I suppressed the emotions as best as I could.

It wasn't something the Idaltar in front of me would want either.

Above all, I couldn't accomplish anything when being swept away by these emotions.

What I wanted was to resolve the root cause for this rage and sadness, not to run rampant after being swallowed whole by these emotions.

“Keruk, you don't have to pity me. I don't know why you're so concerned with my situation. Keruk, Keruk, the challenger this time is rather kind.”

Her words telling me I didn't need to be so concerned pulled me deeper into my pit of emotions.

I cleared my throat and said.

“Khem, hm, it's not nice to strike at the core of someone else's thoughts.”

It was something she had said to me in the past.

“But I'm good at reading others' emotions. Keruk, I was ostracized ever since I was young by my own kind. I had to get used to deciphering their reactions. After I became a Great Warrior and received power from a god, I became able to read other people's emotions almost perfectly.”

I didn't ask which god gave her the power.

I knew she wouldn't be able to answer.

“Keruk, I don't know why you're feeling pity for me, but I hope today's encounter goes well. Even if it's something that I won't be able to remember after this time is over, isn't it better to enjoy the present?”

“Yeah, you're right.”

She was right.

There was no need to complicate things.

“So, about that. Keruk, Keruk.”

Idaltar gave a long speech but soon became bashful.

I could predict her words from my past experience.

“Would you mate with...”

“Nope.”

“Keruk.”

That again.

Is that why she was going on about having a good time and stuff?

Once I realized her notion of a 'good time' and mine was different, I realized what she said could be heard differently.

“Keruk.”

Good time my ass. Idaltar made a face as if the world was falling apart and looked like she was about to cry.

“Why are you so down? Am I in the wrong here? Is it really my fault?”

Even if you make a sad face, I'm still not going to do it."

At my words, Idaltar scratched her head and straightened her face.

"Keruk, didn't think that my compassion-inducement strategy wouldn't work. Such a shame."

I had one thing I wanted to ask Idaltar.

Female lizardmen... lizardwomen had been lunging at me ferociously.

And from what I know, for the lizardmen race the strongest and most triumphant have priority in every situation.

When I met Idaltar for the first time, she was the stronger one and boldly requested that I mate with her.

Of course, I declined, and Idaltar was upset and dumbfounded.

That's how the lizardmen race was.

The strong deserve respect, and most willingly and even gladly accommodate to their requests.

Therefore, the strong can comfortably demand what they want from the other.

On the flip side, the weak make frantic ef.

To gain the right to request what their desires through victory.

Or even if they don't win, to appeal to the other by fighting fiercely.

If you just listen to the explanation, you'll be wondering what kind of crazy talk is this.

To be fair, the lizardmen race has a few screws loose to begin with.

Idaltar was on the calm and sensible side of the spectrum.

Anyway, to get back to my original point, I wasn't able to distinguish the males and females of the lizardmen race.

But now that I can definitely distinguish them, I wondered why female lizardmen were particularly ferocious towards me.

"You just like the way I look?"

"Keruk, Keruk. Ideal type. Handsome."

Motherfucker.

Idaltar just said that my face is an ideal appearance for lizardwomen.

What kind of face is the face that's popular among lizardmen. What on earth...

"Exactly your face. Keruk."

Turns out my face is celebrity-level for lizardmen.

Should I be pleased or not?

All of a sudden, I remembered the time when I met her for the first time.

I thought I had gained her favor because I acknowledged and complimented her skills.

But according to what she was telling me now, that was all a delusion.

It was highly probable that she would've lunged at me no matter what I said.

"To continue with that, Keruk."

Idaltar gripped the spear she had over her shoulder.

“Won’t you do it?”

I got goosebumps from her serious voice.

“Don’t leave out the object of the sentence!”

“It was an ambiguous meaning. Keruk. We’re going to do it anyway if I win, right?”

“NO!”

“Keruk, Keruk, Keruk.”

Idaltar laughed and keruk-ed as if it was funny.

“You won’t shy away from the duel right?”

“Of course I won’t.”

It wasn’t easy to find a dueling partner like her.

Proficient spearmanship in strong strikes and cunning judgement.

In addition, she also has an Authority from an unknown god.

While there were stronger foes than her in the higher floors, it was hard to find a dueling partner as constructive as her.

Above all, she relishes duking it out in a rough brawl over talking as much as I do.

The lizardmen are warriors from birth.

Even if it doesn’t have to do anything with mating, they love battles.

“Keruk, you don’t seem to have a weapon.”

“Unfortunately.”

Instead, I pulled out long blades of aura just above the top of my hands.

The mana consumption of the blades wasn't as bad as I thought.

Forming mana on weapons constantly consumes mana.

But it doesn't take much mana to maintain the form of perfectly refined aura like this.

I checked the length, width, and sharpness of the claws I extended from the top of both my hands.

It was basically a zealot.

“Keruk, what an incredible challenger.”

Idaltar said as if delighted.

“Keruk, but I hope you won't be careless. I feel like I'll finally be able to use the power I'm normally unable to. Just don't die on me.”

“Power you were unable to use?”

“Keruk, Keruk.”

She didn't seem to be able to say more.

Was there power that I wasn't aware of?

To be fair, she did have unusual abilities.

She is able to temporarily boost her body's ability, as well and temporarily become invulnerable by turning her body into smoke.

In addition to that, she can brandish her cursed-level strength through

her weapons.

An ability I didn't know in addition to that?

Was she really an ex-Apostle of a god?

“Ok, let's go at it.”

Chapter 190

Tutorial 35th Floor (9)

Before engaging in battle, Idaltar's eyes flushed red.

In that state, her muscle strength and tolerance to pain increases drastically.

Kwang!

She created a massive fissure by slamming her spear on the ground.

Let's avoid battles of strength if I can.

I thought that technique was only something she could use when her emotions were in turmoil, but it turns out she can use it whenever she pleases.

"Keruk, it's on!"

Idtalar kicked off the ground with a shout.

A typical stab using the superior reach of the spear came at me.

I quickly lowered my body to evade the spearhead flying towards my throat.

With the aura-formed claws on my right hand, I intercepted the spear and closed the distance.

Along with a 'voong' sound, the spear brushed past my ear.

Some sparks flew and noise rang out from the aura's collision with the spear.

Idaltar took a step back and retracted her spear.

All the while, she kept me in check using her tail and spear shaft.

Kang! Kang! Kang! Kang!

My aura repeatedly clashed with her spear.

As if knowing I was aiming at her blind spots, Idaltar held me back using smaller quick attacks rather than a large sweeping one.

Even so, I needed to focus on mitigating her attacks to my sides because of the difference in strength.

“I can feel 7 times the strength rising up!”

“Stop saying shit like that when we’re fighting!”

Just as Idaltar said those hair-raising words, I saw an opening.

“Opening!”

Idy’s spear and tail flew at me in unison.

The spear’s trajectory was hard to evade to one side.

It looked like a perilous situation, but in truth, it wasn’t.

Lizardmen support their body using their thick tails.

Their feet, optimized for movement by water, isn’t made for walking on two feet.

Therefore, tail attacks were only possible after lowering their center of gravity, or by shifting their body weight completely.

Instead of avoiding her attack, I closed in further.

I blocked by whipping the shaft away using the aura claw.

Instead of opting to block her tail attack, I went for a strike at Idaltar's body.

The moment the aura claw penetrated her body.

Her body shifted into black smoke. Without a moment to be bewildered, I felt strong energy emanating from beyond the smoke.

Kwang!

I was barely able to block the spear strike that pierced the smoke.

I purposely let the spear push me back while blocking.

“Keruk.”

Phoo.

Too close for comfort.

“It was my secret attack. Keruk. I didn't think it would be blocked.”

I blocked it on an impulse.

What in the world is that skill?

It's not a Cloning Technique or even an Illusory Technique.

She turned her body into smoke, and immediately after her main body appeared from behind the smoke.

I couldn't understand the fundamentals behind it.

The skill I knew she had was turning her body into smoke to dodge an enemy's attack.

Furthermore, she couldn't move momentarily afterward, so she was open to attacks.

It wasn't a ninja-decoy skill like the one I had just seen.

"Keruk, should we continue?"

"Sure."

There were skills that I didn't know that mixed in, but I didn't feel the need to avoid combat.

Rather, the tension was multiplied and so was my joy.

As the fight went on, I took the upper hand.

It was due course.

Even if she was using skills that I wasn't aware of, or even if my body wasn't at the perfect standard, I knew her too well.

Her speed, strength, techniques, skills, as well as her instincts in particular situations.

I knew everything.

So, it was hard for me to lose.

Kwang!

Idaltar barely blocked my attack with a swing of her spear.

Instead of being pushed back by the impact, she twirled her spear and went for another blow.

The spear flying at me was smothered with black energy.

It was just at the moment I was expecting it.

The blackened spear pierced an empty space.

Meanwhile, I snuck close to Idaltar and pierced her heart with my aura.

It was something I had been planning before the battle had even started.

And as expected, my plans succeeded.

The results were exactly as I had planned.

“Keruk.”

Idaltar fell, keruk-ing till the end.

Unlike me, who felt a bit empty, she seemed very pleased.

I opened my mouth with hopes that she wasn't able to read my thoughts.

“You were great.”

Idaltar let out a grin and put up a thumb at my words.

And in the next moment, quietly passed away.

I was dumbstruck at her satisfaction and confidence.

I wondered if I would be able to do that when I died.

I didn't think I could.

It was my third time seeing her corpse.

The difference was that her corpse didn't disappear after her death.

I collapsed next to her corpse.

I wasn't in shock from her third death.

I gifted her the thing she wanted the most.

A defeat after a close battle, and an honorable death to be recognized by the strong in her last moment.

To be fair, the battle was one-sided, but from her point of view, it would've been a very close and intense fight.

It was the death that every lizardmen would dream of.

It would be the same for Idaltar.

Obviously, this didn't mean her complete death.

She won't even remember it.

One could also see it as never having happened.

But Idaltar would've been fully satisfied just before her death.

At least, it would've been much more satisfying than being reset after sitting down and chatting until my eventual departure.

It was even more so because, during the battle as well as just before her death, she will have felt the satisfaction of being alive.

Even so, it was my personal opinion, as well as a decision I made.

I was sure she would prefer this.

I wasn't all that different from her, so I could sympathize and understand her.

But while she would be pleased with the results of her third death, it wasn't a pleasing conclusion for me.

My desire for strength increased evermore.

[Round 24, Day 5. 9h 55m]

I got up after checking the time.

My joints are aching because I've been sitting in the same spot for over 10 hours.

I was in the midst of a quiet, flourishing forest.

The scenery didn't suit me.

I started my mana training as soon as I entered the 12th floor.

I wanted to build up my mana as much as possible before being moved onto the 13th floor.

I've already the level and the basic stats that I aimed for on the party stage before coming to the 12th floor.

I thought the monsters in the forest would be a nuisance before I started training, but it wasn't the case.

It may have been because of my mana, but there wasn't an insect, let alone a fucking bird nearby.

Thanks to that, there was silence except for the wind and my breathing in the dense forest.

The sound of bugs in the grass would've been nice. Not having the sound was my one regret.

"Status Window."

[Lee HoJae (Human)]

Lv. 8

Str: 16

Dex: 14

Sta: 19

Mana: 34

Skill: Battle Focus Lv. 30, Willpower Lv.7, Awakening Lv. 7, Dash Lv. 4, Covertiness Lv. 19, Superhuman Senses Lv. 1, Sensory Amplification Lv. 1, Senses Lv. 20 Ironwall Lv. 2, Natural Recovery Lv. 5, Super-Regeneration Lv. 5, Intermediate Swordsmanship Lv. 10, Intermediate Spearmanship Lv. 6, Intermediate Weaponry Lv. 10, Intermediate Throwing Lv.1, Intermediate Brawling Lv. 14, Mana Circuit Lv. 21, Pain Tolerance Lv. 9, Hemmorage Resistance Lv. 3, Paralysis Resistance Lv. 4, Curse Resistance Lv. 1, Great Magic Resistance Lv. 1

It was barely conceivable that I developed this much in just 3 days.

It was still lacking, but I was satisfied with this degree of growth for now.

My only regrets were that I wasn't able to pick up any new skills in the lower levels.

As I peered at the status window and checked my growth, my body was moved to a new space.

The dark stone room was a direct contrast from the earlier dense forest.

The 13th floor stage.

As I proceeded, I was met with a wooden door.

A sign with a number 0 was written next to the door.

Once I opened the door passed the hallway, a wooden door with a 1 written on it appeared.

“Welcome.”

In room number one, a giant monk over 2 meters high was sitting in a lotus position.

“It’s been a while since I met a challenger. What do you wish to gain here?”

The comment was surprisingly friendly.

I remember it being something along the lines of arrogant human or other the last time I came to the 13th floor.

It was because the plot of the stage itself was to be victorious against the enraged monks carrying out the god’s will.

But since the plot was no longer applicable, they seemed amicable.

“A clue to further growth is enough.”

“Uhaha, that’s not easy to attain. At your level, who knows how many years it would take until you get a tiny clue.

You wouldn’t even know if it’s applicable to yourself even if you find one.”

“That’s for ordinary people. I really just need a small clue.”

For example, JuJi’s power filling this room maybe.

I could feel JuJi’s power here, who would be sitting on the 33rd room.

Surprisingly, this power wasn’t mana.

It probably wasn’t holy energy either.

Then what was the identity of the power encompassing this room?

If I can uncover this, I would be satisfied; at that point, I would have attained enough on this 13th floor stage.

“Uhahaha, you’re a confident challenger. You were probably able to attain your level precisely because of that confidence.”

What a magnanimous monk.

Most monks like confident and enthusiastic people.

They were known to be indifferent We use cookies to enhance your visit to our site and to bring you advertisements that might interest you. Read our ferent to how others addressed them, which meant he could be as gutsy as he liked.

Because they don’t really care about others’ attitude or tone, one did not have to worry and could speak as gutsy as they want when talking to them.

“So, about that.”

“Mmm? What is it?”

“Since I don’t have much time, what’s the fastest way I can get the 33rd room?”

The monk chuckled at my words.

“There’s only one way to get to the next room. Uhahaha.”

It means there isn’t one. Fuck.

“Honestly, can’t I just run through really quick?”

“I can’t let you do that. I can only let you through once you pass the trial. Uhahaha.”

The 13th floor stage is rather long.

The last time I had a crack at this, it took me several days.

The difficulty far surpasses the level of the 13th floor, especially the rooms after the 15th one.

I couldn't say how long it would take to get past the rooms at that point.

The time allocated to me on this 13th floor stage was just 13 hours.

I wasn't sure if I could meet JuJi within that time frame and attain a meaningful clue.

"Ah, can't you just let me through?"

"I can't do that, Uhahahaha."

There was a joking element to the monk's laughter now.

Damn, I misspoke.

The thick-jawed monk had a clownish expression.

It was possible he would try and drag the fight on as long as possible.

"Uhahahaha."

I confirmed that the monk had no intentions of letting me pass.

Since that was the case, I'll break through with brute force, no questions asked.

I kicked off from my spot and lunged at the monk.

My fist clashed with the monk's fist.

Chapter 191

Tutorial 35th Floor (10)

“Isn’t this a little too much?”

“Uhahaha, I’m not too much, you are even more overwhelmed that you try to pass in a simple way.”

Said the Buddhist monk, who clung to the wooden door and was blocking the road with his whole body.

I thought it was impossible to reach room 33 in limited time.

So I came up with one expedient.

It wasn’t special.

I just ran away to the next room, ignoring the monk in the room.

That’s how I passed through room 25.

And maybe he heard the screaming of the monk in room 25, the monk in room 26 shut the door like that.

“What’s going on in room 33? Why are you so urgent to get there?”

“There is nothing going on in room 33. I just want to meet JuJi.”

“Then, why don’t you slowly pass through the rooms and then meet JuJi? Of course, I mean if you can safely pass through every room up to room 33. Uhh.”

I hated the way he laughed so boldly very much.

If a fly got into that wide open mouth, I believe his mouth wouldn't be a circle (he wouldn't be laughing so happily).

"I am so anxious because I have no time. I really don't have time."

I appealed that I had no time, but I didn't expect the monk to step aside.

All the monks I have encountered so far had ignored my words.

And so did this monk.

"Uhahaha, I see. But the world will not work according to people's wishes. Uhahaha."

Generally speaking, I don't have to give up. I can rush out, but time was not enough. There is no way.

Furthermore, even if I somehow met JuJi, I wouldn't have much time left to learn from him.

It's time to select Plan B.

"Oh, have you finally made up your mind? What kind of resolution?"

The monk looked at me who was determined, and asked with a smile.

"Firstly"

"What?"

"Let's play a game first."

"Uhahaha, it's nice for me. Let's get started."

When the monk's feet stepped on the clouds, my 26th battle began on the 13th floor.

“Uhahaha, that’s good, good.”

What is it?

This feeling of losing even though I won.

When I saw the monk who was bleeding everywhere but still laughing, I could not tell who had won.

Ah, of course, I won.

I went to the corner of the room and sat down against the wall.

“Well? Shouldn’t I go over to the next room?”

“It seems that it’s because there is no time. Thanks to everyone.”

Now, I really do not have much time.

If I couldn’t meet JuJi, I had to find a clue here where I could feel JuJi’s power.

I still want to go to a closer room even if it’s only a little bit closer, but it would be close enough to feel JuJi.

“Uhahaha, I’m sorry about that.”

“If you feel sorry, just be quiet. And I beg you not to laugh anymore.”

After I finished these words, the monk began to laugh without a sound.

It was not soft giggle. He laughed so boldly the same as before, but there was no sound anymore.

I am going to get angry and explode.

When I encountered monks in the past, they did not seem to be such a

funny character.

Just because the clear goals and related settings were missed, attitudes changed.

Like someone else.

Will each other's positions work as conditions for judging others in the end?

I stopped thinking about useless things and closed my eyes.

The power of JuJi was clearly felt here as well.

His power had put pressure on me and made my senses dull at the same time.

At the same time, JuJi in Room 33 was observing me through this power.

When I first came here, I understood all this as a phenomenon that JuJi created by his mana.

So I was surprised that JuJi had an incredible amount of mana.

But it's not simple mana.

There were some reasonable clues.

Spirit, what Kiri Kiri said before.

She said I hid my mana and my own spirit as well.

It was a natural direction of development.

However, Kiri Kiri advised that if I could release spirit without consuming mana, that would be a great help.

Once I was tested in JuJi's room and for a moment my spirit expanded from room 33 to room 1.

In that short period, I could clearly see the strength of JuJi.

When I met the Great Mother and the Demon King, I felt great pressure.

Of course, my body got exciting due to that pressure and tried to take it in, but it certainly wasn't something that a normal person could bear.

It was an unnatural phenomenon in any way.

If you see it as spirit.

It's more like someone's strong sense of existence than simple burst of power.

Generally speaking, the sense of existence could only be observed when someone feels an object as the subject.

The person standing in front of the tiger is afraid because he or she has fear in the heart.

But sometimes it's not.

Nothing happens, but suddenly you feel creepy and when you look back, there is a person standing there.

Or walking down the street, you have a very strong impression on the person you are looking at by chance, and then found that it is a very famous person.

Or a singer who shows off his exceptionally strong presence on stage.

Of course, people often see this as a preconceived bias or frivolous

feeling, but what if it is not.

What if that everyone has an average sense of existence is the norm.

And as you grow up here, your presence grows as well.

Kiri Kiri said I was hiding my spirit.

When I cherished and hid my mana, my mana was also hidden, without knowing it.

In other words, if you don't try to hide it, you won't have to hide it.

There had been no clue yet, but it seemed not very difficult not to hide the spirit.

The next thing to think about was intentionally displaying and processing more spirit.

I can refer to JuJi and the Great Mother.

I should've met JuJi.

Even if I was disappointed, I still tried to grasp the power of JuJi that I felt far away.

And the power I felt inside me.

Just then, I found a kind of existence suddenly broke into my space, and then I opened my eyes.

“What happened?”

“Great concentration. It seems that you have been summoned many times. In this case, you can still notice it when I just crossed the line. This is your space. Uhahaha.”

The giggling monk did have a foot in my space.

Because I had been watching him with an expression of suspicion, the monk explained.

“It’s almost the time you mentioned before. Shouldn’t you go?”

[The 24th, 6 Day. 18:59]

Time was really up.

I was about to move to the 14th floor.

I didn’t know that so much time had passed.

“Thanks to you, I’ve learnt a lot.”

“What?”

“The power I feel from you is a little weak, and witnessing you change that way is a valuable experience for me. Although it is a bit difficult to stick to, it’s still to some extent valuable. Thank you.”

It turned out that he had been observing the power that I burst out.

Think of it, it seemed more efficient that someone observed me and let me know the result than I did myself.

“Since you have gained valuable experience, you should do the same thing.”

“You don’t have to give me anything.”

I can’t even take it with me.

Weapons were not necessary for me.

“I’d like to give you something valuable, but unfortunately, what I have right now is this elixir.....”

Before the monk finished his words, my body moved.

It was the 14th floor stage.

“Ahhhh”

Elixir!

If you wanted to give me the altar, you should give it earlier!

I can eat the altar and come over!

Damn it.

If I had 30 seconds more, I'd have an altar to eat.

With the feeling of collapse, I sat on the ground and could not get up immediately.

After a while, I decided what to do next.

For the first time, I continued to train.

Next, I needed a helper to confirm my training performance and to inform me of the results.

I thought about the stage where there would be someone who can help me.

The closest one was 16th floor.

The stage where there was a mix of doppelgangers in the dungeon.

There were a number of people who were fairly high-quality, and the 16th floor, which people spent most of their time doing nothing, was the best place to find an assistant.

I will be moving to the 16th floor after some time, so let me do some

more training during this period.

I thought so and closed my eyes again.

* * *

“Light.”

With the calm voice of magician, the light shone.

An old man with a wide-brimmed cone hat and a wooden cane appeared.

It was the magician in my memory.

What you saw in the community was a paladin, a knight, a magician, a mercenary, an adventurer, and me.

There were six people in total.

“Doppelganger! Doppelganger disappeared! Did he run away? “

The mercenary screamed.

Not only the noise, but also the voice were pollution.

“The doppelganger must still be here. Be careful. My sword is still warning you that there’s a demon in this space.”

The way paladin announced the existence of a doppelganger was the same.

The adventurer pointed out that the doppelganger could use transparent magic, and the magician used transparent sensing magic to identify the surroundings.

Think of it, that magician was a doppelganger.

Since the magician was most likely to detect something at first, it was the wisest from Doppelganger's point of view to eliminate the magician and take over his appearance.

I would not have thought of that he was on the body of the paladin who possessed divine power.

The ability of the knight to combat in short distance was too high, so I cannot attack him in the dark.

Then I got the answer.

He didn't hold the sword at that time.

When I was thinking, the conversation between people was going on.

"According to the record, the Doppelganger killed someone and took over his appearance. It seems that someone was attacked by Doppelganger when the dome collapsed. Then he became the appearance of that person at the same time, which really shocked me. People here are all skilled. It is a top demon species."

The explanation of this guy, which was like a know-it-all, was also the same.

And then something happened.

When people were looking around, the magician and I looked at each other.

The magician turned his eyes embarrassingly.

He did it before.

And I found that the adventurer was looking at me with interests.

The magician said that there were Doppelganger coming out everywhere.

Maybe because he knew the answer.

The conversation was going on, and going on, and who was Doppelganger was not the topic of conversation no longer.

Fortunately, the magician did not see my face in the attack of Dungeons, and the knight and the mercenary worked hard to move things forward.

The noisiest two people identified me as the Doppelganger, so this conversation went quickly and came to the conclusion that I should be attacked and got rid of as soon as possible.

The conclusion was made faster than before.

This time I kept my mouth closed, so it seemed stranger.

The knight and the mercenary drew the sword, and the paladin and the adventurer were behind, and behind them was the magician.

“You wicked devil! I don’t know who the master of the appearance you’re wearing, but I’ll kill you to offer the body to God and release the grudge of its master! Your evil soul will perish without even leaving a handful of ashes under the flame of God!”

It sounds like the words that paladin would say, but it was actually said by the knight.

Of course, I shouldn’t have to feel bad because he was talking to a doppelganger, but I still felt bad.

“Ahhh, for the highest king!”

Headed by a knight who ran along with annoying lines, the pedestrian joined the battle.

Of course, I defeated all of them with my strength.

“Do you believe?”

“Yes, I believe.”

The knight sitting on his knee answered me immediately as if he was waiting.

The mercenary who clutched his chest looked at him as if he was saying “Are you crazy?”, but it didn’t matter.

As expected, the knight’s posture changed very quickly.

Chapter 192

Tutorial 35th Floor (11)

“B... but!”

I explained for the paladin who was flustered and screaming.

“Don’t worry. I will handle the doppelganger before I leave.”

“Do you have a way?”

Said the paladin, nodding his head.

“It takes some time. About 17... 16 hours.”

In fact I could find it out right now.

Because doppelganger was the magician that stretched out there.

But there was something to learn from the magician, so I would leave him.

If the doppelganger took off his skin and expose himself, he would lose the scrupulous know-how and sensibility even though he could have the memory of the former host.

It was like watching a movie that was about someone else’s memory, and what he had was only the experience of watching that movie.

He have had all those short memories in the past.

Above all, there was no need to eliminate doppelganger now.

I would move to 17 stage after 17 hours.

The situation here would naturally end if I disappeared.

Because the situation was created for a challenger and made by constant repeating.

Of course, I'm thinking of getting rid of the doppelganger before I'm taken to the stage on the 18th floor to get some experience.

"You don't believe me?"

I said to the paladin who looked at me with suspicion.

The paladin didn't reply.

Let's change to a nearby target.

"You don't believe me, either?"

"I believe you!"

The knight answered immediately.

Now, the paladin also began to look at the knight with the look of a madman, like what mercenary did.

"So... what should we do during this time?"

"Maybe just keep our eyes on each other until that time."

"You still don't know who the doppelganger is?"

"Yes, I know. But it'll be unconvincing until I make it public. I don't want to make a fuss. Just think about who is the doppelganger and wait."

The back of fallen magician moved.

This was too obvious.

I was also worried that I might be caught by others and attacked before 17 hours passed.

“And there is something you have to do.”

“What... we have to do?”

The mercenary asked me in a loud voice.

I still hated that voice.

Mercenary had a really bad feeling toward me now.

Not for special reason, just because I beat the adventurer up, who were very close to him.

Once again, the adventurer made me slightly uncomfortable. At the cost, he was now on the side and spit.

That adventurer was the only one here who was losing his mind at all.

“It’s easy.”

“So what is it? It made me nervous...”

“Just tell me what you know. Magic, swordsmanship, knowledge of the divine power are all okay.”

Shouted the mercenary, looking startled.

Please, if that person can be quiet.

“Is it OK to omit other people’s core technology like that? No matter how strong you are, and even though you hold the lives of all of us in your hand, you can’t do this. My combat skills are never.....”

“I don’t need yours. Don’t worry.”

The chattering mercenary closed his mouth.

The mercenary seemed to be hurt rather than relieved.

He twisted his head awkwardly and turned his face to the paladin.

* * *

“Yes, that’s how divinity is supposed to be. But in fact, there is no such thing as a god in this world. They’re all gods from other worlds.”

“From another world?”

“I’m not sure, but I guess so. All the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple appeared in the form of God from the beginning...”

It was unexpected.

I never thought about a thing before it became a god.

“It wouldn’t be easy for a person to enter the stage of transcendentalism, surpass that stage and become a god. No matter how much they don’t care about the world, only the world knows the process.”

This made sense.

“According to records from other levels, there are countless ungodly people who want to be gods themselves while serving God. It’s embarrassing, but there are such people in the temple, too. Maybe that’s why the temple often asks about the temple in other world. “

The paladin explained enthusiastically while his unsavory attitude had gone.

He seemed to think that this was his professional field, there was no need to keep it confidential.

It was interesting, and I listened to it carefully.

“They said the transcender became gods at one point. For example, in a certain dimension, people are regarded as the existence of God, and people serve and support them.”

Now even the examples were mentioned.

I had never heard of this before.

“But one day, that existence talked to his followers that he became a god. Just think about what kind of stage that existence was at that time.”

The paladin seemed to be stunned, slobbered and lifted his neck.

[Ninety-nine gods in the Hundreds God Temple are looking at you.]

[Vote started.]

[Approve: 99 votes; Disapprove: 0 vote]

[Vote started.]

[Approve: 91 votes; Disapprove: 2 votes; Abstention: 6 votes]

[Vote started.]

[Approve: 37 votes; Disapprove: 41 votes; Abstention: 19 votes]

This situation had happened before.

It was that time when the king received black stones.

I couldn't know the details of vote.

But I would guess roughly.

The paladin stopped talking suddenly.

He was stuttering, as if he was buffering, and he continued for a long time.

“Suddenly I can’t remember where it comes from. But I am sure I have heard of it.”

The paladin looked not very good.

I hoped that he considered it as his memory was fading.

It was quite painful for someone to be conscious about his memory.

“It doesn’t matter. You can tell us when you think of it. ”

The paladin said yes.

This led to the discovery that the strength that flowed out of the black stone was related to the divine power.

For now, it was enough.

The paladin said he would think about it carefully and walked to the corner, and I started to look at the knight.

He was around the paladin when he talked all the time.

Nothing special, he seemed to try to butt in if he knew anything.

However, he kept quiet without a word. Maybe it was because he knew nothing about what the paladin talked.

“Is it my turn?”

“Yes, talk about your swordsmanship.”

* * *

“The first forefather to invent such a light sword.....”

“No, I know this. I want to know the 3rd type of light sword.”

“You know a lot about light sword. Just like you said, light sword has three types. The first type is how it first appeared in the world. At that time, the mainland was in chaos due to the Army War.....”

“No, I know it, too. Any information about the 3rd type of light sword?”

“That’s too much. The information about 3rd type is countless. The transmission of not only the inventor but also the knight after is countless. For example...”

“No, I’m not saying that!”

You stupid!

I couldn’t swear in the face of the knight who was keen on observing me, so I swore inside.

After that he had been saying something irrelevant.

At last, I just let him talk, as he wanted.

Then the story told by the knight proceeded step by step, and soon I heard what I wanted.

But, of course, I spent a looot of time to wait.

* * *

“So.”

Now I knew that people couldn’t speak fluently if they were annoyed.

The goggle-eyed knight looked at me, like a puppy that was exposed to rain.

“You really don’t know what I mean?”

“No!”

Looking at the knight who answered immediately, my blood pressure increased substantially.

“Do you want to die? I should have told you earlier. Do you know I am listening to your words for hours? You did it deliberately, right?”

I had listened to his words for over 5 hours.

And it turned out that he didn't know about it.

“But this is true. I have told you all I know. Except for these, I have nothing else to say.”

I really should have told him earlier.

Bullshit, it was my fault to listen to him without thinking about it.

I sat down dejectedly.

“Ah...”

Well, I only had one question to ask the knight now.

“What's your name?”

I had heard his name once before.

Although this time I had no chance to hear it.

“Aruhan.”

“What about your surname? A knight always has an aristocratic surname, isn't it?”

“Ah... I won't tell you my surname.”

I had been thinking about beating him up so that he would tell me his surname.

And I could vent my anger by the way.

This time the mercenary nearby interjected.

“Well, don’t inquire about other people’s private stories. You don’t even know what it means when someone introduces himself with first name and surname.”

“I don’t know.”

Really.

However, according to mercenary’s words, it wouldn’t be anything good.

I didn’t have to inquire about other people’s wounds just for story.

So I give up asking the knight’s surname.

Now, let me learn some magic from magician.

Along with the existence of the doppelganger, I could threaten him to tell me some information.

However, I was startled when the magician turned around.

He got so old that I felt uncomfortable when I saw him.

The magician really looked like an onion.

There was a face of young woman under the face of man, and a doppelganger under that face.

The mercenary asked me.

“When will you tell us who is the doppelganger?”

This was a good question at the right time.

“I will tell you who is the doppelganger soon.”

My word drew their attention.

“So... who is the doppelganger?”

“Wait for a while. Let’s talk about magic first.”

I walked to the magician.

And I took him to the corner.

“Can you build a barrier that is able to block noises? If it can hide my figure, it will be better.”

“W... why? Why do you want that kind of thing?”

He spoke like a woman, as if it was normal for a man to speak in such a way.

Although he spoke with a low voice, it was different from the way a man spoke in vocalization and pronunciation.

If he was not the doppelganger, the truth must be that he was a female magician.

But I didn’t have to show the doppelganger that hid in this woman’s body such incongruity.

So there were some questions.

“Let’s build the barrier first. We’ll talk about it later. ”

Others glared at me and the magician, as if they wanted to burn a hole

on us.

The doppelganger would feel pressure in this situation.

It wasn't a bad choice for the doppelganger to separate me, who would reveal whom he is, from other people.

He would try to persuade me, or kill me first.

And I planned to coax the doppelganger properly (of course, using some force), and it was enough for me to get some information about magic.

"I... I reject!"

What?

"You know who I am, don't you?"

The magician spoke sharply.

"Yeah."

As soon as I answered, the magician's face became ashen and he drew back hurriedly.

He shouted to the people behind me.

"Help me!"

However, people just looked at him with an expression like "what is this old man doing?"

The magician made a gesture immediately.

The magician changed from an old man to a young woman quickly.

"This is the real me!"

“Uh... Doesn't she seem like the student of the Master of Maruathen Magic Tower?”

The mercenary muttered behind.

“Yes! I came in with the appearance of my teacher!”

Before people understood what she said before, she shouted again.

“Help me! The man tried to force me into a confined space while knowing who I am! ”

What?

This situation.....

“This lascivious man.....!”

What??? What man?

Chapter 193

Tutorial 35th Floor (12)

“What man?”

“Lascivious man!”

Instead of being angry, I was so dumbfounded and speechless.

You had been an old man before!

I protested for myself secretly, because of the absurd feeling that she called me lascivious man.

“You said you knew who I was!”

Yes, I did.

I knew you were the doppelganger.

“I don’t know how you got to know, but indeed you know that I came in with my teacher’s appearance. If you didn’t know about that, you wouldn’t be looking at me like that all the time!”

Of course I had to keep looking at you like that.

Because you were the doppelganger.

“And I didn’t say it because I was so scared, but isn’t it too rude that you use magic to casually look at someone up and down?”

Of course I had to use magic.

The only way to find out the doppelganger was to use magic.

Things were getting fuzzy now.

The doppelganger had three forms.

The forms of doppelganger, old man, and young woman.

It was quite embarrassing that the doppelganger was using the appearance of a young woman in order to gain more support.

The other people's eye expression became strange immediately.

I had to solve it as soon as possible.

But I couldn't come up with an appropriate method.

"If you are not, then tell me the reason! Why did you take me to the corner and ask me to build a barrier to block other people's sight?!"

Shouted the magician, with a sharp voice.

Okay, I am determined.

Let me drag the monster out of her body, and kill it.

I had got the basic information, no matter about magic, or something else.

I wanted more information, but I didn't have to put up with this irritating situation.

However, before I could even act, there was someone else who acted faster than me.

"Holy Strike!"

The paladin yelled and flew up. I avoided the divine power released by the paladin.

And I also avoided the paladin's battle hammer that kept flying in incessantly.

“Ahhh!”

What's this guy doing? Was he crazy?

I had been determined to attack the magician, but I had yet to act.

We had quarreled a lot, but we didn't have to be enemies.

I tripped the paladin and snatched his hammer.

The paladin, who fell on the ground, was shocked.

Through his eyes, it seemed like he was looking at the direction behind my back and the magician.

I took a guess.

The paladin had told me once before that the real look of the magician was like his daughter who was dead, so he couldn't attack her.

I had already paid attention to the doppelganger at that time, and I thought that the doppelganger had lost the memory of the paladin, and he was playing tricks, so I didn't care about it.

Now, it seemed that the paladin's trauma and the look of the doppelganger were some of the settings of the 16th floor.

If I hadn't been able to drag the doppelganger using Soul Siphon before, I think the same situation would have arisen.

If I were an ordinary challenger, this sudden situation would put me in danger.

I had to tell Lee Hyung Jin later.

I stopped my thought and looked at the paladin.

The paladin who lost his battle hammer was rushing over naked.

Everyone else looked at him with a “why is he exaggerating so much?” expression.

Even the magician was staring at him vacantly.

I hit the head of the paladin who was trying to tackle me with the hammer in my hands.

With a bang sound, the paladin fell backwards.

He wouldn't die.

Maybe.

By the way, hitting using the hammer felt better than I had thought.

What about integrating two-handed hammer into a big one?

Just like the character (in a movie or TV series) who liked to push goods with a shield.

While I was thinking, the second attacker appeared.

It was the adventurer.

I kicked the chest of the adventurer, who was taking out his dagger.

Unfortunate short adventurer.

A shorty with dagger, his reach was hopeless short.

Meanwhile, my doubt became stronger.

Why did he jump out?

So I asked him.

“Why are you going crazy, too?”

Instead of answering my words, the adventurer, who was still clutching his chest and curling up, spewed something out from his mouth towards my face.

It was poison.

I quickly covered my face with the hammer and stepped back.

As soon as I stepped back, the adventurer took up his dagger and shortened the distance between us.

As a result, I could only swing the hammer sharply and hit the adventurer on one side of his head.

The adventurer's head half deflated and he fell down.

There was no doubt he died this time.

Looking at the amount of blood scattered around, bones seen from the head wound, and what's contained in it, there was no doubt he died.

Hmm... I totally fucked it up now.

I was just going to pressure him, but I got a little angry when he suddenly spat poison in front of my face like a Hydra.

I only used average strength but the accident occurred because I was not sophisticated in using the hammer.

I had no chance to know why he had attacked me now.

However, to think he had kept poison in his mouth.

I guessed that he had prepared it as soon as the paladin had started to fight with me.

I had no idea why he had done this, just to kill me.

Apart from the reason that didn't come to my mind, the atmosphere went very badly.

Other people were all flustered by this sudden incident.

I wanted to keep the atmosphere as bright as possible.

Not only did I have something to learn from them, but I also had to concentrate as much as I could before going up to the 17th floor.

However, because of the incident, the atmosphere became more tense, and my plan got disrupted in many ways.

No matter how much I insisted that it had been self-defense, the atmosphere had changed.

They wouldn't come to me and show kindness in any way.

And the important thing was.

“Khan, Khanjar, Khanjar!”

The mercenary ran over, calling the adventurer's name.

They were good friends.

After examining the body of the adventurer, perhaps the mercenary would run at me.

Even if he wouldn't, he would definitely be hostile to me.

While I was thinking and looking for a way to break through this situation, the mercenary who was rushing towards me suddenly stopped.

His eyes were full of confusion.

Following his eyes, I looked back and I saw something was crawling out from the body of the adventurer.

To be precise, tiny tentacles kept growing out from his head, and those tentacles were struggling to come out through the holes on his head.

What's more, something inside him was forming its own body.

“Doppelganger!”

Said the knight, who had been silent through the whole confusion.

“Those purple tentacles belong to the doppelganger! The doppelganger tore the adventure's body and was wearing his appearance!”

There had been two doppelgangers on the 16th stage.

The magician, and me.

But this time the adventurer was the doppelganger.

I could understand why the doppelganger changed from the magician to the adventurer.

The existence of the doppelganger changed every time I entered the tutorial.

If it didn't, according to the explanation on the 35th floor, this stage would be the same as the other stages.

What about the second doppelganger?

The second doppelganger hid inside of the challenger.

But in all 35 stages, the challengers couldn't change the settings of

every stage.

If so, could I infer that there was no second doppelganger?

Or perhaps there was another doppelganger among the rest of the people?

I kept trying to figure it out, but I had no idea at all.

I would go up to the next stage as soon as the time was up anyway, so I decided not to think about it.

Although the doppelganger was killed, the atmosphere was still grim.

The mercenary stayed in the corner, grieving over the death of his friend, the adventurer.

Confirming that the magician was not his daughter, the paladin was saddened by the painful memories of the past that resurfaced.

He apologised to the magician and me, and then went to the same corner as the mercenary.

The knight comforted the mercenary and the paladin alternately, and then became depressed like the rest of them.

Just what were they doing...

“Well?”

“What? ”

“Why did you take me to the corner and ask me to build a barrier?”

Ah, this question...

“I wanted you to teach me some magic.”

My words made the magician frown.

“You should have just said that you want me to teach you some magic. Why did you take me to the corner. It really scared me. Telling me to build a barrier also led to misunderstanding.”

The magician’s attitude was still not good, but fortunately the misunderstanding was resolved.

After the magician saw how I had used the battle hammer to knock down the giant tentacle monster, no matter what kind of misunderstanding it was, would be naturally resolved.

“Did you know that?”

“Know what?”

The magician always started a conversation suddenly.

“The doppelganger used the adventurer’s appearance. You said that you knew who was the doppelganger.”

Maybe that was why the adventurer, or the doppelganger with the adventurer’s appearance, suddenly attacked me.

As the adventurer was the doppelganger, he became apprehensive because I said I knew who the doppelganger was.

At that time, a hostile atmosphere against me had been formed and while the paladin had been attacking me, the adventurer thought “Yep! This is a good opportunity!”, and then he ran over to me.

“Nope.”

She looked dumbfounded because of my words.

“You really didn’t know?”

I nodded.

“I thought it was you.”

“What? ”

“I said I thought you had been the doppelganger.”

“W... what?”

A strange look came over the magician’s face.

“So, why did you ask me to build a barrier?”

“I just wanted to learn some magic from you. In exchange, I wouldn’t tell other people that you were doppelganger.”

“From the doppelganger?!”

“Yeah.”

The magician’s look at me became sharp.

It was sharper than the time she had thought I had been a psychopath.

“How dare you...”

The magician began to scold me.

How could you attempt to learn magic from the doppelganger, how could you try to hide the doppelganger, and how could you mistake me as the doppelganger.

She kept on talking.

This magician was much noisier than I had thought.

She had barely spoken anything when she had been using an old magician’s appearance. She must be uncomfortable when she had restrained herself to not speak too much.

She and that depressed knight on the corner were a perfect match.

I listened to the magician without speaking anything, and I asked her suddenly.

“So.”

“Yes?”

“Are you gonna teach me some magic?”

To increase the success rate of the request, I picked up the hammer that had fallen on the floor from my hand and asked.

“O, of course.”

I succeeded.

* * *

There wasn't much to learn from the magician.

Because I had heard the knowledge that she knew from the doppelganger before.

By the end of the magic lecture which lasted for several hours, other people had fallen asleep one by one.

Perhaps due to the confusion, those people were unable to overcome their fatigue and soon fell asleep.

Perhaps because of the death of the doppelganger, they were all sleeping in the room together,

without even a night watch.

Except one.

“After hearing about the paladin’s story, I have thought a lot. In fact, there have been many dirty things in my family. Some of them are similar to what the paladin went through. The competition between aristocracy is actually much more vulgar and dirtier than the backstreet fight.”

So what!

“But I did get out of that hole, because I had become a knight by accident. Oh, have I told you why I became a knight? Oh, I guess not. It was a particularly fortuitous chance. It started with the Duke of Heblan. Have you ever been to the Duke of Heblan? Although it is famous for the beautiful lakes, there are actually more swamps than lakes. My brother and my friend Robben are also there. Oh, this friend, Robben, is my childhood friend, and we made a lifelong commitment when we were young. He is a common civilian, but we are close friends regardless of his status. From there...”

“Please.”

“Yes? ”

“Could you please just go to sleep.”

I wasn’t curious about your story. And you had already said it before!

Chapter 194

Tutorial 35th Floor (13)

[Round 24, Day 7. 16 hours 40 minutes.]

“Aren’t you tired?”

I looked at the knight sitting next to me and asked.

“Who knows what’s going on? I am not tired at all. A lot of things have happened today.”

“Why did you start to say something weird again? Just go to sleep.”

I stopped the knight, who was going to start a new topic.

His perseverance with talking was amazing.

The others had all sat down with eyes closed and were currently resting but this guy kept talking to me, I thought.

“There are many things that have happened, but none of them have been experienced by me in person, so I am not tired at all. Maybe I am just an outsider witnessing these things, so I don’t have that kind of feeling.”

That’s not true, you had experienced something in person.

You had been talking after experiencing so many things.

You had also rushed over to me and then been hammered by me.

I decided to give up trying to concentrate and then listened to the knight as he wished.

“What do you want to say? Don’t beat about the bush and speak frankly. We don’t have much time.”

Although the knight was really chatty, he knew what the others thought about himself.

So when others didn’t want to talk, he would stay in the corner quietly.

I met him on the previous 16th floor, so I knew this.

So the knight kept bothering me not because he was bored, but because he had something to say to me.

Sure enough, the knight scratched the back of his head and said,

“Are you sure it is finished?”

“What?”

“I am talking about the doppelganger, or whether there are other dangers in this dungeon.”

What was he talking about?

“Why do you think so?”

“Because no matter how many times I see it, it looks like you are preparing to fight again.”

If you knew about this, shouldn’t you interfere with me, and let me stand alone?

“Although you didn’t tell other people and you are not on guard, the way you sit here to concentrate obviously shows that you are preparing for a battle.”

I also felt it before, but this guy was really sensitive sometimes.

Although it did not help at all for finding the doppelganger.

“Something like the state of the mind? I can feel that kind of thing. Have I told you that I have participated in a war? I once went to the battlefield when I was young. The most impressive thing at that time was not the magician who burned the earth or the knight who could destroy a siege weapon with just a sword. It was an old cavalryman who was preparing to fight with a spear on his shoulders.”

Although he was really annoying, I had to admit one thing.

The stories this guy talked about were very interesting.

If you started listening, you would want to know what had happened next.

Maybe I had never heard anyone talk for such a long time after I had started the tutorial, so I thought it was interesting.

“I felt something special about him before the battle. I used to think that we should bring something to the battle. In order to stay alive, swords, fencing, armors, and teammates were necessary. But instead, what I learnt from him was to abandon.”

I seemed to understand what the young knight had learnt from the old soldier.

“He seemed to have abandoned fear, abandoned his obsession, and even abandoned his expectation, only focusing on the scene in front of him. It was not simply giving up all the thoughts about life. Although he didn’t directly tell me that, I think he was throwing all the useless things away in order to concentrate a little bit more.”

Doing one’s best and concentrating, were generally illusory.

It was impossible for a normal person to use the strength of the whole body and work hard with a mortal heart.

People would die before they managed to do this.

If one felt fear and despair, the brain would become confused. If a person was in an extremely tense state, the muscles would become stiff.

Any sense would be anesthetized by hormones.

In the face of death, human beings would not choose to overcome it, but instead choose self-anesthesia.

So we needed preparation.

It was the preparation in order to protect all and abandon all.

It was the preparation in order to face the crisis calmly and make a great effort in front of the crisis.

“Don’t worry.”

“Eh?”

“The danger will not appear here.”

The knight was quite confused.

I didn’t want to tell him word by word.

“I’m sure about that. Just go to sleep.”

This time I said these words while holding the hammer which had been lying on the side.

The knight immediately returned to his seat.

It seemed that I should have done this since the start.

The feeling of holding the hammer in my hands was very clear

It would be great if I could take this hammer away.

I had experienced crisis frequently recently.

I had faced enemies stronger than me and more enemies than this time, and had experienced the situation of being unable to escape.

But that kind of crisis was not serious enough to bring me the danger of death until now.

Since I had achieved a certain level, the crisis was neither a stepping stone for my growth nor an obstacle to me.

But it was different this time.

“Don’t fight.”

I remembered what Kiri Kiri had told me in a special tone.

I had heard about the information of the 35th floor from Kiri Kiri, and the first thing that came to mind was the 17th floor.

On the 17th floor, there was a mirage who took my appearance of that time.

Because I was the first challenger, I had ended the 17th floor within five seconds without doing anything.

So what would happen if I entered the 17th floor that’s on the 35th floor?

Would I encounter the mirage, or skip it as I had done before.

For my question, Kiri Kiri gave this answer.

“Since you can’t win, don’t fight.”

Something could be inferred from this answer.

I would encounter the mirage on the 17th floor.

It took 136 hours for me to get to the 17th floor.

It was 5 days plus 16 hours.

It was impossible to catch up with my accumulated growth from the 1st to the 17th floor during such a short time.

And therefore Kiri Kiri had told me those words.

The 35th floor didn't have any particular setting.

That meant there was no setting on the 17th floor that required my mirage to destroy the enemies in front of him.

Similarly, there was no setting that I should kill my mirage in order to get to the next floor.

“Don't fight, since you cannot win.”

These were the words that I couldn't respond.

I felt the shaking of the space.

Although it was the first time I felt such a thing, I clearly knew what it was.

It was the feeling of my body moving to another space.

The nerves that became extremely sensitive could even capture the feelings that couldn't be noticed before.

My body, which was trapped in the cave of the dungeon, moved to the stone room of a temple that I had once visited.

Along with the newly changed landscape, I sensed something new.

It was a murderous intent that permeated through the sweat pores of the skin. Just by feeling it, I could feel the heavy madness that's filling this space.

And there was also the mirage who looked exactly the same as me, exuding a fierce atmosphere.

[Round 24, Day 7. 17 Hours]

The 17th floor.

Sure enough, there was no message that should appear at the same time as my arrival.

The mirage in front of me didn't have to kill me.

And I didn't have to kill the mirage either.

However, look at him.

Look at the crazy man who pulled out the long sword when seeing me and smiled happily.

I didn't know why Kiri Kiri had said it's OK even if I didn't fight him.

I knew why the mirage was so happy.

He was feeling excited.

Because there was a new stimulus after such a long time.

Because of the crisis of death.

I really didn't like that smile, but there was also a similar smile on my face, so I decided not to pick holes.

I stood up.

Without saying anything.

I said nothing about the unexpected encounter with him.

I also said nothing about how he shared the same appearance as me.

There was no doubt that we had just vowed to kill each other and accepted it as the truth.

Looking at the mirage who took the first step towards me, I took out the things I had prepared beforehand.

The mana hidden around me suddenly unfolded. In the space between me and the mirage, the mana made a chain reaction.

There was no noise at all.

However, in an instant, there was an explosion that's fierce enough to give hearing loss, but the mirage broke through it.

It was a move that I had expected.

I compressed my aura and shot it straight towards the mirage.

It was a kind of finger strike.

Due to the explosion created by mana, the mirage could not choose to evade to the side or the back.

Blink

The mirage disappeared instantly and then reappeared.

I punched at the position that I had predicted, and it landed on the face of the mirage.

The thickly-compressed mana exploded, and the body of the mirage was hit and flew far away.

* * *

Shit.

The long knife almost grazed my chin, but I avoided and cursed it in my heart.

I tried to kick the abdomen of the mirage.

However, the mirage rather tried to grab my leg, but the mana's spinning near my ankle did not allow him to do it.

I knocked the mirage away and shouted.

“You ungrateful son of a bitch! This is too crazy!”

Just shouting loudly blazed anger burns in my heart.

Fucking Soul Siphon.

Just standing still made me feel lethargic.

Beyond simply being tired and exhausted, I had been affected by mana operations profoundly.

Any carelessness would give an opening to the mirage...

Damn it, I didn't want to admit it, but he was much stronger than me.

I couldn't deny that the fact that the gap between our powers is wide.

On the 17th floor, I never experienced such a serious crisis before.

Every time I faced an enemy, I had always been very calm.

If there was any danger to me at that time, the mirage could know based on how much strength I could exert.

But the performance of the mirage was beyond my expectations.

First, I only saw that crazy lunatic suddenly using magic like wind arrow and now he is unleashing an aura at the same level as me.

To my relief, one comforting point was that I succeeded in deceiving the mirage.

The mirage couldn't grasp me perfectly.

I could guess the amount and completeness of my mana circuit by looking at the techniques that poured out like water.

Of course, he would have thought that I had much more mana than him.

So the mirage chose a short-term battle and was ready to rush out without rest.

My odds of winning was slightly increased because of the mirage's strategy.

The total amount of mana I had was a quarter of that of the mirage's.

So if time dragged on a little longer, the outcome of this battle would be doomed.

The drawing board was unfolded. (I was prepared.)

The next thing was to draw the pictures. (What to do next was fighting.)

kuang!

The mirage spread the Talaria's Wings and instantly rushed to me.

My legs clashed with the mirage's sword.

The collision between both our auras exploded violently.

I twisted my body around to avoid the debris of the collision while preparing to start another attack on the mirage.

Information about the mirage and the situation was my best weapon

now.

I knew how would the mirage move next.

As I expected, the mirage pushed the sword away and rushed into my arms. I had foreseen this, so I was able to knock my elbows into his chin.

However, the mirage continued to attack as if he had never been hurt.

He was still faster than me.

He knew it and he would continue to take advantage of it.

I needed a breakthrough that only I had but the mirage didn't have.

The confirmation that I was the real one.

"I am the real one, you stupid motherfucker!"

We had the same face and figure with the same techniques and habits.

It was clear that the mirage began to feel confused while he was fighting with me.

The sentence "I am the real one" disturbed him.

Of course, He wouldn't delve into those words in the middle of a fight.

But just this short pause was enough.

The short pause was so fatal for him who was used the power that did not match his level.

And I would seize that opportunity.

Kuang!

His sword collided with my half broken weapon.

The remaining half of the sword started to shine in blue.

Damn it, it seemed that he was gonna explode.

The mirage was wielding a bomb that might explode anytime, so I had no choice but to stop it.

Bwoom!

I was temporarily blinded by the burning light in front of me, so that I couldn't manage to pay attention to the explode.

The crazy mirage tanked the explosion with his body and used Blink at the same time.

Blink moved his body forward, which should have been blown backwards.

In that moment, he caught my exhausted body flying in the air and stuck his short sword onto my neck...

I predicted that the mirage would rush to me after the explosion, so I grabbed his neck without any delay and placed my weapon right next to it...

Bang, we crashed on the ground together.

My back was stiff.

The mirage and I lied on the floor with him right on top of me.

It felt nauseated doing this with a man who looked just like me.

However, right now we both have our weapons against each other's neck.

“...Get off from me, you son of a bitch.”

The mirage was above me with a blade near my neck.

If I had not placed my weapon on his neck, he would have cut my throat right now. That was what his expression showed.

He was such a devil.

“Wh... *Cough* *Cough*!”

The mirage vomited blood several times as he tried to speak.

He wielded a force beyond his limits, so he deserved that rebound.

The problem was that all the blood spilled onto my face.

What the hell?

“You said that you are the real one. what do you mean?”

He had no way to prove that he was the real one at this time.

Aside from facing someone who looked exactly like him, he had always doubted whether he was “real”.

The face of the mirage showed even desperation, beyond anger and pain.

I could understand this feeling more than anyone else, but instead of comforting it, I laughed at it.

“Do you know the decisive difference between you and I?”

My vision was blurry due to his blood. I licked it, then I forced my eyes to open and smiled.

“Nothing else.”

I told the mirage, who was waiting for my answer, nothing.

“It’s the state of being.

My eyes still couldn’t see clearly.

But it was obvious.

The mirage wrinkled his face and looked away because of my aura.

He should not have given me the chance as I had thought.

I should have moved without hesitation.

That was the right judgment.

However, the mirage had given me more than 10 seconds now.

I decided to kill him.

“Mind Slash.”

The blade of aura sliced the head of the mirage before he recognized it.

The cut head rolled over my chest.

I threw it away roughly and removed the mirage’s corpse pressing on my body.

The difference between the mirage and I, was the state of being.

He had no different from me except that.

Ah, now that I’m thinking about, there was another difference between us.

The mirage failed, but I succeeded.

Chapter 195

Tutorial 35th Floor (14)

“Keak, ueak.”

I coughed up the blood flowing from my throat.

Nevertheless, my body did not recover.

My eyes are still blurry and my hearing is also problematic.

Although, my sense of touch is usable, it is not reliable enough.

My body exuded out chill from the inside.

[You have reached Poison Resistance Level 1.]

I am really tired.

That vicious and crazy man.

The blood that the mirage spit out is the root of my bane.

I had never thought he would mix poison in his own blood.

As far as the tutorial 35th floor, I had never thought that someone would mix poison in his blood offensively instead of using a weapon or limbs as a medium for poison.

I did not test if it was possible, so I did not consider its possibility.

Yet that mirage pulled it off.

This impromptu thought must popped up when he pinned me down and his blood flowed out because of excessive force.

I shot the head that was rolling around.

His judgmental ability was worthy of praise, but I could not regard it finely since I was the victim.

However, from his perspective, it was the best solution in that situation.

If I was poisoned when we were pointing at each other's neck with weapons, the mirage would have won as time passed.

He could've pried information from me while I begged for the antidote in his inventory.

He even thought about the antidote.

I couldn't touch the inventory, but there was his dimensional bag.

I remembered that there was one or two antidote in the dimensional bag, so I ran over the body of the mirage.

Soon I found the bag, in which there were a few odds and ends, some food, stamina potions and detoxification potions.

I took the potions out immediately.

I drank the stamina potions first and then the antidote,

There is no need to save them.

They would disappear when I moved to the 18th floor anyway.

[You have reached Poison Resistance Level 2.]

[You have reached Poison Resistance Level 3.]

I drank the antidote and waited for the symptoms to alleviate, yet the poison continued to erode my body slowly as if the antidote had no effect.

The thought never came to me until now.

My poison level.

In order to raise my level of Poison Energy skill, I had taken poison myself.

My Poison Energy skill had risen rapidly to overcome my high Poison Resistance.

I have never heard of a general antidote.

I no longer expect anything from the antidote potion and I intended to use mana to force the poison out of my body.

Even if I didn't have Poison Resistance, I could get rid of a few neurotoxins just by circulating mana.

My consciousness was almost broken, but I gripped it and forced my body to circulate my mana.

In order to prevent the poison that had invaded my body from spreading again, I blocked the path of their circulation. I planned to gather these poisons in one place and burn them with mana.

When I endured the pain and used mana, I fainted suddenly.

* * *

It was very noisy around.

I don't know whether this was a phonism sound in my ears or there was actually noise around.

The noise that hurt my head continued until I lost consciousness

again.

* * *

[You have reached Poison Resistance Level 11.]

Consciousness returned with a message that the Poison Resistance Level was still rising.

As soon as I woke up, I used my mana reflexively to check my body.

The condition of it was the worst.

My limbs couldn't move and the poison still remained.

It was fortunate that I survived even after suffering from such extreme poison.

My eyesight is cloudy.

However, I am very lucky.

In order to stay awake, I couldn't use mana. I thought I would see nothing and spend time in the darkness with my blurred vision, but I managed to spot something.

My body was covered with large leaves.

I don't know how much I had sweated, but the ground was soaked in my sweat.

It was uncomfortable because the leaves were on top of my body.

What was strange was that I felt the warmth of the leaves.

I tried to focus my vision and found that there was something like mud between the leaves.

It seemed that the warmth was flowing slowly from the leaves themselves.

I was lying in a forest because all around me was only grass and trees.

It seemed that time passed and I left the 17th stage.

The stage that is nearest the 17th stage and set in a forest is 19th stage.

Did I skip the 18th stage already?

Maybe this was the 20th stage.

As I was thinking about it, I tried to use the mana in my body, but my consciousness faded again.

I lost my mind with the warm feeling of the leaves blanket.

* * *

I was awakened by a wonderful feeling.

It was really a wonderful feeling.

It seemed like someone was taking my pants off.

I opened my eyes and checked my pants.

There was a little boy who was trying to take off my pants.

He had fox's ears over his head.

“...What are you doing?”

Maybe because I woke up and spoke suddenly, Myong Myong may had been scared. He stuttered.

“I just wanted to find your wound...”

Usually, unless you ate poisonous mushrooms, most of the poisoning situations caused by poisonous weeds, thorns or insects would leave external wounds.

I looked at my wound, it had already gone.

He couldn't find the wound on my upper body, so he began to look at my lower body.

It was reasonable.

“There was no external wound because I consumed the poison.”

Now I knew who covered my body with leaves.

The forest setting of the 19th stage, was cold at night.

If Myong Myong did not cover me with leaves, my body that had been weakened by poison may be invaded by the cold.

I did a gesture to Myong Myong, asking him to come closer to my face.

It was difficult for me to speak loudly now.

I gave the pocket that hang on my waist to Myong Myong.

It was a pocket full of jerky and water.

At that time, Myong Myong was in a state of starvation because he couldn't eat well for a long time.

He pushed himself and suffered because he is taking care of me, so his condition was worsening.

I couldn't move, so I gave him the pocket that contained my emergency food.

But Myong Myong's reaction was strange.

Myong Myong did not think about checking the contents as soon as he got the pocket, but he started to cry.

“Are you gonna die?”

What is he saying?

I gave him food, but why did he ask this?

Looking at Myong Myong who held the pocket with both hands, I roughly knew what he was thinking.

“...I'm not gonna die. That's not a keepsake. Eat the food inside and find some herbs or fruit that can alleviate on my poison. “

I felt sorry to ask a weak boy to work for me, but Myong Myong had extensive knowledge of the herbs in the forest.

Maybe he knew some herbs that could be used as antidotes.

Myong Myong, who was tilting his head like a puppy, soon got up from his seat as if he knew what I said.

And before he left, he bent down and said to me,

“I am Myong Myong.”

He wanted to introduce himself first.

But he was really shy when we met before.

No, he was more afraid of me rather than being shy.

It took me more than a whole day to clear his boundary.

For Myong Myong, it would be more comfortable to stay with me who was lying down with pain than me at that time.

He was a good kid who liked to help others.

I said to Myong Myong, who was looking at me with his round eyes.

“Okay, my name is... I will tell you later.”

Myong Myong asked me why.

I didn't want to let him now because I remembered that he had laughed at my name before.

I explained that feeling to Myong Myong.

Myong Myong was a little disappointed and said.

“I never laugh at someone's name.”

Yes, you did. And you laughed very hard.

Of course, you tried to hold back your laughter, but it hurt me even more.

Myong Myong got up from his seat for what he needed to do, instead of asking for my name that I didn't want to say.

I thought he didn't want to eat jerky, but luckily he ran through my pockets while walking.

I lost my mind again when I saw the back of Myong Myong walking somewhere with a jerky in my mouth.

* * *

But Myong Myong strangely looked very energetic.

I remembered that he would get a cold every time he went into the tutorial.

Maybe he had a cold because he nervously taking care of me all night.

“Come on, open your mouth.”

I opened my mouth as Myong Myong said.

Myong Myong put the juicy stuff in my mouth, which was squeezed from herb

It was incredibly bitter.

[You have reached Poison Resistance Level 13.]

“...What’s this.”

What grass would improve my Poison Resistance as soon as I eat it.

“An herb named Sangun. It has the effect of protecting the body from poison and curse. Instead of just sleeping for a few days, you will get better when you get up. I have mixed it with the root of an herb named Hwaliong so that your body will not become weak in the meantime.”

“...I will fall asleep for how long?”

“About a week. Don’t worry, I will tend to you.”

I wanted to rebuttal the benevolent Myong Myong.

Of course, I appreciated the kindness of his heart for doing so much to a stranger who were lying in the forest.

But falling asleep for a week?!

I even didn’t know which stage I would be on after a week.

I could die while I was sleeping.

“Come on, it’s the last bite.”

“Well, wait for a minute. I can’t drink this...”

I tried to stop Myong Myong’s spoon, but it seemed like the herbs had already took effect, so my consciousness began to fade.

I felt Myong Myong ‘s herbal medicine coming into my mouth while my consciousness was fading.

I choked, but the medicine passed through my throat as soon as Myong Myong touched it.

* * *

A strange ceiling.

I did not know that I would say the words one day that was considered as one of the worst novels’ opening remarks.

But it was a very strange ceiling.

Looking at the materials, it was not a rough building.

It was not a modern building as it was old-fashioned.

I checked my body first.

The poison disappeared totally.

My limbs and body was normal.

My mana was also normal.

Sight, hearing, touch and smell was all normal.

Taste was also normal, I guess.

I was so grateful that I survived.

This time, I managed to get through the danger on account of luck rather than my ability.

I felt relieved, but terrified of the death crisis I didn't even recognize.

It was like I was halfway down the river Styx but I swam back finally.

“Do you feel better?”

It was a calm voice with no up and down.

I turned my head to the woman who asked the question without any surprise, even though I suddenly woke up.

She was sitting on a chair next to my bed.

“Seregia?”

It was Seregia that I met on the 25th stage, and she was attached to the soul sword now.

“You know my name? It seemed that you had been conscious once in a while in between.”

I nodded my head.

“I am glad you have woken up now. As soon as you were summoned here, you fell down and it caused some confusion. Your body has been cured by the priests, and after you were cured you were transported here.”

The explanation was neat.

“But how did you catch such extreme poison? The priests say that it was worse than the poison of Hydra in the Heblan marsh. It's hard to

say that if the priests were not gathered here, you would have not recovered. ”

I couldn't explain the truth.

How can I explain that the mirage vomited his blood mixed with the poison onto my face and I was poisoned because the blood went into my mouth?

I ignored her question and thought about the past instead.

I went through from the 18th stage to the 24th stage when I lost my consciousness.

147 hours overall.

About 6 days.

It was about the fourth day since Myong Myong fed me the herbal juice.

I was so fortunate that I didn't die during that time.

Of course, it was possible because they were not the stages where risks came along with the entry.

“However.....”

“Yes, please speak.”

“Isn't it that my body is getting better?”

Myong Myong's special herbal juice made me sleep for 4 days in a coma.

“No, you're on the verge of life and death.”

Chapter 196

Tutorial 35th Floor (15)

I was a little relieved by Seregia's words.

Myong Myong's bright smiling face passed through my head.

"You are on the verge of life and death."

"You don't have to tell me it twice....."

Even so, I was still alive.

I just wanted to be optimistic about it.

There was something more urgent than that.

I was unconscious when I passed through the 17th floor to the 26th floor, which would be very troubling in the future.

I had to cultivate myself while I was going through the 17th to 26th floors to handle future challenges.

But now that I had lost the chance because of the poisoning, my capabilities has fallen short of the level required to handle challenges.

The biggest problems were the enemies beyond the 30th floor.

I didn't have enough physical strength, mana and other attack skills, so I needed the light sword technique to kill them.

Of course I could use light sword now.

But my body would explode instead.

I had to build up a body that could withstand the light sword's heat.

The schedule of my plan had already been so tight, but now my time had all flown away so the plan collapsed.

I need to find alternatives.

The first one was to find a new way that could defeat the enemies on the 30th floor.

If I could find a safer technique, which was not dangerous like light sword, I could pass the 30th floor.

However, I had no idea where to start.

If I had met Great Mother on the 19th floor or JuJi on the 13th floor, I might have found some new clues through a face-to-face meeting with them, but that was not arranged successfully in the end.

The second one, to abandon the conquest method I was using now.

As KiriKiri said, I would actively avoid fighting and flee for survival.

Flattering, hiding and escaping, I would be able to survive this way.

However, I was already determined not to use this method.

I didn't want to change what I had decided.

The last thing that I had to consider was how to improve my light sword.

I couldn't use the light sword because it was too dangerous, so all I could do was to eliminate or alleviate its drawback.

Of course, it wouldn't be easy to make the light sword safer while maintaining its power, but I had a feeling that it was possible.

The third form of the light sword was quite unusual.

It did not consist of a single action, like stabbing or cutting.

The basis of the light sword is the displaying offensive and defensive capabilities. This swordsmanship would manifest as the light sword.

A light sword that would explode constantly, killing all enemies around me.

But what if there were someone who could bear the light and heat ?

The founder of the light sword also thought about this question and his answer was to lengthen the fight while using the light sword.

No matter how much heat and light the enemy could bear, he would eventually falter.

So he held onto the light sword and burned everything.

He suggested to lengthen the fight until the enemy couldn't withstand it anymore.

That is the third form of the light sword.

In fact, this was impossible.

From my perspective, who is an actual user of the light sword, it is absurd to take continuous action while keeping that state.

But it was the information from the knight and he said that it was the only piece of information available.

It was possible that the information from the knight was distorted, but I succeeded in restoring all of the swordsmanship that he told me.

I was sure that most of the information was accurate.

Let's assume knight's information as right.

This was definitely the key point of the third form.

Users of the light sword could avoid its heat.

To fend off attacks from enemies in the inferno where the light sword was created, you should not be affected by the inferno itself.

Suppose the user isn't be hurt during the continuous use of the light sword.

If I could skillfully use the light sword, I could avoid self-damage.

With that alone, the enemies beyond the 30th floor will no longer be a threat.

In addition, the output of the light sword would be enhanced, too.

I had enough mana, skill, and understanding of the light sword to use it effectively.

The only thing was that my body couldn't bear it, so I must adjust the output

While I was deep in thought, Seregia was looking at me silently.

"Would you like to go outside? The banquet is in progress. If you'd like to go out, I'll take you there. However I think you should consider your body's condition....."

Said Seregia. It seemed that she wouldn't go out no matter what happened.

I also didn't want to waste time on banquet.

I told Seregia my worry.

Seregia had a fairly good insight into the theoretical part of swordsmanship and she had some novel ideas that I didn't have from time to time.

"Yes, it's hard to believe that it is possible. It's like a magic rather than

swordsmanship.”

She was right.

Just as peak of different martial arts would be similar to each other, swordsmanship would be like magic if it exceeded a certain level.

“According to your explanation, it seems that you have a dangerous and primitive sword without hilt. And now you’re looking for a way to make a hilt.”

She understood quickly as I expected.

A primitive sword with no hilt.

Therefore I needed a safe hilt.

The space protected by hilt of the light sword was a safe zone built around the user.

The problem was a safe zone (hilt) that could bear the dangerous power of the light sword couldn’t be made by humans.

It was apparent that no matter how much mana I put the safe zone would break right away.

“Then maybe you need a safe zone like a typhoon’s eye, which is unaffected by the storm of power.”

Typhoon’s eye.

It was not a brand-new idea, but the image came out in my mind looked plausible.

If I spun the power of the light sword, would the center of that power be a safe zone?

Different from the typhoon, the light sword could target enemies.

I asked Seregia for a piece of paper and a pen.

I thought it would be better if I could draw my thoughts on the paper rather than just think about it.

I carefully marked the direction of the power of the light sword on the paper.

It looked as if I had drawn a magnetic field.

“I think it works.”

In order to make the light sword shoot straight and to burst the aura, it needed pressure from both sides.

Both sides would rotate in opposing directions.

The idea would be much more tangible if you thought about the two circles running on the baseball pitching machine.

How about increasing the output by adding another circle to the back of the two circles and at the same time creating a safe zone in the center of them.

But the problem was that the direction of the two circles was the opposite to each other.

I continued to think about it while I was drawing on the paper.

Seregia, who was next to me, took an interest in what I was drawing. She grabbed another piece of paper and started adding her own ideas following what I had drawn.

When the bright day passed and the dark night came, the floor of the room was full of papers that had been used up.

What's more.

“I feel this will work.”

“I agree with you. Let’s give it a try.”

Seragia was urging me beside.

“Please hurry up.”

“Why are you in such a hurry?”

“I’m looking forward to seeing it.”

Seregia’s mood is understandable.

Because I was in the same mood as her.

I couldn’t believe that I had worked on it for a whole day, but my head was full of inspiration.

I checked the design on the paper again instead of leaving my seat immediately.

It seemed possible.

“It is theoretically possible.”

The problem was that whether I could manifest this technique as well as the theory.

To be honest, this was clearly beyond my capabilities.

“It’s possible. Please have a try.”

“If I fail, will I explode?”

“You will be fine.”

I will certainly not.

Looking at Seregia's face, expressionless but flushed red, I could know how excited she was.

I remembered when she almost died because she wanted to observe the light sword closely back on the 26th floor.

I checked the design again.

It was complicated to utilize the original light sword, yet the complexity shored further with the new light sword design.

Curves and circles filled the papers representing the mana that I had to control.

They couldn't conflict with each other and had to achieve a synergy to complete the entire flow.

These papers were only designed for a single action, stabbing.

How many papers would be required if I wanted to show the design of the other various techniques of swordsmanship.

Furthermore, if I ceaselessly drew a design for all of the techniques, my brain would overload.

The founder of the light sword is extraordinary.

"Well, let's try it."

"Where do you want to go? We can teleport to somewhere that is near to the plain or the cliff."

She was really excited.

But we had something to do before it.

"Let's eat some food first."

I had been in a coma for several days, and studied the light sword for

a whole day after I wake up.

Of course I was hungry.

“Just starve for a day.”

Said Seregia in a harsh voice while looking at me with her cold face.

I didn't know where the person who told me to rest in the morning had gone.

“No, I don't have enough energy, so I have to eat something first.”

I told Seregia, who was leaving her seat, for one more thing.

“If there is something like potion, take some for me too.”

* * *

After the meal, I left the room with Seregia.

We met some people on the road, but Seregia handled it properly.

“Well, where are we going?”

Seregia asked because I was taking the lead.

“We are going to take the holy sword with us.”

Seregia was surprised by my words.

“I will probably die if I use this technique with my current condition.”

“I see.”

Seregia didn't ask anything else.

Even when the guard in front of the sealed room was stunned because

of the holy sword, she didn't ask any questions.

“Why are looking at me like that?”

Asked Seregia, who was rummaging into soldiers' bodies because she thought they might have some emergency artifacts.

It seemed that the empire did raise a lot of wastrels.

Different from when I came here alone, Seregia walked and found all the artifacts that were hidden in the walls and ceilings.

She is so skilled at this.

I was not sure whether we could do this, so I asked her.

“I think we should teleport as far as possible. Going to a foreign country is a good choice. You could seek asylum from the foreign nobleman who recognizes the strength of the technique you are going to try.”

She was planning the future in the meantime.

We walked for a while and saw the holy sword on the end of the road.

[Warrior.]

I heard a calm voice from the holy sword.

[Did you hear me, Warrior?]

I recalled the past.

I didn't answer the holy sword at that time, so he was anxious.

[Don't you hear me? Warrior? Warrior! Warrior! Ahhhh! Why people who come here during the past hundreds of years are all deaf? Ssshit.]

“I can hear you. ”

I couldn't just ignore it so I replied.

[Warrior! I have committed a capital offense! Please kill me, the criminal!]

What was he talking about?

I felt the absurdity of the holy sword in my hand, who asked me to punish him.

How could I kill someone who died once and became a sword spirit.

“Please set off. We don't have much time.”

Seregia stated.

I walked out, following her lead.

“I'll tell you what you need to do next as we walk so listen carefully.”

The holy sword was necessary If I wanted to finish this experiment smoothly.

As well as the protection magic that the holy sword had, his ability to help prevent the flow of mana from tangling was also needed.

Hearing my explanation, the holy sword stopped talking and began to listen quietly.

Sometimes he expressed his opinion and the design became better while we were on the teleport.

He helped a lot.

Sezeria operated the teleportation device and took us to a nameless plain.

We left the gate and could see nothing even over the horizon on this perfect empty plain.

“This place is pretty good. It is not the other country, but near the border line. Although there are castle chapels nearby, we should be able to cross the border before they come.”

[Round 24, Day 16. 2:45 p.m.]

It was the night here, but it was 2:45 p.m. in system.

The timing was perfect.

It was 15 minutes before moving from the 26th floor to the next floor.

Looking at the stars embedded in the night sky, I prepared the technique.

* * *

The light stretched out toward the dark blue night sky that slowly became red and the powerful gust generated by the light blew all the clouds around.

The light that penetrated the center of the red sky, where there were no clouds, seemed to be throwing open a door of the sky.

[The God of Heaven is displeased.]

[The God of Heaven refuses to expose his temple.]

[The vote begins.]

[Approval: 1 vote. Disapproval: 98 votes.]

[The God of the light is very excited!]

[The God of Heaven is very displeased.]

[The God of Light is very excited!]

[The God of Light is very excited!]

[You've reached Level 4 on aura mastery.]

I have surpassed the me before entering the 35th floor.

Chapter 197

Tutorial 35th Floor (16)

[Park JungAh, 60th floor: The danger of the tutorial of Hell difficulty seems to have been conveyed for sure. The newbies who came into this round say they've been informed about it. In fact, there are no newbies who came to Hell difficulty.]

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: I'm glad.]

[Park JungAh, 60th floor: I am relieved that things proceeded better than I thought. I thought the government might not believe what we said, or something unexpected might happen.]

[Lee HoJae, 35th floor: It may be because the outside situation is also abnormal. People outside may accept this phenomenon better than us, who have lived ordinary lives. Some of the contestants have come out after clearing tutorials from other countries.

I wrote it down and then I found that Park JungAh already knew the information I had.

She even knew much more than me.

But she said she agreed with me.

We peacefully chatted about the hardships and joy of recent life.

Park JungAh said that she thought about stopping the climb to 100th floor and taking a break when she reaches at the residential zone on the 60th floor.

She said she had been tired of doing the challenges and managing work at the same time. As the population in the tutorial increased, the problems also increased too, so she wanted to have a rest.

Although she is busy, it seems that she is living a peaceful life and enjoying the residential zone.

She told me about small things in everyday life, like planting a flower in the house and living a regular life.

I also temporarily stayed on the 30th floor.

But I couldn't share the same feeling as hers.

However, just listening to her daily life became a vicarious satisfaction.

There was a strange satisfaction from hearing others doing what I couldn't do.

It's not bad.

While I was looking at the message window, a hole opened up in the sky and a demon appeared.

"Newbie, Olphon want to see you."

Yes, of course.

He would appear soon.

I sent a message to Park that I would contact her later.

Park replied that we could chat again in the evening because business hours were nearing.

I turned off the message window and looked at the demon.

"Just follow me obediently. It'll good for you."

The content of the invitation was a bit different from before.

Is the treatment different from that when Orphean was indiscriminately beating organizations that are influential?

Perhaps he wanted me to be his subordinate.

Interesting.

After I nodded my head obediently, the devil used a gate magic.

I had seen that before.

Space magic is the field that I am most interested in.

So I got a lot of information about space magic from the holy sword.

“Is that magic able to remain for a while even if the user is dead?”

“What?”

Those were his last words as I sever his head.

He had done his job, so it was time to let him go.

I could see the space on the other side of the gate magic.

Interestingly, I could see Olphon and other demons.

They were flustered and angry because I killed that demon who led me.

I walked through the gate and moved to the space on the other side.

The gate that appeared in the sky gradually closed behind my back.

“Newbie.”

This was the second time I meet Olphon.

Olphon seemed like a little more nervous than before.

Amusing.

My strength and mana are not as good as our first meeting.

Even though my strength is less than before Olphon is more cautious and alert.

It seems that he is on guard against me because he couldn't read my upper limits like KiriKiri had said.

"You are a funny guy. Among the many demons that have passed through here, there are many who breezed through the preliminary area like you. There are even some who are able to reach the foot of the Demon king. However, there are also many fools who showed hostility towards me and died."

His speech was long.

I don't want to have a meaningless conversation with him.

"What are you doing newbie?"

I want to experiment on something from before.

It was the technique that I tested in the residential area of the 30th floor.

The technique, I'll call it "Yeodeuleum Pyo" or maybe "Sibam Boom", was made by aura of fist-size. *(TL & PF's note: Yeodeuleum Pyo and Sibam Boom is the tempname of the new technique. The korean words are meaningless so we just transliterate these two words.)*

When I used it earlier, It didn't infuse a lot of mana because the power was too vicious.

If I was well prepared and infused all of my mana, what would happen?

“Stop, newbie.”

Olphon stood up while the surrounding demons started to build defence net.

The demons at the far end began to quickly flee from their seats.

My aura mastery only increased one level, but what I got in the process is enormous.

I found a way to avoid damage from the power of the light sword, therefore I am able to apply it to other techniques.

Especially, this Sibam Boom technique which integrated the technique that the holy sword told me and the light sword.

“What do you want, newbie? State your demands.”

Of course, this technique is extremely dangerous because I am able to kill myself,

So I spent all of my time on this technique the 31st floor.

I couldn't see Olphon now.

The aura, which is rapidly rotating around me, is emitting blinding lights, so the view between the demons and me was completely blocked.

There is strong clamor and vibration inside my body.

I couldn't endure for a long time.

I could have added more power, but this is my limit for now.

I open my mouth before the aura exploded.

It was a pity that the noise was so loud that no one could hear me.

“Art is”

I really wanted to say this line.

“An explosion.”

Aura escaped from the tornado-like rotation speed.

The protruding aura stretched out dozens of meters and swept the area like a giant blender.

I abandoned the control of some aura at that time and then the aura burst out in every direction.

The explosion looked nicer than I thought from the inside.

This is real art.

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

The level up notifications showed up in a row.

My current level would become meaningless when I leave the 35th floor.

The explosion, which lasted a while even after the level-up notices ended, had finally faded.

There were no living demons in this burning region.

Even their corpses had burned away.

What remained burning on the floor were flames, inside a giant crater, that had torched everything.

There was no bomb like this around.

When I leave the tutorial, I could be treated as a strategic weapon.

People can load me into a bomber and launch me into the middle of monsters.

The technique was successful.

I was not concerned about the power of this technique, but I worried about how much it hurts me.

My hearing and sight were not damaged nor did my mana circuit stagnate.

My body was throbbing and there was blood in my throat, but this was because my body was too weak at this moment.

It was unavoidable.

I cleaned myself up and quickly left from the site.

My body couldn't withstand the hot air here or the flames on the ground.

I left as soon as possible, but my body was burning everywhere.

I didn't recover from the damage I had suffered after level-up.

* * *

There was some time left after I killed Olphon and other demons.

I was doing nothing for a while.

It was a little awkward because there was time left.

Especially since entering the 35th floor, I've immersed myself in things every moment.

If I had an inventory, I would have been eating snacks, but I didn't.

What a pity. I opened the community window while chewing on jerky.

While I was doing this, I recalled the old days.

In the early days, I checked community as my daily routine, but recently I had never opened the community window.

A hot topic was being discussed on the community.

This was a normal occurrence.

If some hot topic appeared, thirsty challengers would rush to it blindly and talked about it as if the topic was the most concerning thing for every challenger.

This time, the topic was the possibility of growth of melee weapons.

The topic was interesting.

Warriors who only use melee weapons are usually less favored.

It is more dangerous and less powerful than focusing on skills.

What's more, their role in team battle is faint because they're not a tanker.

Rankers like me who entered in the early rounds lacked the options and focused on the weapon, but the challengers who entered later were encouraged to use skills.

This tendency became more prevalent as Lee Jun-seok, who mainly used an electric skill, became famous.

However, there were always challengers who preferred melee weapons such as a spear or sword.

People could safely level up with weapons at the very beginning and people with weapons were more powerful on solo stage. So, even this method fell out of meta gradually. It had its own advantages and demand.

These challengers recently called themselves as warriors.

I thought carefully and found that I also belonged to that group, so I read one of the posts.

There were a lot of opinions saying that warriors should play a better role in the team play, but warriors found their own ways.

There were some users in the AOS(MOBA) games who used off-meta characters and mastered them. It was the same as the warriors' situation.

It reminded me of the Japanese challengers wearing Japanese swords as fashion during the competition.

The hot topic in the community now was that we had to rethink the possibility of the warriors' growth potential.

The melee weapon was known to be weaker and weaker in the latter half of the tutorial. However, if you observed the people that mainly use melee weapons, it was not true.

I agreed with that.

This place is different from the earth.

Only by burrowing into swordsmanship and mastery of mana could one gain more strength than other people.

I also gave a comment to show my support to the claim.

People were surprised that I commented.

I appear in the community for the first time after so long. I seemed to be treated like a legend among the challengers who didn't experience the competition or grand conference.

I enjoyed the attention from the community more than I thought.

I also read other posts.

The warriors shared the basic rules, know-hows, and their experiences, which were quite novel.

Some said that your mind should be like a mirror or a peaceful lake. Some said that you should treat your weapon as part of your body. Some said that you had to wield your weapon ten thousand times a day to reach the acme of the martial arts.

Most contents seemed to be copied from martial arts magazines or comic books.

It was funny, but I disagree that I should treat my weapons like my own limbs.

In the tutorial, you could obtain and repair your weapons as much as you want and through inventory, you could change and use them at any time.

You don't have to take one weapon as your partner.

The body of challenger is the most powerful weapon. However, the community disagrees with that notion.

I wanted to comment and express my opinion, but I found that this idea would be difficult to accept.

I talked a lot about how to actively exercise and grow body.

There were few challengers who actually took the advice.

I closed the community window.

The people I saw in the community looked happy.

Maybe because the crime rate and death rate decreased rapidly, tension and fear disappeared from people's communication.

Even the concern about clearing the tutorial had disappeared. Now, people could enjoy it like a game.

It was not bad.

This was rather good.

It is only during perilous situations where the peaceful mind becomes a hindrance.

If there was no danger, it made sense to relax.

Excessive tension and fear would only eat people's spirits.

They didn't need excessive tension and fear.

Kim Min-hyuk said that he wanted the tutorial become a place where everyone could pass through comfortably one day.

I was thinking about what he said was just like this.

If so, It was going really well.

The community looked very pleasant.

I don't need to be jealous of them.

The path I walked was my choice and I was willing to accept this ascetic.

I don't regret it.

Chapter 198

Tutorial 35th Floor (17)

“What are you thinking about?”

“Just some things.”

“Talk about it. If you can relieve my boredom, I’ll reward you within reason.”

The attitude of the Demon King didn’t change.

He seemed to have an abundance of time.

His attitude still shocked me.

I looked down on him and the other demons.

Although they were born with powerful body and mana, they weren’t able to utilize it to its fullest potential. I thought they weren’t worthy of them.

“Talk, quickly.”

“It’s just interesting.”

“What’s interesting?”

I was going to tell these curious demons.

Though, I was not sure whether they could understand.

Challengers have a chance at various opportunities after the 35th floor.

There were many opportunities for challengers to regret and be frustrated of their past.

It also meant that the stages of the tutorial forced challengers to make various choices.

The stage's setting is really clever.

Challengers would feel injustice when their strength is stolen and they are returned to the beginning of the tutorial.

Because of that, challengers would ignore the results and only focus on the process.

My current growth and effort is regretful.

If I had worked harder and found a direction that I hadn't come up with before, would I be better than what I am now?

I have regrets about the relationships with people I met in the stages.

I should have improved my social relationships.

I regret that I thought the strength I gained in the tutorial completely belonged to me.

This stage made people feel remorseful for the past by returning to the fragments of their past.

"I don't understand your words."

"It doesn't matter. You don't have to understand it."

The eyes of Demon King twinkled.

He was interested.

"So what are you gonna do. What do you feel in such regrets?"

“Nothing. The past is the past.”

I must confess that my displeasure to the designer of this stage has gotten stronger.

“Interesting. I can’t feel regrets inside your heart. There are only urgent desires. You’re interesting.”

I asked the giggling Demon King what he was laughing at.

“I don’t think it’s possible to have no lingering feelings about a regretful past. Aren’t you curious? Don’t you wonder, deep inside, that maybe you’re fooling yourself.”

“No.”

“Ahhhh, you are too decisive. You should think about it carefully and then discuss your questions with me.”

That’s how you fall into a mire.

I felt this on the 26th floor, this Demon King’s mental capabilities are superior to his physical capabilities.

“Well then, show me your evidence.”

“Evidence! You ask for evidence, you really amuse me.”

Only when we gained results, is the process meaningful.

If my strength disappeared and the results were erased, I could take it as a process and draw some results.

The journey on the 35th floor was not just for me to look back into the past.

The design of the 35th floor and Kiri Kiri’s advice was to escape and survive, but I fought.

I didn't want to take all of my accomplishments as meaningless processes while having this weak body.

I took it as a test where I faced a wall with no strength and I needed to regain that strength in order to get over this stage.

This is the point where I finish.

When I couldn't run away, I would use the light sword in front of the Demon King and succeed.

I set this goal back when I was on the first floor.

“Light sword.”

I didn't have a sword, not even a wooden stick, but I used my light sword appropriately and skillfully.

Because my most powerful weapon was me.

When the bright light faded, what I could only see was the corpse of a Demon King who abruptly died.

[Tutorial, 35th floor of Hell difficulty has been cleared perfectly.]

[All status ailments and injuries were restored.]

[You got 7000 points as a reward.]

[You got 7000 points as the first clear reward.]

[Most of the Gods had positive reactions. You got 7700 points.]

[Most of the Gods had negative reactions. You lost 1200 points.]

[99 gods in the Hundred Gods Temple are watching you.]

[The God of Slow is quite satisfied.]

[You'll get an extra reward according to your play records.]

[You got 120,000 points as an extra reward.]

I made it.

With this useless body, I succeeded in honing the skill to use the light sword in only 24 days.

Since I proved the results, I had also proven the process.

I don't feel fulfilled by that fact anymore.

Just as the Demon King had said, only desires surged.

I stood for a while and calmed down.

A portal appeared in front of me after only a few minutes into the 34th floor.

It seemed that I had passed all of the 34 floors, so I didn't have to wait for 34 hours.

What a relief.

Before I went out from the stage, I looked at the clear messages once again.

I found that not all of the gods in the Hundred Gods Temple, but 99 gods were looking at me.

Why only 99 Gods.

There were 100 gods before.

I have to ask Kiri Kiri.

And the 120,000 reward point was also strange.

This was really strange.

The unit was hundred or thousand before, but it jumped to hundred thousand now.

However, no matter why, this is a good thing.

“Status window.”

[Lee HoJae (human)]

Level: 19

Power: 20

Agility: 18

Health: 25

Mana: 44

Skills: Battle Concentration Lv.30, Will Power Lv.20, Awakening Lv.10, Race Lv.10, Covertness Lv.24, Extrasensory perception Lv.3, Sensation Explosion Lv.15, Energy Lv.30, Metal Wall Lv.5, Meditation Lv.11, Natural Healing Lv.10, Regeneration Lv.10, Advanced Sword Skill Lv.7, Intermediate Spear Skill Lv. 10, Weapon skill Lv.10, Intermediate throwing skill Lv.1, Intermediate combat skill Lv.15, Aura mastery Lv.4, Pain Tolerance Lv.14, Hemorrhage Resistance Lv.7, Faint Resistance Lv.3, Paralysis Resistance Lv. 9, Poison Resistance Lv. 16, Curse Resistance Lv. 3, Grand Magic Resistance Lv. 4

Others: the God of Slow is quite satisfied.

If I cleared the 35th floor, what would happen to the skills I gained during it?

Did they just disappear?

I indeed obtained something from the 35th floor, but it was still regretful.

I stopped thinking and walked toward the portal.

At that time, an awful, terrible feeling cropped up from my neck.

It was ominous rather than dangerous.

The gaze that pierced me seemed as if it was natural and supposed to be there.

[The God of Remorse is watching you.]

Was he always watching like this?

The message given by the God of Remorse was the same as the words said by the Demon King.

To look back and regret.

This is not funny.

I exhaled and entered the portal.

Even though I saw that message, I didn't feel empty, deprived or sense of loss.

* * *

"A design error?"

"Yep."

Looking at Kiri Kiri who answered me while nodding her head, It felt ridiculous.

“Only ‘yep’? Shouldn’t you explain?”

According to the lesson I learned recently, I took away Kiri Kiri’s cake instead of just urging her, so she told me quickly.

“It is because of the God of Remorse. It’s not my fault!”

She avoided undertaking her responsibility rather than clarify the confusion.

Please explain clearly.

“That stone shouldn’t of come out.”

She was talking about the stone that the goblin king gave me on the 4th stage.

Kiri Kiri was trying to explain as shortly as possible.

I told you to explain clearly.

“It’ll be better if you forget that stone. In addition, you can’t reveal it to the community either.”

“You mean I can’t let anyone else know? Is it okay to control the information like this?”

“You got points as a reward.”

So the 120,000 points was hush money.

“If it’s Houjae you’ll figure it out someday. Don’t be too distracted about it.”

Kirikiri finished speaking and concentrated on the cake again.

The black stone of King Goblin, whose mysterious power had flowed out.

The mysterious power from that stone was still in my body.

“This power won’t cause me harm, correct?”

“Not yet.”

So eventually it will be.

Kiri Kiri... You owe me a punch to the face.

I took her cake and harassed her for 30 minutes, but Kiri Kiri only repeated that she couldn’t tell me the details.

Although I didn’t get the answer I want, harassing Kiri Kiri relieved my stress.

“Hing... My cake is cold...”

Looking at Kiri Kiri who was eating her cake while muttering nonsense, I smiled.

I opened my status window.

The swordsmanship, aura mastery and hyper-sensitivity skills, which had leveled up on the 35th floor, were updated.

When I read this lengthy status window, I felt strange and funny.

I was discontent because it was so short before, but now it was uncomfortable because it was too long.

It was cumbersome.

* * *

I asked Kiri Kiri about the God of Remorse after she finished her cake.

The information about Gods are really expensive, but I must find out.

“I suggest you to let it go. Getting entangled in Time-related Gods is no good for people. The God of Remorse, the God of Slow, and the God of Slow are the same.”

Why did she say the God of Slow twice?

“Moreover, not only the God of Remorses’ doctrine is strange, but his personality is terrible. He can manipulate time based on regrets, so he likes digging people’s weaknesses and secrets.”

I remembered something I experienced on the 35th stage.

“So that’s the reason. That black stone is similar. Anyways, don’t mind it. The God of Remorse won’t appear for a while.”

The God of Remorse won’t appear for a while?

Is this related to the message that said that 99 gods were watching me, but not all of the gods in Hundred Gods Temple.

“I really cannot tell you. This information is related to the system and is too expensive.”

Kiri Kiri was so serious that her every pronunciation was correct and accurate.

Instead of questioning in a roundabout way, I passed on to the next question.

There was a question that was not very important but I was curious about.

It was about things that happened after I was poisoned on 17th floor.

I was not totally conscious before I reached the 26th floor.

I woke up a few times with flickering awareness.

It was brief, but I met Myong Myong again on the 19th floor.

Myong Myong fed me some herbs which made me fall into a coma until the 26th floor.

“Humm, it’s not poison. Those herbs were edible.”

Fortunately.

I had thought that Myong Myong was so tender that he wanted to euthanize me rather than watch me suffer from the poison.

I would be upset if this was true.

“The issue was the poison skill rather than the medicine. That skill is strange. Even taking in consideration of its level, it became very bizarre.”

“What are you saying?”

Why did she call other people’s skill bizarre?

“It is because your poison resistance level is high while your poison skill is level 1. You poisoned yourself in waiting room. So a latent period generated in you poison skill.”

“Latent period?”

“Could you describe the symptoms of this poison?”

I nodded my head.

I didn’t really know what my poison was even when I was using it.

Due to the level of my poison resistance, my poison had no effect on me.

“Your poison is special because it makes people lose consciousness and paralyze the sensation rather than threaten their life immediately.

Of course this is an extreme poison for normal people which could kill them instantly. So this poison is only effective in putting you into a coma. The latent period of this poison is around 4 or 5 days. Personally, I believe that it depends on the waiting time between the rounds of tutorial. In other words, normal people will die as soon as they touch this poison, but you are Houjae. When the latent period ends, your body begins to necrotize rapidly. This includes the important organs like your heart and your lungs. If so, you die on the spot. Detoxification is almost impossible if not handling it with magic or charms. Ah, what's more, this poison can infect others through blood."

I had no idea..... But this, this is terrible.

Seregia said it was more toxic than Hydra's poison, it's a perfect biochemical weapon.

Chapter 199

Tutorial 60th Floor (14)

I sat down beside hatchling Yong Yong who was sleeping on the bed, patted him and watched him.

Yong Yong had grown to the size of a retriever from my vivid memory where he rose his tiny little paws when he was a little baby.

He was a larger one among retrievers.

Yong Yong, who entered the hibernation not long ago, was sleeping all day long.

Dragons usually go through hibernation, but I had heard that sometimes they didn't depending on their living conditions.

Yong Yong did not hibernate often, but not long ago he suddenly hibernated.

Both Ho-chi and me had become busy, he became bored more often and for longer periods, so his hibernation naturally begun.

When Yong Yong, who had always been energetic and around me, fell asleep, the world seemed frozen.

I didn't take care of him because I was too busy at that time. I felt terrible about it.

Right now I can't wake up Yong Yong, who was hibernating, and play with him. So I could do nothing but stay besides Yong Yong.

I should have been kinder to him when he was awake.

I failed to perform such a simple act.

[Lee YeonHee, 35th floor: What about the 17th floor? I don't think I can win if I meet your mirage.]

While patting Yong Yong on his back, I received a message from Lee YeonHee after she finished contemplating.

Lee YeonHee, who was a magic caster that depended on skills and items, indeed showed a great weakness on 35th stage.

Of course, Lee YeonHee's efforts to improve her skills would enable her to pass through some gates.

I made lots of preparation for that.

The problem is the mirage on the 17th floor.

There is one fact that comforts me.

[Lee HoJae, 60th floor: It is your mirage which will exist on the 17th floor, not mine. You don't have to do the stage mission so It will be better to solve it with communication. It's also a standard tactic.]

I killed the mirage and passed the floor, but I don't think she needs to do the same.

Each man has his own ways and standards.

What's more, people would suffer from a tremendous amount of stress if they killed the mirage made based on themselves.

In my case, I didn't suffer from that. However, it is very possible for Lee YeonHee to be affected.

[Lee Yeonhee, 35th floor: What if the mirage attacks me? I've heard that if people meet their doppelgangers, they will die.]

Things on the 16th floor was not the doppelganger, but a ghost story.

The underlying idea of the ghost story was this.

If you meet another person who had the exact same appearance and identity as yourself, the first impression these two people have for each other will be hostile.

During the conversation, it was totally possible for the mirage, to become aware that she was a fake, to feel jealousy and hate and attack the real Lee Yeon-hee.

What to do.

I should make up a story to explain the situation and fool around.

Or I could say that these useless thoughts should be dismissed.

This was not good.

Lee Yeon Hee is always worried.

The evidence is how dilatory she was on the 30th stage despite having such strength.

She is currently getting through the stages without my advice.

It's been a long time since she'd asked me for advice, so it's better to relieve her worries than to make up some nonsense.

[Lee HoJae, 60th floor: Don't worry too much. I'll tell you a magic incantation. If the mirage attacks you, say 'Baruce', and you'll be fine.]

[Lee YeonHee, 35th floor: 'Baruce'? It sounds like a castle on the Heaven. Hahahaha.]

I felt that the giggling Lee YeonHee was cursing me.

It must be an illusion.

Lee YeonHee said nothing for a while.

I sighed.

Was she practicing the ‘Baruce’ incantation?

This is the problem of Lee YeonHee.

She is cautious and calm, but still careless at times.

So I couldn’t tell her that she was sluggish like an old turtle.

She could die anywhere at the slightest slip.

Zzzz, Zzzz, Yong Yong puffs from his nose. I annoy him by putting my finger in and out his nostril for fun.

Yong Yong’s nose was throbbing as if it was itchy.

After a some time, Lee YeonHee sent me messages.

She was indeed practicing the ‘Baruce’ incantation.

The moment she mutters the word, the effect built into the item will be activated.

Lee Yeon-hee will not be able to take any action because of extreme pain.

[Lee YeonHee, 35th floor: what was that?]

I could feel her embarrassment through her short question.

It was hard to answer.

What Lee YeonHee felt was not only embarrassment.

The fact that someone can harm them remotely gives great fear to humans.

For Lee YeonHee, who is on the 35th floor, it will be extremely frightening.

However, I should explain that.

Fear scales up through raising various doubts.

It will be better to let her understand.

[Lee HoJae, 60th floor: It is the strength hidden in your necklace Ruceba. (TL note: Ruceba is the name of the necklace. Korean is 루스바)]

I explained that this function was prepared to confront the mirage on the 35th floor.

It was truly for that purpose.

[Lee YeonHee. 35th floor: But this necklace... you sent me this necklace when I went to 2th floor.]

[Lee HoJae, 60th floor: I prepared for this in advance.]

[Lee YeonHee, 35th floor: Why don't you tell me in advance.]

Because you'll kick me if I talked about it.

In addition, the mirage could get the information about the function of this necklace.

I explained it to her carefully.

[Lee YeonHee, 35th floor: Okay, I see. I'll take this necklace off. Since I have arrived at the 35th floor, it's meaningless to wear it.]

[Lee HoJae, 60th floor: Alright.]

The conversation ended awkwardly.

No matter how necessary it is, Lee YeonHee's feelings will worsen.

Because I caused it.

I thought it was necessary to apologise, but to apologise was also awkward.

Because it is useful on the 35th floor.

But even so, I felt apologetic.

The necklace of Ruceba was made before Lee YeonHee came into the tutorial.

In fact, it was an experiment based on the idea that I could control the newbies who just entered the tutorial by pain, and not to confront the mirage on the 35th floor.

Another function hidden in Ruceba necklace was the remote drive that works beyond the dimensions.

Newbies who entered before Lee YeonHee usually died on the lower floors.

They died one after another as if the effort I made for them at that time was totally useless.

I couldn't figure that out at that time.

Even when I have provided detailed strategies that suit their own level, they couldn't get over the 3th floor and died.

There were many challengers who didn't want to move beyond the first floor.

Challengers wasted their time in the waiting room became stressed out and lonely and finally committed suicide. I wanted to create a means to force them to progress.

Of course, the experiment failed.

If I succeeded in experimenting with force beyond the dimensions of the tutorial stage, I would have been in Seoul now, not here on the 60th floor.

While I was sighing, Ho-chi opened the door and came in.

“Why do you look like that?”

“I’m just emotional.”

Situations where my actions are controlled by emotions occurred less often than before.

But my emotions still exists.

Without regard to the feelings of others, my emotion exerts much more influence than before.

The sense of guilt, which was generated because our consciousness were connected, didn’t reduce at all.

“How about Barrier?”(TL note: Gyeongye is a magic that can build a sealed environment to protect someone or catch someone.)

“Well, things are getting serious. You should go to see it.”

Ho-chi said while scratching at the back of his head.

It seems that some God is playing a trick with my Barrier.

They thought they just orderly knocked on the door. But in my eyes, I thought they were some guy who peed on the door and ran away.

“How about the Barrier?”

“The time axis of the Barrier was shocked.”

This is indeed serious.

If the time axis collapses, the base system of protection will also collapse.

“The God of Slow has finally come, right?”

“Nope. I found that time is going back.”

Time reversal.

Of Gods in the Hundred Gods temple that can reverse the time axis of my Barrier there aren't many.

And if this God did this directly, there is only one left.

“It must be the God of Remorse.”

“I think so too.”

If it's not the God of Slow, then I could feel reassured somehow.

Time flows forever, and this is powerful to prove eternal existence.

Regression is a transcendental phenomenon that overturns the law of the universe, but the area that changed must be limited.

The emphasis of this phenomenon is the process of changing, but not the results of changing.

This was interesting because this matched to the personality of the God of Remorse.

By the way, I was wondering if the God of Remorse was still behaving himself.

Maybe this is also part of their disciplining.

Recently, the gods in the Hundred Gods temple are taking turns to attack my Barrier.

What I'm wondering is, what did the Gods sacrifice for this much direct intervention?

Everything the Gods do comes with a price.

Or perhaps the Ten Thousands Gods temple, the Hundred Gods in the other dimension paid the price instead.

I want to know more about the Gods in other dimensions.

"The Gods related to time are fussy."

Ho-chi muttered.

I agreed with that.

Unless we know and prepare for the major premise that they are entitled to use the power of time, it is very difficult to cope with it.

"Let's go. I should go to have a look at it."

I said frankly.

It will be hard for Ho-chi to stop their attack on his own, but their attack is not enough to completely ruin my Barrier.

I built a thorough defense against their power.

Even when the God of Remorse came out to attack my Gyeongje, all he could do was to return part of my Barrier to the past and obstruct the system's normal functions. This attack is a lower level than that.

I went out from the room, which Yong Yong was sleeping in and asked Ho-chi.

“What did you do?”

“Hm? What did I do? I just left it and came back.”

Ho-chi answered with such a natural tone.

He said this so naturally that I almost felt he was right.

This is unbelievable.

“Hey, you should have at least done something to fix it.”

“Uh. I didn’t know.”

How prideful.

He was so smart that he didn’t even know he should do something.

“You really have to study. Do I hope for a lot? You should at least learn some basic knowledge. Yong Yong will be better than you if you continue to act like this. Your previous accumulation doesn’t remain a lot now.”

“Uh. I’m not interested in it.”

I wanted to kick Ho-chi who gave this perfunctory answer.

So I did.

“Ah! Shit, what’s wrong with you?!”

Ho-chi rolled round and said that I violated his human rights, abused children, and his brain cells were dead because I hit his head.

Abusing children was technically correct.

The age of Ho-chi is not much higher than Yong Yong.

Ho-chi continued to yell, but as I ignored him, he soon became quiet.

Ho-chi, who was quiet, poked his mouth out and started to read a novel book even while walking.

He had no interest in anything except reading novels.

He is becoming more and more childish.

He used to be a person who was like the other me, but now, it was different. He became a totally different person from me.

He is growing. He was also changing.

For Ho-chi, my appearance is the starting point of his birth.

He shares the same base as me, but recently, I believe he has changed too much,

Maybe because of adolescence.

Thinking carefully, it is possible he is at the age of adolescence.

It is a little early. but it's not very strange that he is experiencing puberty now if you trace his life back to his birth.

Since his words are like a Jung-ibyeong he became understandable.
(TL note: Jung-ibyeong means how sophomore acts and talks in middle high school. Normally, teenagers' acting and talking change a lot because of adolescence.)

It's time for him to do something like that.

So I determined to let this go.

If someday I hear the sound that he is kicking away the quilt, I will just jeer at him.

“Aren't you just in a bad mood?”

He disconnected the telepathic link. I even don't know how he figured that out.

* * *

It was only then that I understood why Ho-chi came back without taking any measures.

Especially, I understand his gripe.

There was a familiar face in the center of my Barrier.

“Seregia.”

“Yes, Warrior.”

Chapter 200

Tutorial 61st Floor (3)

I looked at Ho-chi stealthy who was reading a novel while walking.

Even if Ho-chi take out the book as a sign of dissatisfaction because of my criticism, he usually read it with enthusiasm.

Ho-chi likes novels so much that he wants to read novels at every possible moment.

However, he was not reading. He was just holding the book in his hand.

His gaze was on the book, but they were gazing into the void.

In my opinion, he was so distracted that he couldn't even focus on the novel.

This was surprising.

There were not many things that could distract him from reading.

Different from me, unless something had a direct influence on Ho-chi, he usually ignores it and let it go.

He didn't care about the stages of the tutorial or the Gods.

He thought these were not related to him.

So he could crazy things like stealing powers from the Gods with no hesitation.

For him, all of these were outside of his world.

So I was surprised that he was disturbed like this.

“Well, what happened to the Barrier?”

Ho-chi ignored my words silently.

I waited for a little while, but he still didn't answer me.

He was just walking forward and pretending to read the book like before I questioned him.

Perhaps he used his focused on the book as an excuse to ignore me.

I gave up because it was too difficult to get his answer.

What disturbed Ho-chi must be related to the Barrier.

I would know what happened when we arrived at the Barrier.

Even if he was disturbed by something else, when I alone look around the Barrier, I will find the cause of the problem immediately.

Ho-chi opened his mouth when we were near the Barrier.

He spoke nonchalantly as if nothing happened.

“Ms. Seregia appeared.”

After this sentence, he shut his mouth again.

I couldn't answer him immediately.

All I could do was walk in silence like him.

I forced my footsteps to move, which almost stopped unconsciously.

I tried to pretend to be calm, but I couldn't hide my agitation in front of Ho-chi.

Both of us were silent.

“Don’t worry.”

Said Ho-chi, in front of the Barrier’s entrance.

When I saw Ho-chi talking as if it wasn’t a big deal, I had mixed feelings.

Along with the relief, I felt apologetic and guilty for the past mistakes.

“Hey, Ho-chi.”

“Yeah, what?”

“You can leave here first if you feel uncomfortable. I’ll handle this.”

Hearing my words, Ho-chi considered for a while. Then he said Okay and returned to the residential area.

I should have calmed myself down while looking at his back.

The period when I would get discouraged due to agitation had passed.

However, there is a high risk of not being able to control my emotions when it is necessary to repair the Barrier.

The number of things I feel guilty about today is high.

I felt so guilty that my stomach stung.

When I was trapped in the 60th floor, I was maddened.

This was not an excuse, this was the reality.

I was so desperate to break through, but I failed no matter how hard I struggled.

After all my attempts failed, the earnest feeling and sincerity I poured in became hatred and madness.

Even so, I didn't give up while I was going crazy.

In order to find a new method, I continued to experiment.

The concept I had before was completely changed.

Now, when thinking about these efficiency and results oriented experiments I did, I would get in a bad mood.

Most objects of experiments were my body and spirit and as the experiments continued, I was only further exhausted.

I tried countless times and was so tired that I gave up everything and returned to the starting point again and again. I repeated this many times, so I died and reborn many times.

5 years.

It is the time it took for Lee YeonHee to arrive on the first floor after I was trapped in the 60th floor.

And during those five years of time, every moment of my life was accelerated.

At least hundreds of years.

I wasn't sure when the acceleration stopped, but it was quite possible to be hundreds of years considering the performance of improved time acceleration.

I didn't only do experiments on myself during that insane period.

I tried to do experiments on everything I saw around me.

I had buried many things that were unsuccessful and there were also many things that vanished completely.

There were also some things that were belatedly solved.

However, it wasn't that something you couldn't see didn't exist.

The residential area that collapsed and rebuilt for dozens of times, the necklace I gave Lee YeonHee as gift and Ho-chi, all of this proved that.

I knew I was unable to go back to the past.

And the memory of the past wouldn't affect my future.

Except, my remorse about my past remained.

* * *

There was a woman's face in the center of the Barrier, instead of a huge sword.

It was quite strange to that a face hanging in the center of Barrier.

Even if it was an acquaintance's face.

"Seregia."

"Yes, Warrior."

The calm voice was the same.

"Long time no see."

"Quite a long time."

It seemed she was the real Seregia.

The only power I could perceive was time reversal.

In other words, Seregia, who became the core axis of the Barrier, returned to her previous state.

“You look very good. Did you find a method?”

Through her words, I knew there was no problem of her memory.

Now my stomach was not stung slightly, but squeezed hard.

“I have.”

“Thank Goodness. So why did you return me to my previous state?”

I answered bitterly.

“In fact, it wasn’t me that woke you up.”

I explained the power of God that the Barrier was bearing and she understood the situation.

Seregia heard my words and smiled like this was a great fortune.

“So there was no problem with Barrier.”

“Yes. it’s only time is going back and I’ll return your state to the normal. It’s difficult to destroy their power, but not impossible.”

“I see. Please restore the Barrier now. I’m in a bad mood due to my incomplete state.”

I said Okay and started to destroy the power.

Seregia’s face just looking at me quietly.

Before the Barrier was restored completely, Seregia said.

“How encouraging. You look very good. Just like before.”

“Fortunately I do. Thanks.”

The past that Seregia spoke about was probably when I hung her on

my waist..... No, it's quite weird to say she hung on my waist.

Either way, I was talking about the stage when she and I fought together.

It was relieving that Seregia took that time as a good memory.

“Warrior.”

“Yeah.”

“Have you found the method?”

“I’ve found it. Don’t worry about that.”

Seregia smiled quietly because of my confident answer.

I also smiled, looking at her face.

I became so much calmer after I met Seregia.

As soon as the Barrier was restored, Seregia would return to her original form.

A giant mountainous sword inside the Barrier.

That’s her original form.

The fact that Segeria used the form of a sword, not a human being, proved that she perceived herself as a sword.

I’ve come to a crucial realization.

The swordsmanship that Seregia desired was flexible and adaptive, agile, and complex technicality.

However, the sword that she finally selected had such overwhelming weight and power.

The difference between the process and the result was incongruous.

* * *

It had been three weeks since I met Seregia and talked to her.

Yong Yong, who slept for a long time, finally woke up.

I was very glad about that. So was Ho-chi.

Yong Yong was happy too!

Yong Yong just awoke from his sleep, but the atmosphere in residential area became much brighter.

The air was fresher when he was around.

Ho-chi, Yong Yong and I hung out together everyday which made Yong Yong very ecstatic since three of us could play together.

And today, I took Yong Yong to the 61st floor for a picnic, just as I had promised myself during his sleep.

Yong Yong was excited to get out from the 60th floor and go to somewhere he had never been before.

He prepared his outfit and had been waiting for today with his cross bag full of odds and ends since yesterday morning.

As soon as Yong Yong arrived on the 61st floor, he was so excited and ran around.

He was so cute, like an excited puppy.

He didn't care much about the poor environment on the 61st floor.

After playing around the entrance for about an hour, we headed to the palace of the Ice Queen.

* * *

“He is your son. Okay, I see. “

The Ice Queen nodded with a relieved look.

She acted like she was like looking at her cute grandson.

“When you told me you wouldn’t raise him as a challenger, I had some assumptions, but I didn’t expect he was this cute. “

Said this old woman while looking at Yong Yong who was making snowman with Ho-chi.

These two people could create more than a snowman, either by magic or whatever, but they were making snowballs the hard way and drawing a facial expression with their fingers in order to make a snowman.

“Dad! Look at this! Uncle brought a carrot! “

Shouted Yong Yong, who made a nose for snowman with the carrot that Ho-chi brought.

Yong Yong was simply happy just because there was something to make snowman’s nose.

By the way, Ho-chi seemed to like Yong Yong as well.

How could he think about bringing carrot?

“It looks good. Really. ”

“Thank you, granny ”

“Sister. ”

It was ridiculous.

What kind of sister is She?

She was alive even when Dangun grandfather set up Gojoseon. (Dangun is the legendary founder of Gojoseon, which is the first Korean state.)

She wants me to call her sister? I would feel rather better to call her queen.

“Sister. ”

“Uhh... This is kind of...”

“Call me sister. ”

“Okay, sister. ”

She chuckled delightfully after hearing my words.

The huge ice door opened, covering her laughter.

“We’re all gathered here!?”

A huge lava giant entered the Ice Palace.

Even in the lava flowing down from the giant’s body, the Ice Palace didn’t collapse nor melt.

The giant didn’t care about that and sat around us.

Although he only sat down, the earth shook as if it was collapsing.

“Why did we gather here!? Why not gather at my Lava Hall?!”

“Because Yong Yong prefers cooler temperatures over hot ones.”

“Alright! This kid must be the hatchling!”

This old man looked around Yong Yong with novelty.

Yong Yong shrank back and defends himself against the unfamiliar sight.

He smiled and sat down besides granny.

“You look delighted.”

Hearing my words, he laughed joyfully.

His laughter was too loud.

I knew and prepared in advance, but Yong Yong didn't. He covered his ears with both hands and ran to hug me.

“My ears hurt! ”

The giant laughed again because of him.

“I waited and waited for a long time and finally I was able to get out. I'm still trapped in the same world, but I'm happy that my range of actions expanded. Thank you again, King.”

“You're welcome. I just did my job.”

“Well then, when are we leaving this world?”

Why did he have to ask me such a serious question while I was enjoying myself.

I knew he would keep asking until I gave the answer, so I answered him.

“Not long. We'll escape soon. ”

“Oh, really! So the challenger is almost there, right?! ”

Not long ago, Lee YeonHee cleared the 35th floor and arrived at the 36th floor.

If she passed big crises safely and there was no accident happened, she would arrive at the 60th floor easily.

“She’s almost here. But the day we get out of here is near regardless of where she is”

“Regardless of where challenger is? How could that be?”

“What do you mean? We’ll just break through it by force in the next six months to a year. If she doesn’t make it here by then, we’ll escape by ourselves.”



PbF by: traitor/SEN



GANDARA 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- VOLUME 8 -

**-AUTHOR-
Gandara**

[WangMama]

Chapter 201

Tutorial 40th Floor (1)

“You’re late!”

Kiri Kiri, who was laying and rolling in the field, cried as soon as she saw me.

I didn’t arrive that late.

It took the same amount of time.

I promised that I would buy Kiri Kiri cake so she was waiting for me.

She was so excited that she left her seat and ran around me. However, I was so tired that I just waved to her and sank down.

I had no energy to open my mouth and say hello to Kirikiri.

I just opened the shop window and silently purchased a fresh cream cake at the top of my favorites list.

I lay down and Kirikiri cheerfully rushed toward the cake.

I took a deep breath so fresh air can enter my lungs.

The refreshing feeling made me feel alive.

My body had been healed while clearing the 39th floor, but my exhausted mind hasn’t recovered yet.

I was fortunate to have this field that refreshed and cleared my mind.

Breathing slowly, I waited for myself to calm down.

After feeling a little better, I relaxed and watched KiriKiri eat the fresh cream cake.

Without a fork, she ate happily using her hands.

Cream scattered all over the place.

I felt much more relaxed over time.

Now I could bear pain with a smile, but the last few rounds were really unbearable.

Since I found out that the Poison Energy skill was much more powerful than I thought on the 35th floor, I had focused on honing it.

Of course, in order to grow the Poison Energy skill, I had to use it on myself.

Like Kiri Kiri had said, the poison is fatal.

After the latent period, the poison started to penetrate my body, and then the tolerance and physical strength that I had painstakingly developed was totally useless. I could do nothing but groan like a patient.

Fortunately, my body adapted the poison quickly.

My quirk is self-harm. I didn't know whether my body was accustomed to the poison or was good at adapting.

On the 36th floor, it was difficult for the poison to last 10 days, but on the 39th floor, the poison survived until the 23rd day.

I drank a special antidote because I thought I would die on the morning of the 24th day.

However, even though I drank two bottles of potion, the poison wasn't detoxified, so I rushed to clear the stage.

In the state of knowing that my life was on the line, I found out that if I cleared the stage, then my body would recover, but I fainted at that same moment.

when I regained consciousness, I was already on this field.

I was still dumbfounded and groggy due to this.

I've become accustomed to the poison, but the most unbearable part is withstanding the high fever, dizziness and dyspnea that did not go away for even a moment. Compared with these symptoms, the pain or fear of the poison didn't matter anymore.

Several hours were tolerable, but I withstood it for almost three months. The stress was no joke.

Even though I cleared the stage and laid in the field, it seems that the nausea and dizziness still remained.

I remembered that one night I came home from the beach when I was young, I felt I was still swimming despite being on my bed.

Similar to that, even though the poison had completely died out in my body, I felt like I was still suffering from poison.

It was that hard and it is still hard, but also rewarding.

The stagnant poison resistance had finally evolved into poison immunity.

The level of faint resistance, paralysis resistance and pain tolerance also increased a lot.

A new skill, disease resistance has been born and the level of natural healing and regeneration also increased.

At last, being in line with the growth of resistance, the poison energy skill also raised a lot.

The situation was positive.

“It’s not positive, nothing is positive.”

Said KiriKiri, who was eating cake silently.

“The level of my skills raised a lot, this is positive.”

Especially since the level of my resistance skills increased.

This was the first time that my level of resistance skills grew this much since I cleared 1st and 2nd floor.

The levels of poison skills also increased.

This couldn’t be negative.

KiriKiri listened to my word and shook her head.

“Your poison has evolved to attack and penetrate the immune system, which is extremely dangerous. That’s why it’s called poison ‘immunity’. You must stop using the poison skill from now on.”

She had warned several times about the dangers of poison energy skill.

And I kept ignoring her warning.

“If you insist, the poison will kill you someday.”

“I won’t let that happen. Just in case, I will also have elixirs with me.”

I bought a few bottles of Elixir as the last defense for a really dangerous moment.

Only one thing, I had to consume Elixir sparingly due to the limited quantity.

"You're supposed to be completely careful. No more than 25 days. This poison is highly toxic that even though you have a strong body with poison immunity, you'll die in no more than 25 days. There is now there's no way to detoxify it besides the healing effect the system provides and the elixir. Houjae ought to take this seriously. A small mistake made in a split second could lead to an irreversible accident."

"I see, I see."

As a response to words that I had heard many times, I nodded hard. However, Kiri Kiri was not satisfied with me and pouted her mouth.

"I know you want stronger power, but you should keep yourself safe first. Don't confuse the method with aim."

The poison skill is a double-edged sword.

It's indeed strong, but it's also dangerous for me.

Because I can poison myself and endanger my life.

However, this kind of weapon is always powerful.

Although I would be careful, totally abandoning it was impossible.

The point was to test how much could I handle poison as a skill.

Or how about finding out another way to use poison rather than raising the level of poison energy skill.

I took an empty glass bottle from my inventory while thinking about this.

My finger hurts.

A bead of blood welled up.

The blood flow into the glass bottle and fused with poison energy skill.

I was careful not to poison myself.

My efforts were not in vain. The poison penetrated the blood that flowed out of my finger.

The red blood turned deep-black as soon as the poison penetrated.

It was only a few drops of blood, but no one could withstand this.

When your enemy was living being, it was far more threatening to throw a glass bottle rather than to use a siege weapon or magic.

It was effective.

The cost performance was also outstanding.

How about selling bottled poison in the auction house?

It would be a great help to other challengers attempting attack stages.

Enemies who could survive after being poisoned by this poison were few.

“No, you can’t do that.”

KiriKiri firmly objected.

“Why?”

“If this begins to circulate, the grand conference will be convened. People who don’t have poison resistance could be in danger even when they’re in the waiting room.”

Really?

Once upon a time, a potion with a strong drug effect was produced and circulated so the grand conference was convened.

I tried to think about the similarities between that potion and my poison.

At that moment, smoke began to rise from the bottom of the glass bottle with a hissing sound.

The poison melted the glass and leaked through the crack.

I didn't expect that.

“Flame.”

I put my hand below the glass bottle and used magic.

The flame magic that I was able to master not long was the magic that could use the high temperature fire, like its name expressed.

The poison blood that leaked from the crack of the bottle of glass bottle disappeared as soon as it met the flame.

Maybe the boiling point of poison was low, so it evaporated and disappeared in a flash.

The smoke that produced because of evaporation pierced the tip of my nose.

[.....!]

KiriKiri screamed with a sound that was not understandable.

Then a powerful gust of wind blew and pushed the smoke away.

Before the wind blew the smoke of poison away, my nose that inhaled the smoke for a short period had become numb.

My face and hands that had touched the smoke become sore.

It's effect was so powerful even in this field, what would happen outside the field?

It has not only been poisoned.

I believe that if I didn't have poison immunity, I would've die as soon as my nose inhaled the smoke.

It's interesting.

In Wuxia novels, fire produced by internal power was used to burn the poison out. That's why I decided to use flame magic.

However, the poison showed a stronger effect when it evaporated by the flame.

It may lose its effect in the long run, but in the short term, the poisoning has become more effective and potent.

What if I combined the poison with fire?

The greatest disadvantage of poison is that it can only infect my opponents when it touches their body.

If I could handle and control the smoke of poison's direction, then I don't have to worry about that disadvantage.

I had done some experiments on myself, but I haven't experimented anything about that.

It is regretful for not exactly understanding its boiling point and freezing point and the changes of its effect during a chemical reaction. Why have I not recognized it until now?

I kept thinking, but the rattling noise made by KiriKiri from the side interrupted me.

Glaring at me, KiriKiri seemed to be so enraged that her lips were curled up five steps away her mouth.

She looked much angrier than that time I robbed her of the Churros she was eating with no reason.

So I put the thoughts about poison aside and quickly apologized to her.

“KiriKiri, I’m sorry.”

The apology reminded me of my mistakes.

She was sad because I experimented with the poison immediately after she advised me not to.

And she would be heartbroken because the smoke diffused on this field, where she likes and cherishes.

I am reflecting.

Seriously.

“Humph!”

I apologized, but KiriKiri turned her head around.

Eventually, KiriKiri got over it after I promised not to abuse the poison skill recklessly before I could safely handle it, as she advised.

It was the advice that I had heard many times and Kirikiri had never emphasized her advice like this before, so I decided to obey it quietly.

In any case, following Kirikiri’s advice couldn’t hurt.

The situations where things did not proceed well were because I went against her advice or she omitted to advise.

“But could I handle the poison energy skill well?”

If it’s impossible, it means I can’t rely on this skill forever.

KiriKiri shook her head and said no.

“If you can use magic to detoxify it, it should be possible with a holy incantation.”

KiriKiri still looked unhappy while answering my question.

It was easy to know her mood. When her face had no expression or her voice was extremely low, she is in a bad mood.

But KiriKiri, who pretended to be mad the moment, looked strange when I looked at her face.

It had been a long time since I first met KiriKiri after I cleared the first stage.

As a person who knows her personality well, I had a question.

Is she still mad at me?

Or is she pretending to be mad in order to show her firm position?

I wonder which one was true.

“I’m angry!”

Kirikiri flew into a rage and shouted out, as if she to prove her innocence.

I nodded at her.

Yes, yes, I know you’re angry.

“I said I was angry! Seriously!”

I stared at this woman’s face. In response she rolled her eyes around to avoid my sights and finally turned her head aside.

For KiriKiri, who did her best to pretend to be mad, I opened the shop window once again.

I bought a set of macaroons to give to her.

“Hey, here’s the apology gift for angry KiriKiri.”

I seldom buy macaroon because it is not worth its price.

KiriKiri likes it because it looks cute and has beautiful colors.

Here’s the evidence. Although KiriKiri was still turning her head to the side with her eyes moving around, her gaze had already been fell on the macaroon set.

He still pouted her lips, but her mouth moved up and down. It seemed she couldn’t help but smile.

Looking at how happy she was, it was very Kiri Kiri-like.

“Is macaroon that tasty?”

When I spoke, Kirikiri hurriedly lifted her hand and covered her mouth.

KiriKiri, who was sniggering and covering her mouth, was pop-eyed and made her sight full of anger on purpose.

This was more amusing.

I didn’t hide my emotion and laughed bluntly.

“Yea, Yea, it’s a stage that you have to challenge yourself.”

Mumbled KiriKiri while putting two macarons in mouth.

She looked like a hamster more than a rabbit.

Kirikiri says the 40th floor is a stage where people must challenge alone.

It is the first solo stage since the 35th floor.

Usually, these stages are subject to a very annoying restriction or have missions that require you to prove your ability.

The 12th floor, in which challengers had to survive in the jungle for a month without the inventory or the 35th floor, in which challengers had to start from the first floor again after all their skills were reset.

Therefore, when KiriKiri said that the 40th stage was a solo stage, I got a little nervous.

“It’s not like that. Maybe it’ll cost a lot of time, but there is no annoying restriction.”

So it’ll take a long time if I’m not lucky enough.

No matter how much I thought about it, I still felt uneasy.

“Any tips for me before I enter the stage?”

“No, nothing.”

Every time Kirikiri assured me that advice was not needed, I can indeed manage to pass the stage, but in most cases the process took a longer time or was extremely annoying.

I was anxious.

“But I’m anxious.”

“Ah, you don’t need any advice.”

Though I asked several times, Kirikiri only repeated that there was no particular advice about the stage.

Eventually, I gave up asking her more about the stage and bought consumables such as food, drinking water, toilet paper and potion before returning to the waiting room.

It was dawn when I checked the time.

It was better to sleep in the waiting room for a moment and leave in the morning.

Arranging all of these things, I went to bed, opened the inventory and took the holy sword and soul sword out.

The holy sword dislikes staying in the inventory, so I take it out as soon as I enter the waiting room. Otherwise, he'll get angry.

[Long time no see! Warrior! How're you doing!]

It has been a long time.

For about five hours?

"I'm fine. Why are you so happy? It seems that you have adapted being in the inventory."

[Hoo, Hoo, Hoo, Hoo, Uhooo.]

The holy sword laughed with a low voice.

His distinctive bass sound made me uncomfortable.

It was quite uncomfortable to hear this kind of voice because the voice appeared directly my head without going through my ears.

It seemed that he didn't talk near my ears, but directly to my eardrum.

[Warrior, I've done it. I've done it.]

"What?"

[I found a way to talk with Seregia!]

Chapter 202

Tutorial 40th Floor (2)

[I found a way to talk with Seregia!]

“Really?”

This wasn’t within my expectations, so I asked Ahbooboo in surprise.

After Seregia fused with the soul sword completely, she seldom spoke.

She didn’t totally lose the ability to speak.

She still had consciousness of herself and knew what was happening around her.

Occasionally she would express what she wanted to convey.

However, she spoke too little and irregularly.

Sometimes she would say a few words a day, but sometimes she wouldn’t respond for a month.

I failed to find out any regularity in Seregia’s ways of speaking, so I welcomed every time she spoke to encourage her.

So I was surprised that Ahbooboo found a way to speak with Seregia.

[Yes!]

“So, what’s the method?”

[The method is... ho... hoho, do you want to know?]

“...I do want to know. If you can tell me right now, that’ll be great. If you don’t, I’ll throw you back into the inventory.”

I’d really do that.

There was one thing that I learned while getting along with the holy sword.

Don’t get involved in the mischief of the holy sword.

This guy doesn’t know when to stop.

Once you get involved, it will cost you hours, days and nights and if he doesn’t tell you, it will definitely drive you crazy.

[You always say that. Aye, to be honest, you’re lonely when I’m in the inventory, right?]

He was out of his mind.

[So you pretend that you’re not, but treat me kindly, right? Ah, I know what this is. You’re a tsundere.....](*TL note: if you say someone is a Tsundere, you mean he/she always pretends to be indifferent and cool while he/she is totally not.*)

I opened the inventory and threw the holy sword into it.

I signed and lamented my misfortune.

I had two swords that could speak. One speaks a few words only when she wants and then disappear, so it’s better for the other one to shut his mouth.

I fell asleep in the quiet waiting room.

* * *

[You have entered the 40th stage.]

I moved into a carriage from the room with bonfire.

The initial point of the stage was always rather different and insecure, so I looked around carefully.

There were horses and groom in front of the carriage.

And there were also some other carriages.

The scenery outside the window was thicket, nothing special.

So what is this situation?

Firstly, are the groom and the other carriages a collective group with me?

Since my feet and hands were free, the situation of carriage was normal. I guess that I was not a criminal being escorted somewhere.

I tried to figure out what was going on, but it was unnatural to rush out from the carriage.

Therefore, I just stayed in the carriage and waited for the mission message.

But no matter how long I waited, the message didn't appear.

In case I missed something, I opened my eyes widely and used my mana. Nevertheless, no message appeared.

At that point, the groom had heard me. He turned his head back and spoke to me.

“Have you already woken up, soldier? I was about to wake you up, that's fine either way. We will arrive at your destination soon.”

The groom was an old man.

He looked dirty, with a husky voice.

His appearance was totally different from his polite and calm voice.

[The gateway of 40th stage began.]

Description: One day, there are some rumors about abnormalities in Lake Irai. Two suns and three moons appeared in the sky, bug-eating birds began to eat people, toxins are detected in the herbs, and children in the lakeside villages disappear.

The kingdom dispatched investigation team to investigate these rumors.

This is the 3rd time an investigation team was dispatched, but most of the teams disappeared during the search near the lake.

Some surviving investigators suffered from mental illness because of fear.

They kept repeating stories, such as the one that stated that there was a monster in the forest that would rival the dragon or that the lava under the lake would explode and destroy the continent, which were all unbelievable.

As the situation became worse, the kingdom gained the approval of the temple and asked the Hundred Gods Temple for help.

The Hundred Gods Temple sent their contractors to investigate the abnormalities.

The summoned contractor, brave and trustworthy summoned contractor, please find the reason for the disaster of Irai Lake, get rid of it to restore peace for the people.

[Clear Condition]

– Please investigate the abnormalities in Irai Lake.

– Please protect the summoned contractors that are in the same team with you from being hurt and dead. The summoned contractors you have to protect are (2/2)

-?

-?

-?

When groom talked to me, a long message came out at the same time.

It was like I was playing a game and the episode just started while I was talking to someone.

The content of the message felt like a game prologue.

The messages explaining the clear condition of each stage were slightly different.

Message of some stages were especially short or unkind. On the contrary, sometimes there were too much jargon.

Message of the 40th stage was the one that clearly explained the setting of stage and background.

I calmly read the long message once again.

Unlike other stages, a team was built from the beginning, in addition, what I needed to search the lake and protect team members at the same time.

In the meantime, there was some hidden clear goals, showed “?”

This was a special stage.

The first thing that I pondered about after reading the message was summoned contractor.

What does summoned contractor exactly mean?

The message said that the palace asked the Hundred Gods Temple for support through the temple and Gods sent contractors.

I remembered the summon warriors that I saw on the 26th stage.

Although they were known as warriors, maybe they were different from the summoned contractors.

If I had chance, I ought to figure it out.

It was clear that the other summoned contractors were in other carriages.

It was certain looking at the strength and mana they showed.

Compared to them, the grooms that drove the carriages and the soldiers and knights that defended the team were much lower.

I organised my thoughts and awaited the arrival at the destination.

I wanted to talk with the groom to gain some information, but it wasn't a good idea to annoy someone who was driving the horse.

This was definitely irrelevant to the smell of his mouth.

I took the holy sword out of my inventory.

“Well, are you gonna tell me now?”

[You're too much, warrior!]

It's you who is too much, Okay?

The holy sword that spoke “Tee-hee, Tee-hee” has a voice that gave me way too many goosebumps.

“So you're not gonna tell me?”

[Humph, how about you just give me the leg-screw punishment? Don't give me that look, I won't tell you! I, holy sword Ahoubuch, will not succumb to your threat!]

I'll see how long you can insist.

I opened the inventory without hesitation.

“Well, let's see each other in a year.”

[...No, nonono, wait a moment. Isn't One year too long, warrior? Warrior?]

I slowly put the holy sword into the inventory, who was flustered because of “a year”.

When the half body of the holy sword entered the inventory, he changed his attitude.

[Warrior, you're not serious, right? You're joking about one year, right? It's not real, right? You won't do that, right?]

“You don't know me? I'll take you out in exactly one year. Take a nice rest.”

Hearing the screams of the holy sword, I throw his handle and all of the sword into my inventory.

“Are you mad?”

[.....]

He was mad, he was really mad.

He didn't answer me. This reminded me of a classmate who lowered his head and bent over the table.

At this time, I should lower my head and look at his face from under the table.

[I'm not mad.]

You were mad, don't deny it.

“Tell me. You said you've found a way to speak with Seregia.”

He wouldn't say something like “I won't tell you that easily” again, would he?

If he did, I would place him in the inventory for a month.

[...The method is to ask something that Seregia has to answer.]

“Something that she has to answer?”

[Yes. For example... HooHooHoo.]

Why was he so happy? His sullen voice was mixed with laughter.

[Actually, Seregia likes me. Once you were asleep, Seregia said that she loved me.]

What?

He said it so seriously that I thought there was a dog speaking language of human beings.

His unfounded words made me stunned.

How about that.

[I do not.]

Seregia spoke firmly.

I haven't heard her voice in a very long time.

[Just like that. Isn't it easy?]

I laughed because of the simple words of holy sword.

This was easy and effective.

I never thought of it this way.

“Long time no see, Seregia.”

Since Seregia finally appeared after a long time, I greeted her.

But there was no answer.

I tried to use the method that the holy sword taught me.

“You answered Ahbooboo’s question in earnest while pretending not hearing my greeting. You really do love him.”

[That’s it.]

[I do not.]

The holy sword’s a tone of ridicule blended with Seregia’s slightly annoyed voice.

Before the carriage arrived at the destination, the holy sword and I spent time making fun of Seregia.

* * *

“We have arrived.”

The expression of the groom, who opened the door for me, was weird.

[He must have regarded you as a madman. Haha.]

Treated me as a madman?

Following the guide of the groom, I came out from the carriage and asked back.

[From the groom's point of view, you kept talking to yourself and giggling. No matter how he thinks about it, you are a madman.]

I ignored his words and looked around.

There was a small village where the carriage stopped.

Including my carriage, there were a total of nine carriages lined up.

The entrances of the village looked crowded because of the carriages.

As everyone got out of the carriage, the entrance of the village, which was already cramped, became narrower.

A female magician wearing a blue robe got out of the carriage next to me.

Maybe she had some nausea, the magician's expression didn't look good.

"We arrived, magician. Are you suffering from the nausea that badly? I should have driven the carriage more carefully....."

Said a groom standing next to her, with a guilty expression on his face.

The magician's face suddenly changed.

She was about to vomit but in an instant she looked like the Virgin Mary.

"No, it's not your fault. Thanks to Mr. Egel, I arrived comfortably."

"R-really?"

The magician continued her dialogue, ignoring the groom.

"What a beautiful village. Mr. Egel, you said you were from this town, right? I never thought there would be such a wonderful village in the

forest. Unfortunately, the road was long and hard, but we still have God's grace."

God's grace? What?

What she uttered didn't make sense.

What the fuck is that?

Their conversation was so ridiculous it was like an awkward puppet show rather than gripping.

The magician, who has been suffering from nausea until just now, looks stiff and talks about the beautiful scenery of the village, and the groom, who looks as if he is eating raw pig's haslet, is so moved that he is crying.

"Let's pray."

The magician made the sign of the cross, muttered to herself and began the pray while she was saying this.

The groom closed his eyes with a thankful expression, crossed his fingers and prayed.

Why is the magician abruptly acting like a priest.

What was really amazing was that everyone else was praying as well, besides the magician I saw here.

The summoned contractors from the other carriages were holding on to the people around them and praying, to praise the greatness of God.

What's more, the grooms and the people who seem to be accompanying these summoned contractors looked extremely grateful to the magicians and contractors.

Hey, Ahbooboo, do you know what's happening?

[Not at all. Let's wait and see.]

I looked around and saw the groom driving the carriage that I took was looking at me.

Now, I understood what the expression of the groom meant.

His expression seemed to ask "why don't you do that?".

"...Let us pray, too?"

"Okay!"

His reaction was the same as KiriKiri when I said I would buy her cake.

KiriKiri was cute, but looking at the elderly groom's flushed face was a drudgery.

"Ahbooboo, help me. I don't know how to pray."

[Humm, Please follow me. I'll make it easy. All under the sky.....]

"Under the protection of the God of Sky, who takes everyone equally, your son is here now....."

I followed the holy sword of the God of Sky, Ahbooboo, and recited the prayer.

It was like reading a Korean language book, but the groom was really happy as if he really received the protection of the Gods.

I don't know where the person who looked at me with an uneasily went.

The hot sights of the groom gave me nausea, which I didn't have inside the carriage.

When the prayer was finished, the knights and soldiers who were

escorting the wagon parade came up.

They didn't look exactly like summoned contractors, nor did they look like grooms who showed excessive kindness to summoned contractors.

“Warrior, please come here.”

I followed the lead of knight.

The knight gathered me and other summoned contractors one by one and took us to the village.

Inside the village people gathered together and formed a crowd.

It seemed they were only waiting for us to come to the village.

As we entered the village along the main road, the villagers threw something in their hands high into the sky all together.

All sorts of flowers and thousands of ornaments poured over my head.

At the very next moment, all of the villagers cheered together.

* * *

“You can use this place as your accommodation. There are enough vacant rooms on the second and third floors, please choose one room for each of you. I will come back tomorrow morning. Please be sure to take enough rest until then.”

The knight, who finished his kind explanation, left the building with the soldiers.

It was only then that there were only summoned contractors.

I sighed without realizing it.

Receiving the respect and affection of other was more tiring than I expected.

It was a good thing to be welcomed by the villagers, but the welcome was too much.

Some villagers were crying and giving flowers to us and some villagers were happily praying

We responded by shaking hands with them one by one.

I would like to be tactful, so I accepted their welcome.

It took me a couple of hours to get to the accommodation in the middle of the town so I was sweating around the people who approached me.

All the summoned contractors who entered the quarters were exhausted, sat down or tossed luggage to the floor.

“Hah, shit, I’m so exhausted, this is so fucked up.”

Complained the magician who got off the carriage beside me.

Chapter 203

Tutorial 40th Floor (3)

“This is your first time?”

She spoke while leaning forward with her elbow was on the table.

Thanks to her revealing clothes, I could see her shoulders and cleavage.

And thanks to the poor size of her breast, I had no interest in it.

When I asked her how she knew about this, she laughed.

“I saw you reading a prayer. Do you know me? I got off the carriage just now.”

Of course I knew her.

However, I couldn't imagine that this femme fatale girl sitting on the opposite side the table was the same magician who recited prayers with an elegant face outside the village.

She introduced herself as Sicia.

I said my name was Hao.

Everyone seemed to understand this was a fake name, but Sicia just glossed over it.

Maybe this Sicia name was also fake.

After introduction, we began discussing about the arrival ceremony.

Sicia and other summoned contractors had been quite familiar with the villagers' reactions.

After arriving to the accommodation and separating from the crowd, if you were tired, you could curse or go to bed. But you had to act kind and normal when facing with the villagers.

She looked like she had experienced it more than once or twice.

I asked her if they kindly receive the welcome ceremony and pretend like this every time.

“You don't have to do this every time, but it's often like this. If you are going to stay here, you better abandon your struggle and get used to it. It's our duty to present ourselves in front of people, not a choice. You'll receive penalty points if you curse in front of people or spit on the floor. In case you don't know this.”

Although she said that, sometimes it was amusing to receive praise from people like she was a God.

It seemed that she had already forgotten that she said she was exhausted after entering the accommodation.

As Sicia said, the attitude of people meeting summoned contractors were the same as a believer.

They acted like they were greeting the messenger of God.

“Are you an Apostle of God?”

“No, no, we're different from them.”

I saw them acting like a saint, so I thought this was just like being an Apostle, so I just tried to sound her out. However, Sicia was a little annoyed

She seemed to know the Apostle.

I met someone who knew about Apostles, but I had never met people who understood them well.

I had never heard anything else besides the fact that Apostles existed somewhere. Therefore, I requested her to tell me more.

“Hum... Simply put, An Apostle is directly affiliated with a specific church. They subcontract the tasks to us and we follow the contract.”

She did know a lot about Apostles.

KiriKiri didn't reveal any information about Apostles to me, so I wanted to ask more.

“What do they do exactly.”

“Well, actually, that depends on what's going on inside the church. If they have the leisure to, the job they do is similar to ours, but they usually deal with internal jobs. Not much of their jobs are known to the public.”

This was less than I expected.

Although the information was as poor as her size, I organised what I heard.

Basically, an Apostle could do the same thing as a summoned contractor, but they had to focus on internal problems, so they didn't show up.

“This really is your first time.”

“Of course, I've told you already.”

However, it would be better to say that I acted as the “summoned contractor” for the first time.

“This will be tiring. Do I have to teach you the whole thing?”

Sicia explained that she, someone named Yata, and I would be a team from tomorrow.

“Three people?”

Sicia nodded.

“That’s why I keep talking to you. But for the newbie to be in my team else I would’ve gone into my room and take a rest like everyone else.”

It sounded like she was suffering because of me.

The wine in Sicia’s bottle decreased in quite a fast pace.

I wanted to get more information before she got drunk.

“Tell me if there is anything that a first-time summoned contractor should know.”

“What? Didn’t the church that contracted you explain anything to you?”

I explained that I didn’t know anything in advance due to some personal reasons.

While I was explaining, Sicia lowered her head deeply and muttered something.

Her words were untranslated, but the tone of it was absolutely abusive.

“Ugh... What should a first-time summoned contractor know? Ah, Gods will properly count and give you contribution points depending on your activities, don’t worry. Just do your job well.”

Contribution points.

Here come a keyword.

We clear the party quest and then we are rewarded contribution points from the Gods.

The structure was easy to understand.

Summoned contractors had to gain trust from the Gods so that they could unlock the next task.

Summoned contractors may also cooperate with each other to accomplish the tasks together.

This is just like a game design.

“Gods will reward us? How?”

“...Well, for example, giving the a promised reward or giving you a job. The reward is also possible something basic. Mister, are you not the summoned contractor that contracted with the Sky Church?”

She heard me recite the prayer to God of Sky.

“No.”

“Then which church you contracted with?”

Questioned the curious Sicia.

Which God should I say?

If I answered that I didn't have a contract with any God, things would become a little complex.

Which name should I use?

As I thought, it would have been better to say that I had a contract with the God of Sky.

I held back my regret and began pondering.

I had been asked a similar question on the 16th floor.

Even so, it is dangerous to say the name of a God whose character is too widely known.

If the God was famous, it's difficult to keep up that facade.

It was better to use an inconspicuous God.

I used the name of God of Slow on the 16th floor. Not only the knight but the others said that was their first time hearing this name.

I answered Sicia while recalling the memories.

“God of Slow.”

“God of Slow? I’ve never heard of it before. I guess he seldom appeared in public?”

“Maybe. I don’t know.”

“Fine, summoned contractors couldn’t know what’s going on inside the church.”

I was able to bypass this topic while saying these words.

It was fortunate I coped with it well.

[The God of Adventure is disappointed.]

[The God of Light is disappointed.]

I decided to ignore the people who were disappointed.

If I react to everyone, I’d be even more tired.

By the way, I expected the God of Adventure, but the God of light was unexpected.

At least the God of Adventure gave me a power as a gift, but the God of Light never gave me a gift, just wanted to get something from me.

[The God of Light is extremely unhappy.]

[The God of Light is extremely unhappy because you forgot about his present.]

Ah, well, I guess he was saying that he praised himself when I received the aura mastery as an additional reward.

However, that was the skill that I already had before, he didn't give me some new power.

He just gave his approval vote.

[The God of Light is extremely unhappy.]

[The God of Light.....]

What is he unhappy about?

I'm telling the truth, not making up.

I cleared all the messages that plastered were in front of me.

Given his personality, the messages would come in constantly for a while.

"You know your task, right?"

"To investigate the lake where the anomalies occurred."

Raising her glass again, Sicia said she was glad that I knew this.

"So, is there anything I need to know about the research task?"

I asked Sicia to tell me something important.

Sicia shook her head with a red face caused by the wine that went to her head.

She was less tolerant of alcohol than I thought.

“Nope, nope. We’re not actually a research team. We could just wait in the base and Yata will take care of everything, don’t worry about that. And.....”

“And what?”

“I should have asked about your ability, I’ll do it tomorrow. Anyways, you have more alcohol tolerance than me. Ugh, I’m drunk now.”

After saying that, Sicia stood up from her seat and staggered to her room.

According to what she said, Sicia had formed a fixed team with the person called Yata.

I followed Sicia who kept walking to ask her more questions.

I asked whether she had teamed up with Yata before.

“No, never. Another person had been with us before he left. Mister, you are new here, so it’s natural that they will arrange for you to be our team.”

I nodded my head and asked her about the people that had quit.

“Could you tell me something about the person who had left, kid?”

Sicia screamed instead of answering me.

“Why I am a kid?!”

I was just joking.

“Then how old are you?”

“15!”

She was totally a child.

I had been talking and drinking with a 15-year-old child?

It was shocking.

I thought she was at least 20 years old.

“Fifteen, you are indeed a kid.”

“I said I’m not a child.”

Sicia protested for herself by raising up the wine bottle in her hand.

Did she really think that the people who wore little and could drink were adults?

“Okay, Okay, kid.”

“I said I am not.”

“Okay, you’re a kid.”

Sicia sputtered and argued that she was an adult, and then, she returned to her room panting.

[Why did you squabble with a child, Warrior?]

That’s what I wanted to ask, why did I do this?

It was a useless exchange.

Of course, I was also a little sad when she called me ‘Mister’, but it didn’t matter, I just forget it.

[I think both of you are kids.....]

In order to shut the holy sword up, I opened the inventory and pretended to throw the holy sword into it. Then I entered my room.

I sat on the bed wrapped in my thoughts.

I was surprised that Sicia was only 15.

She looked young, but I didn't think she was only 15.

None of the summoned contractors I saw as I entered the accommodation after exiting the carriage appeared to be Sicia's peer.

On the contrary, there were some people who looked even older than me.

Maybe she is always regarded as a child and that's why she reacted sensitively when I called her 'kid'.

I was also surprised that she contracted with the church and became a summoned contractor who had to perform tasks at her age. Regardless of her identity of a summoned contractor, I knew she was extraordinary since I sensed her mana.

The next thing that I pondered about was summoned contractors in general.

To be honest, I'm worried about the mission.

KiriKiri said there would be no big problem and I thought the solo stage couldn't be too hard as well.

By contrast, I wanted to know more about the summoned contractor and the apostles that are related to them.

Perhaps God hoped the challengers who cleared the tutorial to become summoned contractors.

After killing the monster on the earth, the summoned contractor can help to deal with the problems of another world if they had spare time.

This was plausible.

I accosted Ahbooboo who was a little angry because I threatened to throw him into the inventory.

Ahbooboo is a gift that the God of Light granted to the people.

Although his character is somewhat flawed, he knew the Gods and the church very well.

I asked Ahbooboo if he had any information regarding summoned contractors.

[The summoned contractor? You're not a summoned contractor?]

Ahbooboo said that with surprise.

“...Obviously, I'm not.”

[You were summoned in order to kill the demon king when I first met you, so I naturally thought you were the summoned contractor. Although your tasks were somewhat strange.....]

So... Ahbooboo always regarded me as a summoned contractor till now.

But it made some sense to think so.

Even I had lots of questions about the tutorial system, stage, waiting room, and messages, but he never doubted those and never felt incongruous.

Based on partially interpreted information, he understood and accepted all these situations.

[Summoned contractors are not special. They are just those who have signed contracts with the church, then summoned by the help of God and performed tasks. They're the same with people from other worlds. You can call them summoned contractors, warriors or dimensional mercenaries, etc., but they are all essentially the same.]

After listening to Ahbooboo's explanation, I lie on the bed and took the time to sort the information.

He didn't tell me this before when I asked him.

Hearing about the summoned contractor and the fact that they signed a contract with the church, the information was unlocked and therefore the holy sword could finally reveal that information.

I organized the information heard from Sicia and Ahbooboo today.

I decided to gather more information tomorrow and concluded my thoughts.

I knew I couldn't fall asleep till morning, but I still closed my eyes and decided to take a break.

I was able to recognize the problem when I closed my eyes.

Without any warning, a message appeared in front of my mind.

However, ordinary people could easily fail to realize things that appear on the side of their view in an emergency.

Because of that, there is always a signal before a message appears.

It doesn't need to have a gorgeous effect or a sound.

It just needs to make people aware of it.

No matter how many people want to ignore it, but once the new message appears, people must focus on it.

It is as if the message reading is mandatory.

Therefore, when I close my eyes and prepare to have a rest, my vision became dark, and the message appeared constantly is very annoying.

[The God of Light is extremely unhappy.]

[The God of Light is extremely unhappy.]

* * *

[The God of Light is particularly satisfied.]

[The God of Light wishes you a bright future surrounded by beautiful and glowing lights.]

After I was forced to make a promise with the God of Light, the message bombing stopped.

I decided to tell Sicia that I signed a contract with the God of Light as soon as I meet her tomorrow morning.

Then I felt that the world was quiet and I pulled the quilt over it.

[The God of Adventure silently became sulky.]

Chapter 204

Tutorial 40th Floor (4)

“Hey Mister, you got up early, huh.”

Sicia, who was sitting at the table, greeted me.

The first floor was cold and cheerless.

“You got up early too.”

I said that and sat at the table.

I was a bit worried that Sicia would be mad at what happened last night, but fortunately, she wasn't.

“The other teams went out early this morning. The research area is far from here, so if they want to arrive there before it gets dark, they have to depart early.”

Sicia added that she would explain that in detail later.

I knew other teams left early.

Earlier in the morning, I heard someone walking around in a mess and packing bags. I thought something happened, so I took a glance.

The summoned contractors in other teams explained why they departed early roughly.

I told Sicia this.

“Really? Could you still sleep while hearing they were going to depart in the early morning?”

I couldn't.

Although I have insomnia and I can't sleep in the stage, but the bed here is far too uncomfortable.

Even lying quietly in bed, resting with closed eyes was impossible.

[The God of Adventure is looking at you.]

[The God of Light is looking at you.]

I didn't know if these two Gods who annoyed me were congenial with each other, but they were both were having fun all night.

I sighed.

[The God of Adventure is urging you.]

[The God of Light is urging you!]

The hasty promise I made last night in order to solve the annoying message was the cause of the trouble.

The Gods kept pestering me so I gave in and made one promise with them. However, those gods learned that bothering me was a great way to force me to promise anything, so they did.

I endured and endured, and finally, they no longer asked for more promises, but now it seemed that I had to fulfill my promises.

"Sicia."

"What?"

Although I didn't want to say this, since it was necessary to say it, it was better to say it earlier.

I said to Sicia in a mood that I was forced to do the group presentation.

“I have to tell you something.”

“Well, what’s that.”

“I said that I contracted with the God of Slow, but actually I contracted with the God of Adventure and the God of Light. And I respect and love these two Gods. The God of Light is shining and the God of Adventure is... is... is kind.”

I finished talking as quickly as rap.

Sicia seemed to be asking what I was talking about and looked at me blankly due to my words.

[The God of Light is delighted!]

[The God of Adventure is relieved.]

It was exhausting to look at the messages that flashed like a knife.

They were actually Gods who enjoyed making others lie.

In the middle that talk, I didn’t immediately think of the words of praise for the God of Adventure. I felt a little overwhelmed.

[The God of Slow is a little unhappy.]

I don’t know who should I listen to.

I just want some unity in their opinions.

Sicia said with a surprised look.

“I thought we couldn’t sign a contract with a few gods. I heard that because of some proposal, it is impossible to sign multiple contracts.”

“Hah... Really?”

...She said it was impossible.

How could I have known?

Sicia was now looking at me doubtfully due to that lie.

[The God of Adventure feels funny.]

[The God of Light feels funny.]

These damn Gods.

I didn't know if it was because I didn't answer Sicia and dealt with it perfunctorily, the seat was shrouded in awkward silence.

Sicia played with the cup in her hands and awkwardly asked me.

"Well, maybe I misremembered."

"No, you didn't."

"Ah, is this a joke that I don't know? Will you suddenly dance next?"

"No, please, just let it go."

But Sicia didn't do what I wanted. She questioned me for a long time and I had to rack my brain to muddle through.

During this, the messages that said that the God of Adventure and the God of Light felt funny appeared several times.

* * *

Breakfast was a whole rabbit that was steamed in the big petals.

Although I didn't know when the meal was made, it was still warm, so it was Okay to eat it.

The taste and texture of the dish were like stewing chicken.

When I was licking rabbit meat, I was worried that KiriKiri might hate this behavior, but since it was so delicious, I quickly forgot about it.

“Lady Yata hasn’t arrived.”

Sicia said after wiping the meat off her mouth with her sleeve.

Yata was the other team member Sicia spoke of yesterday.

“Do we have we to pull her down?”

“When should we set off?”

“We still have a lot of time. It is fine to leave tomorrow.”

I asked Sicia if this had any effects on the schedule, why didn’t we just let her have a good rest?

Sleep is a blessing.

I didn’t know if it was because my insomnia was serious, I would feel bad if I disturbed people who were asleep.

“Can you tell me about her?”

Sicia nodded.

“Her name is Yata, like what I said yesterday. She is a magician, same as me, but we didn’t come from the same place.”

The first name was Yata, and I was curious about her last name.

“What is her last name?”

“The last name? She doesn’t have a last name. She was a slave.”

Her origin was quite intricate.

“This is not unusual. The magician from the magic tower slave is not uncommon.”

“Yes?”

“The manpower in the magic tower is never enough. Among the constantly accumulating number of slaves, there were some talented slaves that appeared by chance and became magicians.”

This is special enough.

Sicia said that she didn't know any more details.

I also didn't want to invade other people's personal stories.

But if she was chosen as a magician from the slave, then she must be talented.

“How can someone who became a summoned contractor is not talented. Everyone is like that.”

This is true.

Sicia sitting in front of me is also a very talented magician.

I am looking forward to using this opportunity to learn some magic from both of them.

* * *

I had another conversation with Sicia after breakfast, but the magician who named Yata still hasn't arrived.

Sicia reached the limit of her patience. She glanced up at the second floor from time to time and finally got up from her seat.

With the clacking sound of footsteps, Sicia went up to the second

floor.

I suppressed the urge to peer on the second floor with magic and focused my ears to the sounds from the second floor.

I heard the door being suddenly opened and then some noises.

Judging by the sound I heard and the clamor after the door opened, Yata may not be sleeping in bed.

It appears that she was just in the room.

After that, Sicia hauled somebody out by the collar.

The female magician who seemed to be Yata was flailing her limbs in an attempt to break out from Sicia's grasp, but Sicia firmly dragged her down.

From her appearance, she was a head shorter than Sicia, and only half of my height.

It seemed that she couldn't withstand Sicia. She struggled but was inevitably dragged to the table on the first floor.

The woman, who was dragged like a disobedient cow, hid behind Sicia as soon as she saw me.

"I beg your pardon. She is shy with strangers."

[To this extent, she's not shy with strangers. She is just afraid of you.]

Whispered Ahbooboo, who has been silent.

However, why is she afraid of me?

Have I done something?

"Hey, follow me."

“Huh?”

“Hello.”

Sicia suddenly greeted me with hello.

A voice came from behind Sicia after a pause.

Her voice was as small as her body.

“Hello.”

Sicia was getting Yata to greet me.

Sicia spoke first.

“My name.”

“My name.”

Yata repeated Sicia’s words.

It seemed harder than asking the children in the kindergarten to introduce themselves.

“My name is Yata.”

“.....”

Yata was quiet, so Sicia lost her patience because of Yata’s silence.

“Follow me. I am Yata.”

“I am Yata.”

Watching this ridiculous situation, I couldn’t utter a word.

I was speechless for a moment, so Sicia opened her mouth and

whispered to me. “It’s your turn to introduce yourself.”

“...Nice to meet you, you can call me Hao.”

I greeted her in a hurry, but I didn’t hear the answer.

She didn’t say a word.

The quiet holy sword said.

[She resembles Miss Seregia.]

Indeed.

Seregia just says what she needs to say and closes her mouth for the rest of the conversation.

One difference was that Seregia occasionally convey something what she wanted what to say, but Yata only spoke because Sicia urged her.

Once again, Sicia spoke first.

“Come on, once again. I am also.”

“I am also.”

“Glad to see you.”

“Glad to.....”

Looking at Sicia and Yata made me feel uncomfortable...

At this stage, I don’t think we should converse like this everytime.

Yata, who hid behind Sicia resolutely and never spoke unless Sicia led her, was stubborn. Sicia, who persisted to finish the greeting, was also stubborn.

“I’m looking forward to working with you.”

“I’m looking forward to working with you.”

“...Yeah, well, me too.”

Ending this long greeting, I gently asked Sicia.

“Is she Okay? She seems to be awkward with strangers.”

I was very skeptical about whether she could perform her tasks well.

“It doesn’t matter, you can trust her, everyone has their own abilities.”

I nodded as a response to Sicia’s assurance.

Yata only greeted me by following Sicia’s instructions. Although she didn’t want to, she listened to Sicia’s words.

If Sicia could handle her, I had nothing to say.

After the greeting that was awkward and uncomfortable, Sicia took out a large map from her backpack and unfolded it on the table.

Even though Sicia kept walking around, Yata attached to Sicia like a tortoise shell, which made Sicia uncomfortable.

Sicia, who often gets annoyed quickly, acted unexpectedly this time. She didn’t drive away the annoying Yata or become enraged...

After finishing the setting of the table, Sicia cleared her throat and spoke.

“Now, let me give a simple explanation. If you have any questions, feel free to ask.”

So it was Sicia’s job to explain the tasks.

I nodded and said I got it.

Yata, who was still behind Sicia, wouldn't ask any question, so I guessed she was explaining this mainly to me.

"Yata is familiar with space magic, so she is responsible for the setup and management of the teleport magic circle as well as communication with the research team."

So, Yata can teleport.

Unlike her outward appearance, Yata was a fairly capable magician.

Sicia pointed at the map and continued.

The middle of the map displayed a lake and the point on the south side of the map showed the village we occupied.

"At dawn, two teams will search the west and east regions of the lake. What we have to do is to establish a stronghold on the south side of the lake and communicate with the research teams at both regions, which will be our main job."

"We don't have to research the southern portion of the lake?"

"The research of the south is finished."

The research of the village's immediate surrounding seems to be completed.

Or the mentioned research team mentioned had already finished the analysis on the south.

"Then we have nothing to do."

"That's right. In fact, it's difficult for a team consists of two magicians and one warrior to conduct the search. But if there is a request from the east or west, we still need to help them. So we need to be stationed at the stronghold at the center of the south."

And from then on, we had nothing to do as had Sicia said.

If there was no accident, we were likely to stay around the stronghold and the mission would complete without any effort.

However, that was impossible.

Then we discussed the battle strategy.

In the battle, I would be the vanguard to protect both of them and Sicia, who is familiar with the attack magic, would be rearguard while Yata behind her as support.

Sicia also told me about the road to the lake, the general schedule, and the composition of other research teams.

It might be because I did these things alone before, so now It felt outlandish to discuss future plans with others.

On the other hand, I felt that I would enjoy this stage.

Chapter 205

Tutorial 40th Floor (5)

The morning was ending so we left the accommodation.

I left the village and entered a lush forest.

It seemed that the villagers never came to the lake, there wasn't even a small path here.

Although this path was a bit strenuous for magicians who have little strength, Sicia and Yata kept up with my pace.

"This is prejudice. Don't assume all magicians have low stamina."

"Really? You seem weak to me."

"Even with spells and techniques, a magician's body is an important part of magic casting. If magicians don't exercise, they wouldn't be able to use any advanced magic because they will burst."

In other words, Sicia and Yata, as magicians who signed contracts with Gods, couldn't be physically weak.

The only particularly weak magician I met was the one on the 16th floor.

She was always sickly and weak, since then I began to have a prejudice against the magician.

Thinking carefully, the magician didn't look very weak when I knocked her out.

When the sun was about to set, we arrived at the lake.

This lake was pretty big.

I imagined that the lake would be big when I saw the map, but I didn't expect it to be this huge.

Looking at the boundary of the lake in the distance, I couldn't tell whether it was a lake or a sea.

Sicia and Yata weren't surprised by the scenery of the lake. They began to draw a magic circle on the ground as soon as we arrived.

I asked if they needed my help, but they replied that there was nothing I could do so they told me to leave them.

But I didn't leave. I walked around them and studied how they drew the magic circle.

I couldn't understand what they were doing, but I intended to memorize the whole process.

"If you are curious, I could tell you later. So don't bother us and stay away."

Finally, I was driven away.

She said she could tell me later, so it was okay to be driven away.

But I really had nothing to do in the meantime.

The tent was set up and we would eat the food we brought from the village in the evening, so I didn't have to find food either.

I wanted to explore the area, but there was nothing dangerous in the peaceful and quiet forest.

I didn't find anything strange within the range of my mana and I thought there was no need to investigate the forest.

As a result, I was determined to look under the surface of the lake.

Walking to the lake, I saw ripples of water.

I put my foot on the surface of the water and focused on it for a moment.

I moved my other foot from the ground and onto the surface of the lake, but then my body shook violently.

It would be much easier with bare feet, but I wore shoes with thick soles. So it wasn't easy to control my mana.

I wobbled for a while before gradually stabilizing my center of gravity.

When I was familiar with this, I took a step forward.

Walking on the surface of the lake reminded me of an anime I watched before.

[No matter how peaceful the lake is, this is not something that can be easily learned in such a short time. By the way, what's Naruto?]

“...You don't have to know.”

This kind of thing often happened recently.

Maybe it was because I use not only the voice but also telepathy to communicate with Ahbooboo, sometimes he could hear my thoughts.

I don't know if it was because I am too familiar with telepathy causing me to make mistakes or if there is something else that caused this.

I couldn't put my mind around this, but this time I felt a little uneasy.

It would be better to ask KiriKiri about this after clearing this floor.

When the figures of Sicia and Yata drawing the magic circle in the

lakeside was becoming small, I was so far away from them that I could no longer see the bottom of the lake.

How deep would it be?

I jumped from the surface of the lake while thinking this.

And I dove into the lake.

I put my head down and my feet up so let my feet could touch the surface of the water using my mana.

Unlike standing on the water, my feet were now in contact with the underside of the water surface, like a bat hanging upside down.

[...You are so wasteful. You don't have to use magic for that, just abandon studying magic and use me.]

Voiced Ahbooboo who was afraid of his position would be threatened if I continued to learn magic.

But I won't ignore magic.

Although I could use other techniques in place of magic, there were things I couldn't do without magic.

For example, Sicia and Yata could draw a teleportation circle, but I couldn't.

I walked on the underside surface of the lake and looked around the lake.

I searched the water with my eyes and mana, but nothing strange was found.

It seemed like an ordinary beautiful lake.

I was engrossed in the underwater scenes and forgot to find abnormal phenomenon.

With this method, I walked underwater. After a while, I felt that I was out of the air so I resurfaced.

My body, hair, and clothes weren't wet. I guess it was because I was covered myself with mana.

I shook off some lingering water on my clothes and returned to the dry state just like before.

Perfect waterproofing.

[...If you are still human, please stop learning the magic. Don't you feel sorry for the other magicians in the world? This is unfair for them.]

Why I should feel sorry?

I ignored Ahbooboo's words and walked towards the tent where Sicia and Yata are.

When I neared the lakeside, I found that Sicia and Yata were staring at me.

I didn't know why they reacted like that, so I moved quicker.

"Mister."

"Yes? What is it?"

As soon as I got to land, Sicia grabbed my hand.

I was surprised by this sudden contact.

"Please take me as your disciple."

"What?"

Why did she suddenly request that?

Yata, who was beside Sicia, seemed to have seen something miraculous because her eyes were twinkling.

Maybe it was because I could walk on the water surface.

“That technique just now is not magic.”

“Even if it’s not magic, I still want you to teach me it!”

Probably because she was too excited, Sicia shouted.

It would not be hard to teach her this.

Since she is a magician, she must know more about handling mana than me.

It would be easy for her to learn it if I enlightened her a little.

“Okay, in return you will teach me magic.”

“Cool!”

I had one muddleheaded disciple.

* * *

After we installed the teleport magic circle by the lakeside, we had nothing to do.

Yata communicated with other teams once a day, while Sicia and I did nothing.

The message contents that Yata sent were fixed including some normal regards, which took 5 to 10 minutes.

In the remaining time, Sicia taught me magic and I taught Sicia my techniques.

I gradually familiarized myself with Sicia's magic, however, Sicia couldn't comprehend my teachings.

It appeared that Sicia wanted to learn how to walk on the water and how to remain dry even after diving into water.

In the end, she wanted to learn how to control and manipulate mana as I do.

But the key point was on that, the use of the mana and giving rise to the influence on the body or its surroundings was a kind of physical art.

She had to hold onto the sensation more than the mana controlling and to seize the instinctual feeling.

Maintaining a centre of gravity was as important as being familiar with her body.

In fact, the trick to learning mana control is the result of practicing physical arts.

That was exactly why no matter how I taught her my methods, she couldn't grasp it in our short time together.

Even so, Sicia's physical capabilities were pretty good and her ability to handle mana was better than me, so I had thought she could be able to understand the method quickly.

But two days passed, then three days, Sicia failed to even do an imitation.

At last, from the fourth day, I had begun to teach Sicia the most fundamental thing I know.

I taught her to hold a sword and swing it in the correct posture.

"Is this really helpful?" Asked Sicia.

Swinging her arms, she wielded the sword up and down.

Actually, I wasn't sure of it myself.

Using her body to wield the sword was just a medium awaken her senses.

The only thing I required of her was to wield the sword in the correct posture.

Sicia was doing her best to swing the sword, but her shoulder, her knees, and her head were trembling.

And the position where the sword fell and stopped was different every time, how could she succeed?

Speaking while wielding the sword proved that she didn't understand the significance of this training.

But Yata, who was also wielding sword next to her, was much better.

I didn't know since when, Yata, who was used to stay with Sicia all day, started to hang around to watch Sicia's training.

When I coached Sicia, I found that Yata learned by watching her, so I gave Yata a sword and let her join the training session.

Yata was very interested in this and followed to do the training.

After we spent a few days together, Yata became a little more familiar with me.

We didn't have any conversation though, but we were close enough to pass the salt bar to each other during meals or to poke each other's shoulder during the night watch.

"Mister, perhaps I am not talented enough?"

Sicia went straight to the point

[Yes, absolutely.]

Agreed Seregia.

Seregia, who never opened her mouth about normal things, harshly spoke.

[Meh, she is not bad. It is too harsh to say she is talentless.]

Unexpectedly, Ahbooboo gave a favorable evaluation.

However, I thought she was born to be talentless.

Of course, I didn't voice out my thoughts.

"No, you are not."

Although I said no, Sicia, who has been disappointed for the past few days, loses her momentum.

It was also possible that Sicia already realized my thoughts through my attitude.

Because several times I muttered why she couldn't grasp the trick, which perhaps revealed my impression.

Thinking about that, I felt repentant.

At the night of that day, while I was in the night watch, I considered what training methods could help Sicia improve.

But nothing came up.

I never learned from anyone, hence I could only teach her according to the training I've done.

Yet, I don't think she achieve it if I asked her to my training method.

I also consulted with Ahbooboo and Seregia, but they also didn't present any plausible solution.

In the distress, due to having no solution, I looked up at the night sky and stared at the full moon.

The moon looked especially large.

We had been camping at the lakeside for four days.

I always looked up to the night sky and the moon.

But I never realized the moon was that huge.

Looking at the moon that was shining, I had an ominous presentiment.

“Ahhhhhhha!”

From somewhere, the scream of people came.

That scream was echoing afar, as a result, my tension increased.

It's not an auditory hallucination.

However, within my mana's range, I didn't sense anything.

I was worried that I would miss other voices, so I concentrated on listening, but only to hear the sound of the wind blowing from the woods and the ripples of the lake.

Sicia and Yata rushed out from the tent.

It seemed that they had also heard the scream.

Sicia, who hurriedly rushed out, looked up at the sky and said.

“Mister... Look at this. There are three moons”

Listening to the words of Sicia, I looked up to the sky again. There were three large and bright moons in the sky, which was bizarre.

Then, the contents of the half-forgotten message came to my mind.

[One day, there are some rumors about abnormalities in Lake Irai. Two suns and three moons appeared in the sky, bug-eating birds began to eat people, toxins were detected in the herbs, and children in the lakeside villages disappeared.]

I just thought of it as an exaggerated rumor.

In the message, the survivors were portrayed as being trapped in horror and lost their mind.

KiriKiri said the task on this floor wasn't difficult and other summoned contractors also behaved calm, so I thought it would only be somewhat difficult to find the target, but it couldn't be dangerous.

What's more, I thought the message was absurd and untrustworthy, therefore I just ignored it without any deep thinking.

As soon as I learned that the content in the message was true, the restlessness loomed over me.

And in the message, there were also words as following.

[The survivors of the research team said there were monsters that could rival the dragon in the forest.]

[They repeatedly said that the lava at the bottom of the lake would explode and would swallow the entire continent.]

Kaaaaaagh!

Another strange roar came from the woods afar, and the faint ominous atmosphere had spread, making everyone difficult to breathe.

I couldn't help but feel goosebumps rising from my back.

I'm going to be attacked.

Chapter 206

Tutorial 40th Floor (6)

People usually experience at least one presentiment in their lives.

The presentiment could forebode failing an exam, losing a bet, or that today's fortune will be outrageously bad for no reason.

Anyways, everyone would.

Some believe it's just bad luck and disregard it.

Some think that awful things happen because of presentiment.

Some think it's not a big premonition.

In such a case, people don't believe in the premonition, but the ominous feeling lingers regardless.

However, once you've experienced life-and-death crises repeatedly that was present with an ominous premonition for hundreds of times, you catch onto this feeling instinctively.

My experiences is such a case.

Having been gone through fire and water for countless times, spoiling the doorsill of the hell, I unconsciously began to get used to it.

Every time before something challenging occurs, I feel as if I have my ankles in the Jordan River.

At worst, I feel as if I bathe in the Jordan River to the point that I could see my Grandpa on the other side.

As this kind of premonition happens frequently, sometimes I even feel that it is not bad to take a foot bath in the river and that it is not bad to meet my Grandpa once in a while. Soon, nerves would begin to relax, but the sense of unknowing haunts me.

Sometimes, I wished that my presentiments were not true, even though I'm accustomed to the monthly death crises.

If I continue hanging around, I would drown in the Jordan River rather be simply being soaked.

This time, I feel like I wouldn't be able to return from the opposite bank.

That is what the current ominous premonition warns me.

I can't sense the enemy, but the atmosphere is uneasy. That uneasiness that warns me that if I act rashly, I will die here.

I have often experienced this before I reached the level of strength where I easily cleared the tutorial's stages without any great danger.

I quickly checked my condition as the agitation swept through my mind.

My mind is stable.

My reaction speed and directionality are stable.

I wondered if the fear born from my excessive premonition had affected my judgment, but it didn't seem to be so.

The feeling of death would intensify when neither the fear nor the enemy's existence is felt.

Such a situation would be a perfect chance for sudden death.

I had to swiftly decide whether to escape or locate the adversary.

At that moment, the lake quaked violently.

The ripples that appeared at the center of the lake quickly turned into huge waves.

It seemed like something was struggling in the depths of the lake, trying to jump out of the water.

[The survivor of the research team repeatedly told the absurd story that lava beneath the lake would explode and swallow the continent.]

I thought again of the message about the lake.

In this case, there is only one choice for me.

[Clear Condition]

-Investigate the abnormalities in Irai Lake.

– Protect the summoned contractors in your team from injury or death. The summoned contractors you have to protect are (2/2)

-?

-?

-?

-?

-?

-?

The clear condition of the stage clearly required the protection of the other summoned contractors.

It wouldn't be too late to investigate anomalies of the lake after

making sure the safety of the other two magicians.

Instead of watching the wave that came to us, I turned around, grabbed the shivering Sicia and Yata, and rushed into the forest.

* * *

Within minutes, we arrived at the village where we had stayed on the first day.

The whole village was empty.

To be precise, there was no one here.

The furniture and clothes in the houses were intact.

I searched every corner, but there wasn't even a dog, let alone people.

The village remained unharmed even though anomalies had occurred in the woods.

Therefore, I had thought the village was safe, but that turned out to be wrong.

There are two possibilities I could think of.

One is that the villagers predicted that there would be an abnormal phenomenon and left.

I don't think these ordinary people could perceive what I wasn't able to notice in advance though. However, they have indeed experienced such abnormalities many times and have been familiar with that.

Perhaps this occurred periodically.

If not, then there must be some sign that only they know.

The other possibility is that they've already died before we arrived.

But the village is completely preserved as if it was never attacked.

Just the people have disappeared. The buildings and gates in the village are still undamaged and the scent of blood is absent too.

Even the weakest people would do their best to resist an approaching crisis.

At least, the villagers would have raised some chairs to struggle, which is the normal response of a human.

Even if their resistance is futile, with the overwhelming fear lingering over, a desperate villager should have struggled to grab everything within reach.

But no traces of struggles could be seen.

That cannot be unless the mishap was too fast to be perceived.

After looking around the village, I took Sicia and Yata to the place where we lived the first day.

“Yata, please try to communicate with other teams as well as the temple.”

Sicia, who cheers up a little, asked Yata to communicate with others.

Both Sicia and Yata cheered up quickly.

I asked Sicia, who was looking at Yata.

“Is this a usual task for summoned contractors?”

“No. This is my first time encountering such a situation.”

So this was abnormal.

When things got to this point, I knew that my approach was wrong.

Sicia kept saying that we didn't have to go to the lake.

The message clearly put that we can stay in the village for one or two days before we leave.

Thus, we should have stayed in the village and collected as much information as possible about previous anomalies.

The message's information and the information from other summoned contractors were based on the words of panic-stricken survivors, so no one could vouch for its accuracy.

Instead, it's likely that the villagers hold the most information.

But after the first day, there was no communication between the summoned contractors and the villagers.

What's more, the food we ate before was prepared in advance so we didn't interact with the villagers since then.

The reason was simple.

This is one of the stages of the tutorial after all.

So, if I didn't ask anyone about anything, no one would gather the necessary information for me.

I should have gone out and collected some information from the villagers.

Generally speaking, villagers were very kind to the summoned contractors.

If I wanted to collect the information, I could have done it any time, even if I lacked communication skills.

But the excessive enthusiasm from the villagers was stressful, so I deliberately avoided them.

I bitterly regretted my mistakes.

It would have been a great help if I could find the precursor of the abnormalities, or find the difference between the search this time and the previous one.

Ahbooboo, does anything come to your mind?

[No, I have no idea. I guess the things came up from the bottom of the lake are the source, but haven't we examined the lake? We even examined the bottom of the lake carefully. And... uh, warrior.]

"Yes, I know."

I detected the enemies in the woods while Ahbooboo was talking.

I didn't know the exact numbers, but they were numerous.

Once I engage them, I can't guarantee the safety of Sicia and Yata, who were frail at melee range.

Rather than fighting against enemies while protecting two other people, I'd like to rush out and fight outside the village.

Sicia and Yata were still trying to communicate with the other teams.

I don't like this sensation.

"Ahoubuch"

[You only call me Ahoubuch in such a circumstance. You usually call me Ahbooboo.]

"Well then, Ahbooboo."

[Yep. Holy sword Ahoubuch is present.]

I didn't have to draw Ahbooboo, he unsheathed himself.

Ahbooboo was so excited about what's going to happen, he flew around the accommodation.

What a carefree guy.

Sicia and Yata stared at flying Ahbooboo who abruptly appeared.

When this happened, I felt there was no need to give an exhaustive explanation for them.

"This sword will protect you. Stay alive and hold on. You'd better not follow me."

I said to Ahbooboo while walking out of the door.

Do you understand? Can you do it?

[Of course. I am Warrior's weapon. I'll obey your orders without question, the ideas of good and evil are meaningless to me.]

He doesn't really seem like a sword at all.

I clicked my tongue unconsciously.

I even had doubts about myself.

I don't know who was complaining to who now.

"Mister! Where are you going alone?!"

Even though I saw Sicia running out of the accommodation, I didn't care.

They couldn't break through Ahbooboo's defense.

This was for their protection.

The Ahbooboo's mana capacity is more superior to mine and he can

use aura freely.

Ahbooboo could fly at a speed close to the speed of sound and is unafraid of being hurt because he has various protection magic.

Besides, he has good judgment and is calm. He can also freely use holy magic without any cost to perform various attacks.

Even I, couldn't easily break through his defenses and hurt the people he wanted to protect.

Out of the accommodation, I entered the street in the village.

I traversed the empty street.

I felt unsettled as I walked down the streets since I lack an understanding of the situation.

[Are you okay?]

Asked Seregia.

I don't know whether I should be grateful or contrite to the worries of the usually silent Seregia.

"I'm fine."

Seregia said nothing else.

Does she really think something terrible has happened to me?

"I'm fine. Everything's ok."

When I arrived at the end of the street which was the entrance to the village, I could see enemies clearly.

The enemy was approaching the forest from the lake.

I couldn't believe such adversaries were hidden beneath the lake.

The thick forest made it impossible for me to accurately assess the number of enemies, but it must be no less than a thousand.

The problem wasn't their numbers, but their strength.

These opponents were only half of my waist-high.

They were short like Yata.

They looked like the combination of the dwarves I saw on the 20th floor and the demons I saw on the 30th floor.

Maybe I can call them dwarf demons.

They are short and had dark skin.

Each of them was exuding a strong presence.

The one who stood in front screamed out.

[@@@@!]

It was a scream I couldn't understand.

This he skills, Time before Babel, had the knowledge to translate the demon's language before.

The language that this skill couldn't translate were runes, the ancient language that was forgotten and the slang that only a few people used.

The guy who was saying something suddenly grabbed the collar of another guy beside him and threw him at me.

It was bizarre to see him flying at me like a shot put.

I immediately pulled out the Soul Sword and fired an aura.

Kuang!

With a strange noise, the dwarf demon who collided with aura fell to the ground.

Originally, I planned to use my aura to split the dwarf demon apart, but he stood up as if nothing had happened.

This guy was so tough.

Previously, my aura could cut everything apart.

Therefore, their defensive ability is at least on par with the Demon King.

Although I hoped that only a few of them could be as strong as that guy, they all looked exactly the same from the outside and all exuded a strong presence.

So it would be better to assume that they all have such a strong defense.

Even more so considering this was Hell difficulty of the tutorial,

[@@!]

The fallen dwarf demon shouted proudly.

Does this mean that he has grasped my level?

The remaining opposition all flooded the entrance of the village where I stood.

Chapter 207

Tutorial 40th Floor (7)

Pooha!

My accurate sword swing decapitated the enemy.

Blood gushed from the headless neck.

Instead of avoiding the fountain of blood, I charged forward.

I grasped the head flying in midair and threw it forward.

PA!

“Kkwek!”

The guy who was hit by the head fell backward with a ‘kkwek’ screech.

Their bodies were tougher than ordinary metal, so using the corpses as projectiles was quite effective.

I approached the fellow who had been hit by the skull and had not yet recovered.

As he struggled to recover his balance, I stabbed him in the heart with my sword.

Kuang!

The tip of the sword failed to pierce the enemy’s chest muscles.

It just bounced off with a sound similar to metals colliding.

There wasn't even slight scratches on the chest, not to mention bleeding.

But the enemy still fell backward.

My aura could cut thick shields apart like turnips, but these enemies had such a solid body that scraps didn't appear even after being attacked by my aura.

There were only two ways to do meaningful harm to them with a sword.

One way was to use techniques such as light sword to create overwhelming destructive forces.

Another was.

Split them apart.

From head to toe.

The descending sword split the enemy's body into two clean halves.

I doubtlessly knew it from my experience.

Aura could be influenced by the user's will.

Although it's still speculation, I thought aura and mana were both forces that could manifest themselves through visualization into the world using my strength.

That's how magic was defined in the magic books.

Magic is a supernatural phenomenon that utilizes mana, techniques, and will.

But even without the required mana to process the technique, drawing mana arrays or reciting spells can produce a similar effect.

As long as the release of mana is processed to manifest Aura, then attach my will to Aura, what can be called a miracle will be achieved.

Of course, because aura has been very powerful, there was no need to process mana.

From the split halves, I glanced at the fresh viscera flowing out of the body and sheathed my sword.

There were no enemies left.

This fellow was the 1,028th opponent.

I couldn't help sighing.

This was my hardest strife yet.

It's not about how dangerous it was, it's about how difficult it was.

No matter how hard I concentrated on wielding my sword, I only succeeded once every three attacks.

All of this was because my concentration has improved in combat so the hit rate had also improved. During my training, I only succeeded one in ten attacks.

In order to be more proficient in using Aura, I need more training and practical experience.

Apart from these guys, I didn't sense any other enemies approaching the village.

But the ominous air was still spreading.

It was near the lake, in the forest, inside and outside the village. I wondered where this ominous atmosphere would eventually spread to.

I even wondered if it could cover the entire continent or even the

whole world.

[Ahbooboo.]

[Yes, Warrior.]

[Is there something wrong there?]

[Of course.]

[The two?]

[They fainted.]

That's weird, what?

I asked Ahbooboo what had happened.

[Because after they tried to get in touch with the temple and told them the situation here, they wanted to confirm the situation outside and get more information, so I knocked them out when they tried to go outside. It was nothing.]

After hearing Ahbooboo's words, I really had to admit that his 'nothing' was effective.

Defending against the first stage of the threat, all summoned contractors in need of protection were in the residence with the holy sword to guard them well.

What should I do next?

I've made too many mistakes in this stage, so I'm more cautious about making a judgment.

I confirmed the clear condition again.

[Clear Condition]

- Investigate the abnormalities in Irai Lake.
- Protect the summoned contractors in your team from injury or death. The summoned contractors you have to protect are (2/2)
- ?
- ?
- ?

Now that two summoned contractors' safety had been secured, the next goal was naturally to investigate the cause.

But the investigation was ambiguous.

Whether it's just to identify the cause, to confirm the others' situation, or to gather information and convey it to the temple.

There are no clear guidelines.

First of all, I should clarify the reasons behind the abnormal phenomena of the lake.

There's a clue.

The ominous atmosphere that enveloped the world.

Although I didn't know how far it spreads, I was aware of its origin.

[Talaria's Wings]

I spread my wings and flew up into the sky.

High in the skies, I found that the world was operating abnormally.

The three full moons still shone with a strange light, which was an incomprehensible phenomenon, but that's not all.

Strange birds, the size of a house, flew around and attracted my attention.

They had red tails with black feathers.

That's the bird I've seen countless times in my days camping by the lake.

It should be the most common bird in this area.

But its size was not normal.

There were also jagged teeth exposed in the beak and talons that seems to possess daggers.

I began to understand the sentence in the message that "bug-eating birds began to eat people".

Looking at the bird as it was now, it can really catch people to eat.

In that case, with such a huge body, it would be a bit difficult to survive on insects and fruits. It would be necessary to hunt large animals and humans happen to be included in the prey.

Under the blue sky, there were various monsters wandering around on the ground.

What could I say?

The various monsters wandering around suited the difficulty of hell, I could only chuckle.

I also saw a monster swimming near the center of the red lake in the distance.

The moment I spotted the monster whose enormous size could be seen from afar, I understood that it was the cause of the current situation.

The ominous atmosphere that had been felt since the three full moons rose was emanating from that monster.

It's extraordinarily grotesque.

It was reminiscent of the legendary North Sea monster Kraken.

Unlike Kraken, who had several giant soft tentacles and a tough look, the monster had soft limbs.

And a head as big as its tentacle.

The eyes were embedded in the vaulted dome-like head.

It's not only weird, but also disgusting to look at it.

Once you look at the freak, it's as if an invisible hand grips your heart, your chest becomes stifling, and your vision begins to blur.

Rapid breaths and speeding heart rate seems to be symptoms of a panic disorder.

What a fucking ability.

I need to get pass that in order to reach the monster.

What to do, it was really problematic.

Firstly, I decided to punish Kiri Kiri as soon as I cleared the stage, and then I planned the next move to deal with the monster.

[Can you make it?]

“Well.”

It's really hard to be sure.

“I don't think I can't kill it. It would easily die with a vigorous attack.”

No matter how ominous or powerful it was, it shouldn't be completely untouchable.

"It's just that I'm much more likely to die than it."

And I didn't know what abilities it had.

When it does use them, I couldn't guarantee that I could deal those it too.

[Sicia and Yata can support you, can't they?]

"Yes, but if I die without doing anything, there's nothing they can do."

Sicia and Yata, these two girls were both my shackles and my escape vent.

A few days ago, I trusted both myself and them confidently, but I couldn't rely on them if the rival was that behemoth.

If I took the wrong step, I would lose my life immediately.

[What are you going to do then? That thing hasn't come out of the lake yet. Another way is to ignore and avoid it while investigating it.]

That was the right judgment.

And also the safe judgment.

Suddenly, a new message came.

[Stage task update.]

[Note: It's said that there was an abnormal phenomenon in the Irai Lake area. After the Kingdom obtained the approval of the temple, it dispatched a research team consisting of the summoned contractors.]

On the fifth day of the research and the day when the full moon rose, the mission witnessed the anomalies directly.

The 1st Team and 2nd team were sent to the west and east of the lake area were annihilated before they reported the abnormal phenomena they had witnessed.

But the 3rd team who set up their strongholds on the south side of the lake escaped from the scene at the moment they sensed the foreboding.

Yata, a summoned contractor from the 3rd team, confirmed that the abnormal phenomena in the lake area were true. After confirming that the abnormal phenomena in the lake area were level 1 risk, the Kingdom and the seniors of the temple asked the Hundred Gods for support. The Hundred Gods decided to use the Eye of the Sky, a commonly used power, to reconfirm the scene through the eyes of the surviving contractors.

The Hundred Gods Temple urgently decided to mobilize the maximum available combat power immediately after the eyes of the contractor, Hao, of the 3rd team confirmed the presence of a giant ‘origin monster’ in the middle of the lake.

Among the surviving members of the 3rd team, Sicia was contracted with the God of Nature who intended to send his own apostles to destroy the ‘origin monster’.

The summoned contractors, in the case of the continental crisis, more than anyone else, could calmly dominate the current situation, convey the problem’s source, and development of the anomalies to the Hundred Gods Temple. Please help the apostles sent by the Natural Church to destroy the ‘origin monster’.

[Clear Condition]

- Investigate the abnormalities in Irai Lake.
- Protect the summoned contractors in your team from injury or death. The summoned contractors you have to protect are (2/2)
- Help the apostles of god to destroy the ‘origin monster’.
- ?

- ?

What's this?

I wanted to see if the clearance conditions that were covered by the '?' had changed, so I scrolled down and found that the contents of the information had changed completely.

It took a little time to read because a lot of content was not easily understood.

As soon as I figured out the contents of the information, I was very alarmed by the unexpected message.

The apostles were suddenly mentioned.

I've seen similar things before.

It was on the 19th floor.

On the stage where I met Myong Myong, I had seen a giant fox named Great Mother.

She once said that she wanted to be an apostle of the God of Goodwill.

In the face of that Great Mother, even if I fought with all my strength, I may not be able to ensure an easy victory.

Those coming directly where not Apostle candidates, but fully-fledged Apostles.

I felt both excitement and uneasiness.

[Apostles are summoned. Please be careful of the impact.]

Ow!

How kind.

I would have liked a better message.

[If the arrow hit the key point, you will die. Please be careful.]

[If you fall down, you will die. Please don't fall down.]

And so on.

Seeing that kind message, others would think it would normally kindly take care of me.

The kind message, which asked me to take care, I embarrassed me.

On the other hand, in response to the impact, I also enhanced my strength.

Although I didn't know where and how the apostles would be summoned, the message was so straightforwardly informed me that I needed to be careful. It seemed that if I was not careful, I would die because I was involved in the process of the apostles' summoning.

Chapter 208

Tutorial 40th Floor (8)

The apostles' summoning took place on the ground.

I flew high into the sky and easily pulled away from the summoned apostles.

[Warrior, what is this? Do we need to kill it?]

[It's the impact of the summoning. Leave it alone.]

I immediately stopped Ahbooboo who was asking if I wanted to kill it and continued to watch the summoning process.

The summoning location was easy to find.

I just needed to find the center of the flowing power.

With that location as the center, heaven and earth began to quake.

It's certainly a force that lines up with the message's warning.

Ordinary challengers who didn't listen to the message and wandered around the area would tire and lose their lives upon summoning.

This was how overwhelming the summoning process was.

A deep vibration sounded, space began to shake, and the apostle appeared on the surface.

The scary thing was that even after the summoning, the power that surrounded it remained.

I thought this power was the impact of the magic used to summon apostles here.

But now, it seems like it was just the apostle's energy pouring out.

This so-called 'apostle' was more than four meters high.

Although at first glance it looked like a human being, it was not very similar.

It's more like Genie, the lamp genie from Aladdin.

Its face had none of a human's 5 sensory organs and its body was translucent.

Looking at him was like looking at a ghost, making me feel that it shouldn't even belong in this world.

The summoned being looked up at me.

Then it said.

[Come down.]

It even could speak.

Although without a mouth.

I didn't say a word when I heard the command flowing directly into my mind.

Although this area was full of that violent energy, it was well controlled.

Anyways, it won't attack me for no reason. From the message, it was also an ally.

I descended quickly, landed, and the apostle spoke again.

[Hello.]

Unlike its appearance, it was a very human-like apostle.

And it even said hello to me.

“Well, Hey.”

[No honorifics? Do you know how much older I am than you?]

It's really a human-like apostle.

And also a stubborn old guy.

“Yes, hello, nice to meet you.”

[...]

The apostle was expressionless.

Even though it couldn't make any expression.

Because it didn't have the five sensory organs.

[You're the one who set the fire... Ah, yes, you're the promising challenger. You're the one who annihilated the mutants and summoned me.]

The apostle said.

A word came out of the apostles that I thought it couldn't say.

‘Challenger.’

I'm sure it's a word used to refer to people that were summoned inside the Tutorial system.

[I thought that a challenger of the 40th floor would be exceptionally

strong, but it seems now that you can't bear your cultivation. You are indeed a special being.]

The Apostle wasn't talking to me, but mumbling to himself.

"Really?"

[Of course. These mutants are not made to be easily killed by a 40th floor challenger. While they wandered, you should've moved stealthily and confirmed their origin. I would've been summoned while you were getting chased in the forest. That was the intended process.]

Now I'm absolutely sure, it was talking to me.

"Mr. Apostle, do you know about the Tutorial?"

[Of course. I know a little about Tutorial, the challengers, and you.]

Its reply was beyond my expectation.

Inside a stage, I would've never think to meet someone that had a clear understanding of the Tutorial.

[As an apostle, I am here to be an assistant for the challenger. You can regard me as a guide. I can steer you in the right direction and also provide a variety of guidance for the future.]

This was all abrupt.

It was so unexpected that my mind couldn't keep up with what the apostle said.

To help and guide the challenger? Here?

Why is it here?

If only it had appeared on the first floor.

Maybe it's because it saw my emotional expression, the apostle added.

[Is it strange? Isn't it a tutorial? Since this place is a springboard for adaption and strength. Of course you need such a guidance.]

After listening to the apostle, the phrase “what the fuck” came to my throat.

I can see that apostle and I had a different understanding of the Tutorial.

The apostle thought Tutorial was literally a tutorial.

A tutorial is created to let players familiarize themselves before the game officially started...

[Let me introduce myself. I am the apostle of the God of Nature, Spirit King Alan Hal. Just call me Allen Hal.]

“Allen Hal.”

[Add ‘Mr’ to it.]

“.....”

[Challenger, what's your name?]

“Please call me Hao.”

I almost couldn't resist adding ‘zzaai’ after the name.

[Honorifics without sincerity plus a pseudonym without sincerity.]

[Anyway, it's very well done pseudonym. There are no problem so far. You should always use the pseudonym in the future.]

None of your business.

Why is he suddenly asking me to use a pseudonym.

“May I ask why?”

[The name confirms the existence of the name’s owner... As you grow stronger, revealing your real name will yield no benefits.]

I understand, I replied.

To tell the truth, I didn’t understand, but I pretended that I did.

I need to ask Kiri Kiri for the details.

[Wandering everywhere while exposing one’s real name is equivalent to exposing one’s life. If there is such a person, then he is either the arrogant madman or an overwhelming strong individual who can keep his life against the world.]

This time I also answered, “Ah, yes, I understand.”

Even if I didn’t ask, the apostle explained it one by one.

He reminds me of the Knight from before.

What a human-like apostle.

The Spirit King is evocative of calm, emotionless being.

I spoke my thoughts and the Spirit King answered that it was because he had met so many contractors before.

[I also have questions to ask you.]

“What is it?”

I hadn’t asked enough yet, but it seems he has questions for me.

[Why didn’t you nurture your spirit?]

[There is a fragrance of a spirit within you. Although very weak. You

have obtained a spirit's protection and enough affinity with the spirit. There's even a spirit walking alongside you.]

He must be talking about the Wind Spirit and its protection.

It's true that I didn't care about it or use it after the beginning.

I had no plans to develop it.

[You have the ability to become a spirit messenger. Your strength and

affinity is enough for the spirit to grow. Perhaps you can reach me through that spirit. It will certainly be of great help to your journey. I wish to know why you ignore that spirit.]

As if he was afraid of anyone saying that he was not the Spirit King, it mentioned something about the spirits.

The reason was simple.

Through the use of the Wind Spirit's Protection, new skills emerged one by one.

Spirit Affinity and Spirit Summoning.

I have pondered many times about making full use of those skills.

But I never committed to them because I fear I would lose myself if I constantly relied on the others such as a spirit's.

As I gain more clarity for spirit power, I become more reluctant to use it.

I was disgusted with the idea of borrowing power from others. Therefore, I focused on my own growth.

Faced with Spirit King, I deceived it by saying I wished to put my

effort into growing my physical prowess.

[Is that so? I understand. So is that the same reason that only one soul is loaded inside that sword?]

Spirit King pointed to the Soul Sword clipped to my waist as it said that.

Hm?

[The number of souls that sword can load are no less than tens of thousands. Didn't you know that?]

No I didn't, not at all.

I didn't hear such an explanation when buying the sword.

Both the item window's description and Kiri Kiri did not tell me that.

I pondered over the Spirit King's questions.

Once I clear this confusion, I must punish Kiri Kiri by pinching her cheeks.

According to the Spirit King, if I loaded tens of thousands of souls into the sword, I would see the corresponding effect.

The Soul Sword will grow stronger as the number of souls it carries increases.

Not only will it become more durable and sharper, but it will also emit a bizarre ghostly air, which will cause mental damage against living beings.

It can also ward off and damage ghost-like enemies.

Seregia's soul alone has already awakened this effect. I'm not sure what effect it would have if tens of thousands of souls were loaded into it.

Of course, however, as long as Seregia does not agree with that, I don't intend to force several souls into it.

There's already a solitary tenant. I can't force a cohabitant into it.

Even if I don't load more souls in, it's good enough.

I decided to discuss it with Seregia later.

[In the future, if you have time, have a talk with the little Wind Spirit.]

"I see."

I answered tamely.

Because in front of Spirit King, it's impossible to say that I won't get in touch with the spirit in the future.

It felt like confronting my father-in-law and claiming that I wouldn't take care of his daughter.

[Help God's apostle to destroy the origin monster.]

The information appeared in front of me.

It just repeats what I've seen before.

This has never happened before.

[Anyway, I think God can't stand your conversation with me.]

"Is that so?"

[Yes. More than half of the gods think so. Let's go now. We can walk and talk.]

With that, Spirit King turned to face the lake.

He went ahead.

With its faint legs.

“What are you doing, Mister?”

[What else can I do? Of course go in the direction of origin monster.]

With a pace similar to that of a toddler.

Considering the power of the Spirit King, the distance from here to the lake should be the same as nothing.

Yet, he walked so slowly, but nonetheless moved according to the message. Moreover, he seemed to be purposely showing his procrastination.

I walked along with Spirit King’s slow pace.

“Can we do it like this?”

[Of course. This is not the first time they did this. Don’t worry. The God of Nature also ordered me to talk to you as much as possible before summoning me, so it’s okay.]

The God of Nature.

It shouldn’t be such a kind God.

On the contrary, it should be a god who disliked me.

Because I have been burning, smashing and polluting everything around me for a long time, I could not help it though.

I speculated that the Spirit King, sent by the God of Nature, would distaste me, but he turned out to be more cordial than I thought.

[Don’t you have anything to ask me? There should be a lot. I can’t answer all your questions, but I can tell you quite a lot. Take this

opportunity to ask what you want to know.]

That is what he said.

There was no reason to refuse the opportunity, so I asked.

“What is the purpose of the tutorial?”

[The first is to provide challengers with the power to eliminate the origin and the second is to select the new apostle. That’s all I can tell you. I can’t tell you the third reason because you’ll be able to guess it by the end of this stage.]

The apostle told me exactly what I wanted.

I stuffed this answer into my head and asked the second question.

“Is that the origin monster that has appeared on Earth?”

[That’s right.]

“Why do Gods and their apostles not kill those monsters directly?”

This is my biggest question.

These gods created the tutorial, summoned people into a new world, let them grow, but why did they not interfere directly with the earth?

From the perspective of the tutorial’s design, these gods should have a profound understanding of the earth’s culture and customs.

Given the ability, the spare power, and the intelligence of the Earth, I wonder why they chose to summon challengers and force them to grow.

[I really can’t answer this question. To sum it up, it’s because if one God comes out, other gods may feel unhappy.]

This is not a clear answer.

It's an answer that requires careful consideration.

I need to ask Kiri Kiri once more.

Although she hadn't answered me before, now that I've gotten a little information about it, she may give a different answer.

"Next question. What does God's apostle need to do?"

[The third reason reason for the tutorial is what the apostle needs to accomplish.]

This reply gives me a lot of inspiration.

What the apostle needs to do is established the tutorial's third purpose.

And the second goal is to select the apostle.

That is to say, Gods use the tutorial to select an apostle, not simply to enhance combat effectiveness or for enjoyment, but to clearly indicate a task.

The apostle seems to have more meaning in the tutorial than expected.

"So what is an origin monster?"

[It will be easier to understand that reason when you eradicate the origin. It's near the lake. Ask the last question.]

There is a sound of water coming.

The giant monster swimming in the water tosses in the water and the lake rises waves and sounds.

"Is that all you have?"

[Do you mean my power?]

“Yes.”

[Why on earth did you ask me this?]

“Please answer me.”

My mind is a mess.

The unexpected happens one after another and more alarming information is pouring in.

I’m busy enough just remembering, sorting out, and analyzing the information.

But even so, I couldn’t easily concentrate on all this information.

Since Spirit King was summoned, my mind has been preoccupied by one thought.

Can I kill this Spirit King?

I think I can.

Chapter 209

Tutorial 40th Floor (9)

[About 80% of my power. However, some of it was lost in the summoning process.]

Eighty percent.

It was ambiguous.

[Of course, you can only sense 30% to 40% of my actual strength. There is an immeasurable and inevitable difference in power between us.]

A meddlesome explanation was not absent this time.

But he said that I can perceive only 30% or 40% of his actual power?

I don't think so.

The Spirit King's that I have sensed actually accounts for most of his power.

But I intentionally did not correct his misunderstanding.

"How do you compare to that?"

I pointed to the monster who started to go mad after seeing me and the Spirit King.

The Spirit King seemed a little unhappy and made a "chi" sound.

He has no mouth and nose, so it's hard to discern whether he snorted or did something else. But it was clearly a gesture of annoyance.

[It's as powerful as me. It's a given that a monster of that level possesses such power.]

The Spirit King words, contrary to what I thought, recognize the monster's capabilities to some extent.

I wonder if I should ask more about the monster's power.

But that's no longer necessary.

Because the Spirit King has begun to explain.

[That thing, even among origin monsters, is an anomaly. It has the ability to manifest of mental attacks and an illusory world.]

I know what mental attack is, but I know nothing about illusory worlds.

Thankfully, I didn't need to ask this time either.

[Where we are now is the illusory world of that fellow. Two suns rise in the morning and three moons rise after sunset. The water that fellow is staying in would be dyed as red as blood. It also catches humans to transform them into variants for the purpose of inspecting the surroundings, as well as ferocious beasts that resemble the animals that inhabit here. Everything here belongs to the world created by that fellow.]

I slowly understood the Spirit King's instructions.

It's really very strange.

In the absence of any symptoms, all kinds of strange phenomena occur at the same time.

And they are some strange and obvious phenomena that I have never noticed.

But it makes sense that at some point, we have been transferred to a

place that looks roughly similar to the previous one on the surface but is actually another world.

[That monster exists only in the illusory world created by itself, so it's very difficult to find it outside. Moreover, its ecological law is to swallow up people who wandered around the gate of the illusory world for a period of time in secrecy and use them to strengthen its force by turning them into its underlings. In this case, the lakeside should be the entrance to the illusory world.]

His explanation was so detailed and cordial that it felt like listening to the announcement 'Pokedex of MyPoke is Updating'.

[As a monster with such amazing abilities, it spends most of its power on those tasks. So once it reveals its true form, it becomes a giant prey.]

"Really? So there shouldn't be a problem to get rid of it."

[Right. Of course, but because it's so huge and durable, it will take some effort to fight, but it won't be too dangerous. It is the most suitable enemy to pit against the challenger at this stage. Isn't it a tutorial?]

I nodded vigorously.

"Then Mr. Apostle can also kill it alone."

[Right. But it would be easier to deal with if you aided me. Also, if you want to clear the objectives, you'll have to go with me to destroy that thing in the end. You fight it in person.]

"I see."

Because I kept nodding, the mood became strange.

Suddenly a wave came upon me and the Spirit King.

There was not much water coming in, but neither I nor the Spirit King was swept away by the waves.

[It looks like we have to move now. Let's go.]

The Spirit King said as he strode forward.

I nodded to him for the last time.

Then instead of following the Spirit King, I stood still and said.

“Okay, please take care.”

The Spirit King turned around to my voice which was behind him, not besides him.

[...Hmm? Didn't you hear me just now?]

“I did.”

[I just said explicitly that you have to fight in person to destroy that monster before you can clear the stage.]

That's bullshit.

I said to the Spirit King with a smile.

“No, you didn't say that. That's not what information said. The content of the message precisely stated to help God's apostles eliminate the origin monster. There is no mention of personally fighting.”

[.....]

I wondered what the silent Spirit King was thinking at the moment.

If I could know what expression would appear on its face in such a sudden situation, I could judge its character.

But I could not see any expression on blurry face.

But that's not to say it's impossible to predict the Spirit King's mood.

He felt like he was stepping on shit. Obviously.

“Don't think this place is just a simple tutorial. How many people do you think died here? Most of the people who died after being kidnapped here without getting any explanation committed suicide because of despair. The rest died of ignorance.”

[...So what?]

“For us, the message's information is our only guide. So we will analyze every word in it. Fortunately, this information has a logical pattern and consistency. I know it very well. The message commands me to help you destroy the monster, so it also means that i can cheer you on while you fight.”

[.....]

“I will be here to cheer for you with all my heart. That's enough.”

[.....]

That's what the message said.

The Spirit King didn't say a word. It stood still in front of me. So I added.

Pointing to the monster on the lake.

“Go ahead. Don't beg for my help, just do your thing.”

[...Won't you regret your attitude?]

“Of course won't.”

Think about it humanly, you bitch.

I have nothing to regret.

Anyways, I have not been with the God of Nature for a long time.

Since the time when I ignored God's warnings many times while the jungle was burned happily.

What's more, God's apostles can't hurt me as a challenger at all.

Even if the God of Nature protects him, no other Gods would.

I'm sure.

[I had thought you were an exceptional challenger, yet you are now evading the challenge itself. Do you think there's a high chance we can safely kill that thing with you as my assistant?]

I laughed off his words.

The Spirit King probably said a few more things before realizing that it was impossible to convince me and then turned toward the monster.

[It seems that your bellicosity is picky. Since you're so scared, just cheer me on like you said.]

The Spirit King threw that sentence and flew to the monster.

Sure enough, his brain was not very good.

He knows I'm bellicose, but I haven't shown it yet so there should be some doubts.

Who am I aiming for?

The Spirit King couldn't hear my inner ridicule and confronted the monster.

Thus began the battle between the origin monster and the apostle of God.

[99 gods of Hundred Gods Temple are watching you.]

Long-lost information appeared.

Recently, the interests of the gods had waned.

Those gods can read my thoughts.

This is a ridiculous stage.

* * *

[What happened, Warrior? It feels like it's going to explode here.]

[Hold on. The apostle is fighting with the monster.]

[No, that doesn't matter to me, but what about them?]

Ahbooboo is talking about Sicia and Yata who were frozen by him.

Indeed, the impact here would be a bit unbearable for delicate magicians who are already unconscious.

Even if the distance from the lake to the village increased, the forces that are surging would make that distance meaningless.

But then again, that Spirit King.

This stage wants a 40th-floor challenger to assist in a fight between these two monsters?

Are you serious?

The Spirit King's confrontation with the monster seemed to turn this place upside down, literally.

The water from the lake spewed up into the sky and the surrounding land rose with it.

The ground flew up into the sky in an instant, blanketing the sky, then

falling down back to its original position.

The air became a sharp blade that tore the surroundings into pieces and then suddenly burned.

The Spirit King controlled everything in nature causing a clash of destructive forces.

Of course, that thing didn't even have time to think of a counterattack.

It was just being beaten unilaterally and enduring it.

But that itself was remarkable.

If it was anyone else, let alone hold it up, it'll die the moment it's exposed to the Spirit King's attack.

I have to reconsider my previous judgment.

Could I really kill the Spirit King and that monster?

I'm genuinely unsure.

Because I've never tried to push my limits before so how can I be certain?

(TL's note: Maybe the author messed up here, GodlyCash and I think it should be 'It has been a long time since I've pushed my limits so how can I be certain?')

The only time I was pushed to my limit was on the 35th floor when I met my mirage.

At that time I was in a weakened state.

If I pushed my limits now, what degree of attack can I output?

It can only be roughly estimated.

Interestingly, not to mention the Gods, even Kiri Kiri didn't know exactly how powerful I was.

In a stage like this, she always told me that it would be dangerous to fight head-on.

Normally, it was true in a stage where more than 20 people were needed to challenge.

But it was never as dangerous as she warned.

The information that the Gods gave in the stage messages agreed with Kiri Kiri's judgments.

It was an interesting fact.

Since I've concealed my capabilities to that point that even I can't measure it, the Gods and Kiri Kiri have also begun to make incorrect judgments about my potential.

The Spirit King has information about the tutorial and me.

So, like the Gods, it should have misjudged my abilities.

That's why, while showing his back is to me while also using his powers to his content.

No matter what happens, I'm not a threat to him.

As far as I am concerned, I am very grateful.

As the Spirit King said, such opportunities are really rare.

The opportunity to kill that kind of being by hand will not come easily.

Unlike the power I already have, my experiences can be another weapon for me.

I don't want to lose this opportunity without attempting it, even if I can't guarantee what the outcome will be.

I watched the Spirit King and the origin monster confront each other and perform this mythical scene while waiting.

* * *

The vague translucent body of the Spirit King looks more like an invisible soul.

Although it's hard to find him because he has been unilaterally manipulating the surrounding environment to attack, it's easy to observe when debris flies to him or when the monster's soft tentacles attack him.

When the monster is physically attacking the Spirit King's body, it passes straight through his body.

Like crossing a void with only air.

He used the surroundings to launch his attacks while his rival could not even touch him.

It's a real cheat ability.

* * *

I discerned a bizarre axis of power in the Spirit King's body.

Whenever he exerts his abilities, there is a central part.

That's probably the core of the Spirit King's power.

That core is well hidden.

I even wanted to ask myself how I perceived it.

Perhaps it's because I've watched the scene of the Spirit King pouring

out his power without stint for such a long time or maybe it's due to my affinity with spirits that the Spirit King mentioned.

Anyway, the important thing is that I know his weakness.

As long as I can attack that core and cause it meaningful harm, it will hit whether his body is intangible or gas-like.

Although the core has been found, its location has been constantly changing inside the Spirit King.

Given the speed of the Spirit King's reactions, it's better not to make an obvious attack.

Even if he hides the core well, he will certainly be prepared to protect that core.

Even if an ordinary attack can touch that core, it certainly can't do any harm to it.

There are only a few attacks I can launch.

And there is only one technique that can make good use of the most out of a surprise.

[Ahbooboo.]

[Yes, Warrior. Hold on. They haven't awoken yet.]

[Well done. Now work harder. Summon out holy spells and prepare to withstand the impact.]

[Is the Apostle of God is going to cause a huge explosion?]

[No, it's me.]

Chapter 210

Tutorial 40th Floor (10)

[I feel very uneasy. I don't know what you're going to do, but can you not?]

[Well, no way.]

Anyway, I've warned Ahbooboo.

He'll be able to take care of the rest.

The battle between Spirit King, the apostle of the God of nature, and the origin monster was still raging on.

Although the Spirit King is pushing the monster step by step with his mythical power, the monster is huge and durable after all.

It waved its numerous tentacles to hinder the Spirit King, so the battle did not easily end.

Of course, the damage has been accumulating.

On its giant body, dark red blood flowed and countless injuries covered it.

Over half of its soft limbs were cut off.

But the battle showed no sign of ending, which meant that the Spirit King's strength is actually more or less depleted than it was at the beginning of the battle.

Even if the battle is one-sided oppression by the Spirit King, if it continues at this pace, the battle will last more than 30 minutes.

This will hold unless the Spirit King has a hidden card I haven't noticed.

I thought about waiting a little longer until both sides were more wounded and tired, but it seems better to launch an attack immediately.

[Talaria's Wings]

I spread my wings and flew into the sky.

When I first got this skill, I felt it was a bit unreliable, but it turned out to be my most used power skill.

Even though I limited my use of power skills, a skill that allowed flight could not be abandoned.

Although I have used magic to float and then paced the space with my legs, its speed pales in comparison to actual flight.

[God of Adventure is delighted.]

Those Gods' reactions had always been like this. I ignored him and continued flying.

I flew high to try to get a good view of the battle between the Spirit King and the monster.

Because the scale of the fighting is so large, so it was more appropriate to observe by magic rather than by vision.

[Indomitable Spirit]

[Designate Opponent]

These two power skills can work with the Talaria's Wings for strengthening my capabilities.

One most important common point these skills have is that they

enable me to match the force of the enemy I intend to face.

I used Designate Opponent on that monster and the Spirit King.

I thought this might not work for the Spirit King, but the effects took place.

At this point, the Spirit King and the monster are very fatigued, but they've much energy to spare.

As I am now, I am unable to easily kill both of them by myself. I have to maximize the Indomitable Spirit and Designate Opponent by attacking at this moment.

I took a deep breath and then exhaled.

Thanks to the power skills, my body contains tremendous potential.

The Spirit King and the Origin were on a different level compared to the other enemies I encountered on the 40th-floor stage of Hell Difficulty.

If that monster focused on simple combat rather than consuming its power to create an illusionary world; if the Spirit King did not appear here as an assistant to fight for me against that monster, I would not be so lucky to make such an attempt.

My body trembles from the external magic is flowing in that my body doesn't recognize.

My body was warning me that I can't control it at my level.

Ah, what a torturous situation.

[Are you really going to move?]

[Of course.]

I coldly responded to Seregia's question and activated my skills.

Indomitable Spirit and Designate Opponent were used in conjunction to concentrate my power, the technique can be launched at the fastest speed currently possible.

This should prevent the Spirit King and the Origin Monster from sensing my attack and properly respond to it.

I targeted the technique between the monster and Spirit King so I can maim both of them at once.

Since I started to use the advanced mind power skill of aura, I have named every skill.

Just like what the female student on the 1st floor had said, whose name I can no longer recall, it's not for the sake of being cool or for some romantic fantasy.

Because mind power skills are very difficult to handle, so in order to use it, I must firmly engrave its nature and concept in my mind.

After all, the important thing is not the name, but the fact that I recall the skill's techniques through the name.

So I had to keep the strange name of the technique.

Anyway, it's better than Yeodeuleum Pyo.

“Sibam Boom.”

I threw a red dot in the middle between the Spirit King and the monster.

It was a bright, clear, and unusual red sphere like the red dot of a laser pointer on an oil painting.

The Spirit King and the monster stopped fighting almost at the same time.

In order to escape the sphere between them, they moved in the

opposite direction.

In that instant, the sphere began to expand.

The flame blades from the sphere shattered everything around it and the ensuing explosion illuminated the whole world.

I tried to withstand the impact, but felt that the defense erected by my aura was broken and fainted immediately.

[The God of Light cheers enthusiastically.]

[The God of the Sky feels satisfied.]

[The God of Nature utters a cry of sorrow.]

[The God of Dueling falls silent.]

[The God of Dueling seems to have something to regret.]

[The God of Death looks at someone with great expectations.]

[The God of Chaos is a little excited.]

[The God of Chaos feels very happy.]

[The God of Chaos is urging somebody.]

[Vote started.]

[Approval: 7 votes, Disapproval: 71 votes, Abstention: 22 votes.]

[The vote was rejected.]

[The God of Chaos is laughing at somebody.]

[God of Nature is very angry!]

[Are you awake?]

As soon as I opened my eyes, I heard Seregia's voice.

"How long have I been out?"

My voice is stable.

My mouth, throat, trachea, and lungs are in acceptable condition.

[You woke up 13 seconds after the explosion and 4 seconds after the fall.]

Thirteen seconds after the explosion.

That's quite a long time.

It's enough for an angry enemy to cut my neck.

But considering the scale of the explosion, 13 seconds was short.

The trigger for faint resistance is required so that I can use it when I'm on the edge of dying.

If the impact can not really make me faint or near faint, it is impossible to trigger faint resistance, so in order to really activate faint resistance, I must repeat it many times. Even I feel lucky for myself that I have done so.

Fortunately, my body did not suffer any significant damage.

Although I have suffered numerous slight burns, they did not hinder me at all.

The joints in my waist were sore, but it's not a big deal considering that I have fallen from such a height.

There seem to be some signs of a mild concussion, but it's not dangerous.

I took out my recovery potions and drank it while sending a telepathic message to Ahbooboo.

[What on earth have you done, Warrior?]

[What else can it be? Sibam Boom, of course.]

[...As far as I know, the technique with a stupid name should not have such terrible power.]

[Well, now it does. What happened to them?]

Ahbooboo paused for a while and then answered.

[What happened?! Of course, they died!]

At Ahbooboo's words, I was silent.

I was too impulsive to consider the safety of Sicia and Yata.

I thought I had told Ahbooboo to protect them.

In fact, I knew that they could die.

I didn't want to put any more thought into it.

But, if they die, then I would fail to clear the stage.

The mission goal clearly states that I have to protect them.

Do I really need to go back and start it over?

I've come so far.

All I can see now is the burning jungle.

Indeed, in this case, it is difficult for them to survive.

Because the impact radius is likely reached the village.

[If it hadn't spread to the village, how could it have been completely blown up?]

Well, it's a fact.

[But...]

Hm?

[The lovely me saved them all! With the holy spell rivaling power skill levels – Recovery!]

You saved them?

[Isn't that obvious?]

Although there are countless enemies to kill while traversing through the stages, there are occasional those who need to be saved.

As far as I know, Ahbooboo can't use Recovery to resurrect people.

We've tried before.

[How could that be?]

[Actually, A holy spell is essentially to borrow the God of the Sky's power with his permission. Of course, for some insignificant holy spells, as long as the users are qualified for his permission, no matter how they used the spell, he will not care. But when it is the Recovery spell, all of that changes. I wonder why the God of the Sky agreed so readily this time.]

Well, let's talk about it next time.

I relaunched Talaria's Wings again and flew near the lake.

The scene was full of inferno flames that suited a hell-like environment.

Everything around has been burnt to the ground, but lingering flames remained on the surface.

The impact of the explosion, which had launched the laker water into the sky, is now pouring down like rain.

As soon as the droplets hit the ground, they immediately evaporate into gas and return to the sky again.

I see the wrathful head of the Spirit King.

[You bastard! How dare you!]

I also saw the squirming and dying monster.

With underhanded tricks, I tried to kill both of them, instead they both survive.

[Do you really want to be killed by me?]

The Spirit King's skull shouted angrily.

The Spirit King, how once had a giant imposing figure, now has only a fist-sized head floating in the air.

Perhaps no matter how fatal the damage was, he would not be wounded. Instead, part of his body and strength would disappear.

His strength decreases every time he is attacked, but even after withstanding such a tremendous attack, he is not as dead as the Origin monster.

[Are you ignoring me now!?]

I am.

In fact, when I first recovered from my unconscious state, I had already detected the energies of the Spirit King and the monster so I knew that they were still alive. However, I'm not worried.

I don't have to worry about those who had so little power remaining.

What's more important is after that.

[Why on earth did you attack me?!]

"How can you call it an attack? It's just a misunderstanding."

[Misunderstanding!? Look at me now!]

"I was just delivering the final blow. Didn't you want me to help you? It was so frustrating that I had to give you a hand."

The Spirit King shut up.

This excuse is more useful than I thought.

Anyway, there's an excuse for the attack.

But if I attack this weak Spirit King again and wipe him out completely, I will have no excuse.

What shall I do next?

[I will never let it go so easily!]

I pulled the soul sword halfway out scabbard and asked the Spirit King.

"What should we do then?"

The Spirit King calms down again.

Seeing the Spirit King quickly calm his anger in the face of real

threats, I also make a final decision.

It's not necessary to kill him.

I already know his limits.

As well as how much my power has increased and the types of enemies it could defeat.

That's enough.

The Spirit King is so weak that I don't want to attack him anymore, which might create greater troubles in the future.

Of course, it may be too late to think about the aftermath. Maybe it's because his excited brain has cooled down allowing it to make a better judgment.

[...This time, only this time... I'll let you go.]

"Only this time?"

[I'll let you go forever.]

The Spirit King's anger may have subsided a little, his responses were wise.

Although I don't know if this is a suitable expression for a guy with only a head.

"Let you go?"

Note: Here is a repetition of the Spirit King's words, the Spirit King didn't use honorific words, so the MC repeated to ask him. In the next sentence, the Spirit King uses honorific words.

[Please let me go.]

While the Spirit King replied, the occasional squirming of the

monster's body suddenly dropped down after the odd whine.

The three moons in the sky disappeared and replaced with one bright moon.

The fire-stained sky is once again shrouded by a dark blue dome and the cries of insects replaced the sounds of the burning forest, echoing calmly.

Everything has returned to what it used to be.

Only the Spirit King and me, as well as the huge body of the monster, that seemed to be alien in this ordinary world.

[Stage task update.]

Chapter 211

Tutorial 40th Floor (11)

[Stage task update.]

[Clear Condition]

- Investigate the abnormalities in Irai Lake.
- Protect the summoned contractors in your team from injury or death. The summoned contractors you have to protect are (2/2)
- Help the apostle of god to destroy the origin monster.
- Obtain the essence of the monster's origin.
- ?

There was no lengthy explanation, only the clear conditions has changed.

I think I can guess what the essence of the monster is.

Because after the monster weakened, the essence's energy began to leak out.

I also know its location.

It's at the center of the monster's enormous brain.

A piece of cake.

“Mind Slash.”

Standing at a distance, I cut the monster's huge body into pieces with Mind Slash.

If the monster had to be slaughtered like an animal, it would have taken years.

I brandished Mind Slash in successions. While I methodically disintegrated the monster's body, the Spirit King is stared at me.

I ignore him.

Just like the previous battle, when the Spirit King thought I could not be a threat to him and ignored me.

The Spirit King current condition poised absolutely no threat to me.

He is too weak to make any changes.

On the other hand, I felt very lucky.

Its name is Mind Slash, rather than something like Yeodeuleum Pyo.

With the Spirit King staring at me, I would have been embarrassed if the name of the technique was Yeodeuleum Pyo.

Immediately the thing called the 'essence' emerged from the body of the monster.

It's a fist-sized black stone.

I used magic to dig that thing out of the corpse and bring it in front of me.

"Is this the essence of it?"

I ask the Spirit King.

But he doesn't answer me.

I looked at him, who is in silence, and pulled half the soul sword out of the scabbard.

[Correct. That's the essence of the origin.]

His judgment of the situation is in time.

The Spirit King once said that he had met many human contractors and learned a lot from them.

I don't know from whom he learned, but that person taught him how to behave himself well.

Intriguing.

From the essence of the origin monster, I felt a familiar power.

The power of that essence is very similar to that in the Spirit King's little head and the power hidden in my chest.

When I defeated the Goblin King on the 35th floor, I got a stone that had a similar power with this one.

When I tried to absorb the power in the essence I failed to draw it out unlike my time on the 35th floor

Then a message shows up suddenly.

[Stage task update.]

[Clear Condition]

- Investigate the abnormalities in Irai Lake.
- Protect the summoned contractors in your team from injury or death. The summoned contractors you have to protect are (2/2)
- Help the apostles of god to destroy the 'origin monster'.

- Get the essence of the monster's origin.
- Present the imitated essence of the origin to the altar of God.

[The Imitated Essence of the Origin 34]

Explanation: Please dedicate this offering to the altar of God to increase your contribution.

I am more concerned about the “essence of the origin” explanation rather than the change in clear conditions.

The word ‘imitated’ is In front of the ‘essence of the origin’.

The difference between the stone from the goblin and this one is probably because it's ‘imitated’.

Imitated.

The word implies a lot.

In fact, most of the contents in the tutorial is an imitation of other things.

The stage of this tutorial is a kind of a recreation of the region, people, and events from somewhere.

But the word ‘imitated’ has never been used for these things.

How should I think of this word?

Does it mean that the stage failed to perfectly replicate those things?

Or maybe it failed to reconstruct their prototype?

It's not known yet.

Maybe even if I ask Kiri Kiri, she won't give me any answers about it.

It should be related to the fact that after I absorbed the power of the stone, the God of Remorse was voted out of his voice.

Now I have to take the next step.

“Spirit King, what does this power have to do with divine powers?”

[I can’t answer you accurately. I can only tell you that it matters]

It does matter.

It’s enough to know that.

[Have you finished? Then I’ll leave.]

“Wait a minute.”

[Ahbooboo, it’s almost over. Come here now.]

[OK. The Lovely me is coming.]

I wish that fellow hadn’t said the word “lovely”.

While waiting for Ahbooboo to come, the Spirit King suddenly spoke again.

[You don’t have to covet this power. Anyway, this power is meaningless for the non-Divine being.]

“Really?”

In other words, this power is meaningful to a God.

Although I don’t know what this meaningful power is for a God, that can prove how valuable this power is.

[The same is true of the power hidden in your chest. It’s useless.]

Strangely, the Spirit King's tone seemed to be a little more gentle.

Although what he said may be true, I can't find any reason why his attitude became mild after I stabbed him in the back.

[If you give this power to the gods, the gods will give you great favor. And it will certainly give you the reward beyond your expectation.]

I just nodded and said I knew it.

The Spirit King's words make me even more convinced. The essence is indeed a valuable thing.

And if that's the case, then I don't have any ideas of giving this thing away easily.

Even if it is a worthless thing to me.

[And.....]

The Spirit King continued gingerly.

A strong desire was felt within his quiet prayer.

[If you have any idea of giving it to me...]

“No.”

I said resolutely.

Hearing my response, the Spirit King shuts himself up.

[The Lovely me is coming!]

Just then Ahbooboo flew over.

When heard it said itself 'lovely', I laughed out watching Ahbooboo.

Ahbooboo was surprised when the sudden laughter broke out, while the Spirit King beside me expressed strong displeasure.

I knew he was too kind.

Although he has been exerting pressure on me, everything I asked was answered completely including the questions I didn't even ask.

Now I can understand why he wants to fight origin monster with me.

He's supposed to show his power while waiting for the chance to save me.

I also began to understand why he had been abusing his gorgeous skills excessively and expended his strength quickly when fighting the origin monster and why he always held gentle attitude toward me, who stabbed him in the back, and explained everything to me.

It's because he ultimately wants to gain something.

Thanks to this human-like Spirit King, I've gained another piece of information.

Although the essence of the origin is meaningless to the non-divine being, because it can only work on Gods, the Spirit King wants its power.

The Spirit King is not god, that is for sure.

Although he is full of divine energy, I know it's not his, but the God of Nature's.

In other words, the essence of the origin is not only helpful to Gods, but also of great value to the beings that are God-like or God-related.

[Let's move.]

Hash emotions are contained in the Spirit King's words.

I couldn't help laughing again because of the angry tone I've never heard before.

[Imagine a God in your head while we move to the altar.]

Play no tricks, I follow his words and think about a god.

The God of Slow, whom I have claimed to Sicia and Yata that contracted with me.

[99 Gods of the Hundred Gods Temple are watching you.]

[The God of Nature's anger is gone.]

[The God of Chaos enjoys it.]

[The God of Death thinks it's a pity.]

[The God of Dueling falls silent.]

[The God of Adventure feels sad.]

[The God of Light.....]

A series of messages that appeared in front of me were cut off a moment later.

Then my body moved to a dark space.

It's a place where there's no light, no ceiling, no floor, no wall.

The Spirit King looked around and said.

[This is the temple of the eternal vagrant. Why we are here? I have to go now.]

I asked the Spirit King, who suddenly announced that he was leaving, what he meant.

[I don't want to meet the God of Slow. I have no plans to sing in front of the river. From now on, you can do it by yourself. The way to the **future and forward**.]

Note: For '앞으로', there are both "forward" and "future" meanings. It may be a pun here. One means that the protagonist can walk out of this space without looking back at him now. The other is that the protagonist has to do it by himself as for how to complete the clearance.

The Spirit King left behind this sentence and disappeared.

Is he serious leaving me like this?

Although I try to protest in my heart, nothing happened.

"Ahbooboo, do you know what's going on?"

[No, I don't quite know. Let's move first.]

"Where do we go?"

There is no light or gravity, no distinction between front and back, left and right, up and down. I didn't find anything that could be used to guide me.

I'm afraid I'll get lost in this space.

[Go in the direction you think is correct as a Warrior.]

I think about it for a few moments and went towards one direction as Ahbooboo said.

Then a huge stone gate appeared.

Surprisingly, the shape of the stone gate is similar to the one I saw in front of the boss room on the first stage.

A little observation shows that this gate is not just similar to that stone gate, but exactly the same.

I close my eyes and open them again.

Now, the huge stone gate has become a small one.

It's the stadium booth door that I used to see when I was an E-sports player.

The next instant, the booth door become a school classroom door.

The strange thing is that it's not the classroom door of the school I used to study in, but the classroom door of a school I went to when I took the college entrance examination.

In this way, every time I blink, the appearance of the door will change. It became the door to a single bedroom and the door of the ward where my father was lying.

It seems to have been showing me what the door looks like in my mind.

After sorting out the ideas that came to mind, I blink again.

The door disappeared and a passage appears ahead.

As soon as I enter the passage, I see an altar made of black stone.

I put the essence of the origin on the square altar.

[Welcome.]

The voice of this dark and hollow world formed a sentence.

I felt overwhelmed before such a great presence.

“Are you the God of Slow?”

[Yes, I am.]

Then Ahbooboo flies out of the scabbard.

Ahbooboo points the blade at the void and shouts at me.

[Warrior, please escape. I.....]

I sense the chaos of Ahbooboo, so I can understand its reaction.

Without a word, I grab its handle and threw it into inventory.

[That's the toy from the God of the Sky. The being that wants to be above others and always sees only one side of things.]

Spoke the God of Slow.

I don't agree with God's words.

I don't think Ahbooboo can only see one side of things.

The other side is too vicious.

I thank Ahbooboo for being able to think of me in this situation.

[An interesting judgment.]

[You said that goodwill is bound to be accompanied by sacrifice, the God of Goodwill should be very happy.]

Exactly.

Even though I killed countless lives while clearing the stage, the God of Goodwill did not reduce his concern for me.

[Interesting. Don't you fear me?]

I do fear.

That overwhelming power.

It's totally different from what I sensed when met the Spirit King.

I have neither the intention to risk my life hastily, nor the plan to compare my power with it.

The feeling is similar to looking at planets and the universe with astronomical telescopes.

[So you don't want to kill yourself?]

Chapter 212

Tutorial 40th Floor (12)

When she asked me if I wanted to commit suicide, I was silent for a moment.

After arranging my thoughts, I replied.

“At least, not now.”

The God of Slow laughed.

Although the sound itself caused the space to vibrate, I can feel that she was laughing.

[Interesting. Don't you think you look too miserable and shabby in front of me?]

“That's true.”

[Even so, you still don't want to die?]

“Must it be now? Doesn't everyone usually die eventually?”

Laughter came again.

[Yes, that's usually the case. In my presence, most people will go mad or become disgusted with themselves. If neither is true, they will abandon themselves and dedicate their lives to me in awe. Those who claim to be gods are no exception.]

After listening to the God of Slow, I wanted to ask questions, but God didn't give me the chance to speak and continued.

[I still remember when you were anxious to die. How interesting. Motivation is a very important thing if one wants to survive, whether it's for immortality or the ultimate death. But I've never seen a being such as you, regarding your survival motivation so highly. Can moths that burn themselves to become sparks of fire really keep themselves in front of me?]

[Human beings need those reasons to survive. Is your life your own or just a means to achieve your goals? Don't you think it's strange? Don't you think the purpose and the means are reversed?]

I don't know why. I want to answer her immediately.

But I restrained myself and sorted out my thoughts.

This is God's question.

So even if I couldn't give a perfect answer, at least I need to answer her discreetly.

I suddenly felt that I have heard those same words before.

Not long ago, but I remember when I heard this sentence.

It wasn't a question then, but a warning.

'Don't confuse ends and means.'

Kiri Kiri had said that.

It was the warning she gave me when she saw me practice the Poison Energy Skill for my growth regardless of danger.

Seeing me like that, Kiri Kiri had advised many times that I was too obsessed with my growth that should've been just a means.

I needed to clarify my goal for my growth.

Although Kiri Kiri's theme is different from that of the God of Slow,

when I think about it carefully, they are similar.

[Nothing is different. If you don't want to be brandish as someone else's sword, you can't be manipulated by your own sword first.]

[Well, if you know, Then there is no need to answer again because nothing is fixed at the beginning. Our role is to warn you not to trip over yourself. That's enough.]

The God of Slow concluded the conversation by reading my thoughts without giving me the chance to answer.

Unconsciously, my taut body relaxed and my tension eased.

Then a message appeared.

[Tutorial, the 40th floor of the hell difficulty cleared.]

[All abnormal phenomenons and injuries were recovered.]

[9000 points for clearance award obtained.]

[9000 points for first clearance award obtained.]

[There is a God who is optimistic about you. 1000 points obtained.]

[The God of Slow is watching you.]

[The God of Slow wants to give additional rewards. Will you accept them?]

I was a little alarmed at the sudden news of clearance.

It's totally unexpected that clearance will be successful at this point.

“Yes.”

Although it was whimsical, I responded to the message asking if I

would accept the additional award.

Just then, instead of the next message, the God of Slow appears and asks me.

[What kind of reward do you want? You have accumulated a lot of contribution points in this stage. I'll give you what you want within the limit.]

The answer has been clear for the God of Slow's question.

There is only one thing I want from God.

"I want information."

[Go on.]

The first thing I want to know is all about God.

But I have cleared only one stage and there is no way to get such high-level information.

So I decided to get some information that could be the clue.

"Is this one of your many appearances?"

I asked, pointing to the seemingly endless void.

[Correct. Why do you think so?]

"I've seen a message where you picked up your pillow and threw it at the God of Adventure before. If your appearance is just the void, you can't throw a pillow. So I can guess that you may have many different appearances besides the void. "

Space vibrates and makes a sound again.

It's laughter.

Slightly different from the laughter I heard before.

The laughter lasted for a while and then suddenly stopped.

After a moment of silence, the God of Slow said.

[Forget it.]

“Ok.....”

She spoke so decisively that I couldn't find any more fault.

To be exact, I dared not to find fault.

If there are other appearances, then where, what are they, and how do different appearances interact with other gods, there are a lot of things I want to ask.

But the God of Slow forbids me to ask any questions related to this subject.

[Ask something else.]

I ask the God of Slow who wished to hear something else.

“Aren't you reading my thoughts? Can you explain what I want to know within the scope of permission? I'm afraid the scope of your explanation will be narrowed down by my questions.”

[No. Anyways, it's a reward. I can't explain it to you without asking me. By the way, that one just now also counted as a question. I have deducted the corresponding contribution points, keep that in mind.]

Suddenly I felt that she is somewhat deliberately provocative.

Is it because of the pillow I mentioned just now or something else?

[Words that make me feel uncomfortable will also cost your contribution points. Again, I told you to forget that.]

So it is.

Before the contribution points are consumed again, I stop thinking and ask questions I had prepared.

“Are the monsters that appear on Earth the same ones as the origin monsters that appear on the 40th floor?”

[Yes. but there are few monsters with the essence. Other monsters may have similar things, but is nothing compared to the essence.]

“Then what God asks the apostles to do is to collect the essence and present it to the temple.”

[Yes.]

“Then is the essence of the origin necessary to become a God?”

[Correct, but it doesn't mean that one can become a God even if one owns the essence of origin.]

[Additionally, the essence of the origin is not the only method to ascend to divinity. There are also many people who used other methods to gain the qualifications to become God. My divinity was completed before the power of the origin was sprinkled all over the dimension]

As I expected, it is a necessary power to become a God.

It's also worth the Spirit King's greed.

What the God of Slow mentioned after is something I haven't questioned or thought of at all.

After contemplating for a while, I think it's just a piece of crap that the God of Slow said in order to boast about herself.

So that answer should not consume contribution points.

[But those your rude thoughts will cost contribution points.]

Now I know that the God of Slow I understood through the messages is the same as the God of Slow present.

After struggling to control my laughter, I continued my questions.

[Stop. Your contribution points are almost exhausted. Only ask what you want to know most and what you've been most worried about.]

The God of Slow advised me to carefully consider my questions.

This is the same as Kiri Kiri.

Understanding my thoughts and experiences, I knew the questions I want to ask and the things I needed most.

“I have no intentions of becoming an apostle.”

[I knew it.]

“I have another goal.”

After clearing the 20th floor, all the gods in the Hundred Gods Temple have been watching my every move every time I opened my eyes.

But as time went by, their interests for me began to diminish.

Whenever I cleared a stage, their negative reaction to me will increase accordingly.

Because they know that I'd rather devote myself to other goals than to be their apostle.

And that goal is contrary to Gods' intentions.

[Of course, I knew that too.]

“Even so, there are several gods, including you, who have always trusted me and supported me. I am curious about the reasons. Is it because you don’t know what my goal is? If not, do you think I will give up my goal?”

God of Slow laughed in a low voice.

[I can’t tell you why. It’s not because of the lack of your contribution points. There will be undesirable outcomes, as a result, my words reaching the world. That’s all I can tell to you.]

As the God of Slow answered, a portal appears at my feet.

The luminous portal that appeared in this place void of light, did not shine.

The God of Slow spoke.

[Go and think about my answers carefully.]

I feel that the portal is starting.

Before my body is transferred, the God of Slow finally added.

[Come again.]

As soon as her voice fell, my body left the dark space and moved to the bright field.

* * *

“Hou!”

“Huh?”

“Houjae!”

I see something running toward me through my frown as I suddenly transported to a bright place.

Of course, it's Kiri Kiri.

Kiri Kiri comes skipping over and clings to my back.

Although she welcomed me enthusiastically before, she was too enthusiastic this time.

I grab Kiri Kiri's back neck, clinging to my back like a leech, and pull her off.

Kiri Kiri clings to my hands like a cat, joyfully.

"I'm glad that Houjae is safe."

I'm also glad

In fact, it wouldn't be surprising if I suddenly died at any time and anywhere.

Although I have gained a lot, there are also corresponding dangers hidden in every corner.

I've even exacerbated my danger due to successive misjudgments.

I thank her for worrying about me.

But at the same time, it reminds me that Kiri Kiri was stubborn enough to say that there were no suggestions for the 40th floor.

If she was truly worried about me and informed me in advance, then there would have been no danger.

The seesaw battle between gratitude and hatred soon ended as the balance fell to one side.

I raise my hand and hit the grinning Kiri Kiri on her forehead.

Kiri Kiri's cheeks were stained with tears, but she had already stuffed the lollipop into her mouth.

Although I hit her on the head in anger, I didn't think it was excessive. Kiri Kiri cried a little too much.

In order to coax her, I had to buy her a lollipop.

As soon as the lollipop was stuffed into her mouth, the tears abruptly halted. She pretended to cry for the sake of eating candy.

"He-he."

Kiri Kiri's mood is particularly volatile today.

I don't know what joyful event happened, but she seemed to soar to the sky in happiness.

"Explain to me why you would rather lie than inform me about the 40th floor. Didn't you say that there's definitely nothing dangerous?"

Hearing my question, Kiri Kiri answers me as if it was no big deal.

"Of course, that's because all of the information is excessively expensive. Even if I wanted to tell you, they'd be useless because that information becomes available during the process of clearing the 40th floor."

"So in order to save information costs, that was a natural choice?"

"Yes, that's right."

Anyway, Kiri Kiri made the best choice so I couldn't rebut.

Although Kiri Kiri's lie was a bit of a shock to me, it's awkward to blame it now.

"Now that you have saved up so much information points, you can ask a lot of questions."

“I see. I’ll ask you if I do.”

“No. Ask now, Hurry up.”

Kiri Kiri’s urging surprised me.

I mulled over any immediate questions I might have.

Or anything I missed.

No matter how much I mulled, nothing came to mind.

Resting my chin on my fist, I calmly pondered.

Then I see Kiri Kiri staring at me with bright eyes, waiting for me to ask questions. I understand the reason for her haste.

“Want to answer my questions now?”

“Uh-Huh!”

She didn’t seem to be urging me to ask questions for any reason.

Since there is no need to look for Kiri Kiri’s hidden intentions, I relaxed and began to think about what I wanted to know.

But in the course of clearing the 40th floor, almost all my questions have been answered.

However, there is one question I wanted to ask Kiri Kiri.

“I’ve been thinking about when I used Sibam Boom on the 40th floor. If I added the Poison Ki to it and mixed them together, it would become very powerful. Is there any way I can safely test it?”

“No!”

Kiri Kiri shouted.

Chapter 213

Tutorial 40th Floor (?)

[It looks interesting.]

Ahbooboo spoke as he looked at me silently.

It may look interesting since I'm playing catch marbles.

“What, would you like to try?”

[You know I can't do it. But you play it well, marbles catching.]

“Because it's a game that is to be played with others. Since I was a child, I have been reluctant to admit defeat for this kind of thing. So I made up my mind to win and my skill in turn grew.”

[Oh... so you played since childhood.]

What was that attitude?

[If you lose one round, you'd be the annoying kid who declares it invalid and restarts the round. There are always such people. In order to get the results they want, kids struggle desperately, scream, and make trouble.]

The description is very picturesque.

Maybe it's because I've seen so many children who act shamelessly after losing to me that I can imagine that scene immediately.

But that's not usually the case in my childhood.

“Regardless, I haven't done that.”

[Forget it. Everything has its first time. Anyways, the games played with other people should be lost in order to learn. You still refuse to admit defeat even now?]

“No, you swine. I’ve hardly lost anything like that so far.”

It’s true.

If I see someone playing catch marbles, I will observe the rules and methods of the game before consulting that person.

Then I’ll practice by myself and invite that person to play when I think I can win.

Since I was a child, I prefer winning games rather than enjoying them.

If one’s eyes are only set on victory, it’s impossible to make a fool of yourself when challenging someone without knowing the methods.

[Yes, yes. You are right.]

What should I do with that nasty mouth?

“Wait till I learn silencing magic one day, you just watch.”

[Then I’ll dispel it. You can’t touch me unless you’re better at magic than I am. Ho, Ho, Ho.]

I think that’s the biggest reason this guy doesn’t teach me magic.

Damn it.

Speaking of the long-lost childhood stories, I can’t help recalling that time I lost to an older kid in my community at a fighting game.

That is a very rare memory.

Note: It means that the MC seldom loses, so there are few such memories.

I put my bag in the seat next to the game console and was brushing past instance zones, but very few people moved my bag aside to challenge me.

I didn't practice it enough then and that kid was a very good master.

If I could win, pigs might fly.

After losing two games in a row, I ran out of coins and had to go home.

By the time I got more money and returned to the arcade, that kid had disappeared.

My revenge for that lost has not yet been completed.

Because I haven't seen that kid since.

I chose to be an E-sports player as my profession, which must have been influenced by this memory.

In a sense, that experience had a great impact on my life.

I pick up the scattered marbles.

After about 10 minutes, I think I've played enough.

"Is this all right?"

[No. You must check for even slight symptoms of poisoning. The toxicity can penetrate into the body through the surface of the skin.]

Ahbooboo is right.

Every time this happens, I feel inconvenienced by my excessive resistance.

If my resistance is weaker, I could react immediately at any level of incubation.

After leaving the waiting room, I have to spend some time experimenting.

I was just playing catch marbles with crystals made from Poison Ki and aura.

This is what Kiri Kiri advised me to do.

When I asked Kiri Kiri about the development of the Poison Ki, she got angry with me at first, but then told me that I should improve the safety of my Poison Ki rather than its power.

She added that enhancing the power and flexibility comes after this.

She suggests that I should liquefy Poison Ki for coating first.

As soon as I return to the waiting room, I make poison blood and started testing.

But whether it's glass, plastic, or steel, it's not easy to directly coat things with dissolved Poison Ki (poison blood).

Magic couldn't control the Poison Ki, so I had to store it as solidified aura crystals.

Making aura crystals was more difficult than I thought.

After several days of hard work, I was able to produce crystals of the shape and size I wanted.

As the final work, I made several crystals with black venom dangling inside and red aura wrapped outside.

Now it looks like a gem.

[Yes, it looks like a gem, a gem mined from hell. The surface is as bright red as blood and there is a dark sticky liquid slushing inside. The only person who can see these things as gemstones is you.]

I ignore Ahbooboo's murmur.

That is just my personal feeling.

I appreciate the aura crystal, I was making sure my hands will not be stained with poison.

I should confirm it again outside the waiting room where I can try more experiments.

Kiri Kiri's advice was helpful.

Have I known that even if she has asserted that there were no tips for me, I would eventually get useful advice if I just approach a subject without going straight to the point.

Another thing is that just one cake won't entice her to make suggestions.

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: Hey, are you available?]

Kim MinHyuk's message after such a long time.

No matter what happened, it's usually Park JungAh who sends messages to me.

I have rarely talked to Kim MinHyuk since I handed over the personnel management of Hell Difficulty to Lee Hyung Jin.

Although we occasionally chatted, since he didn't have to meet with me to discuss the Order of Vigilance and he had nothing to report, the chatting time naturally decreased.

[Lee HoJae, 41st floor: I'm available.]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor:... When did you go up to the 41st floor? Well, forget it. I got information from the newcomers who entered this round. It's said that the government is investigating the status and the location of the challenger's family. It is estimated that they will get

the information next cycle or the cycle after that.]

That's a long time.

When those graduating from the tutorial come into contact with the government, their first action was to confirm the status of their families.

It's been months since graduates began to appear. It looks like the government is finally starting to work.

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: It seems that there are several graduates who are dissatisfied with the government. There is a rumor that they intend to go to other countries and because of this, they are now accused of being traitors or something. I guess it was because of this that the government rushed to action.]

I can roughly imagine the circumstances outside.

Although I can't predict accurately, how the world works is always similar.

Even if the monster comes out and the world is in ruins, what should remain unchanged will remain unchanged.

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: What, do you have anything else to say? You're too indifferent.]

[Lee HoJae, 41st floor: That's all. I have nothing to say.]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: Alright. See you later.]

Kim MinHyuk ended the message with an agreement to meet next time.

I don't have any interest in knowing the life or death of my family.

Even if South Korea suffers minimum losses, the death toll exceeds one million.

It's really crooked to be optimistic that my family won't be one of those countless victims.

But it's not bad to hope.

I call Ahbooboo to confirm whether other people think of me.

"Ahbooboo."

[Yes, Warrior.]

"Do you have a family?"

[What are you saying? I am not an orphan.]

Ahbooboo uttered angrily.

Maybe it's because I suddenly asked that, he feels unhappy.

"Tell me about your family."

[Family? When I was a child... no, the story is before I became a sword, so this is a story from the distant past. Let me think...]

I asked Ahbooboo to talk about his past.

Ahbooboo held no secrets and enjoys telling others his stories, so he starts talking about it without any complaints.

All in all, it was a story of Ahbooboo's childhood.

Ahbooboo said that he paid more attention to the sword than his family ever since he began practicing with his sword.

Nevertheless, Ahbooboo's narrative still showed his deep yearning for his family.

I'm contemplating as I listen to Ahbooboo's story.

Why can't I share the same feelings as Ahbooboo?

Even now, when I hear some news about my family, why am I so indifferent?

* * *

[Tutorial, the 40th Floor of Hell Difficulty Cleared.]

[Take care, have a good day.]

With the farewell from the God of Nature, I stepped into the portal.

I left the temple of God of Nature and moved to Kiri Kiri's field.

After moving, the sight of the gods, which has disappeared for some time, back to me.

[Many gods of the Hundred Gods Temple are watching you.]

The number of eyes now exceeds 3,000.

These gazes that watch me often make me feel uncomfortable and frightened

But at least the existence that is opposite to me at the moment isn't as worrisome.

"Kiri Kiri."

"Hello!"

I see Kiri Kiri hopping toward me as she waves her hand.

Her smile was still so naive that it felt creepy.

"Hee-hee, look at that, you're a little late this time."

As usual.

Smart, lovely, pure.

Looking at Kiri Kiri eases my tension.

Even if I still have a bad feeling about her.

I'm sure that my feelings for her have changed and it's not because I like her, but because of her ability.

Kiri Kiri and the uncle on the 60th floor were my life-saving straws when I fell into the hell difficulty alone.

If even one of them was missing, I would never have climbed to the 40th floor.

I look forward to meeting Kiri Kiri after clearing each stage because I can hold her tightly and cry.

We can also chat over tea and cake while playing together like children.

For me, Kiri Kiri is not only a parent, but also a teacher, a friend, a sister.

So I still can't easily accept the fact that the smiles she gives to me with an innocent face were fake.

Even though she has been reading my thoughts at this very moment, she still maintained that innocent face as if nothing had happened which made me feel even more terrible.

Faced with the smiling Kiri Kiri, I am filled with frustration.

I wanted to scold her and be angry at her, but I can't do it at all.

"Kiri Kiri."

“Yes, what?”

Aren't you reading my mind?

Don't you know what I'm going to ask? I jeer at her.

I'd rather she be frank with her thoughts.

“You explained to me about information control in the tutorial before, correct?”

“Yes, I did.”

“You told me about privacy. If one spends points and information fees to set specific information as private, then nobody can peep at this private info without paying a higher price. So please set what I want to be private.”

Kiri Kiri nodded.

Information privacy has been released in large quantities.

Since it's still in its infancy stage, every conversation protocol day held in Korean servers has been related to the privacy settings.

I know everything about privacy.

I also know some of the secrets that uncle hides.

But this is not because I paid enough information fees to see uncle's private information, but because the information is open to the challengers of Hell Difficulty.

“This time I heard from the God of Nature. There is another method, a method to control a specific people's information access.”

Kiri Kiri's curious eyes shook in anticipation of my next words.

I began to fear her innocent face.

I don't have to explain that method.

Because she knows all about it.

I accelerate the progress of this dialogue.

I want to end this dialogue as soon as possible.

“He asked me if I had exposed the trigger to the floor manager.” [1]

I close my eyes tightly.

I held my trembling hands behind my back and spoke my next words.

“Kiri Kiri, tell me what you're hiding.”

No response.

I peeked at Kiri Kiri only to see her staring at me with a smile.

Note [1]:

The idea behind the trigger is that Lee Yeon Hee triggered something related to the “Specific Person Information Control” is what it'll dub it for now, which caused Lee Yeon Hee to be unable to access certain information about Lee Ho Jae. This trigger was activated when speaking to the floor manager, in this case, Kiri Kiri.

Chapter 214

Tutorial 60th Floor (15)

I had nothing to do, so I decided to lie on the bench quietly to kill time.

Having been so busy the past few months, it felt strange to rest.

Although I wanted to take this opportunity to visit the 61st floor, the other two seem quite busy.

First, Yong Yong is building his own house.

Yong Yong has always attached great importance to his personal life, so I'm not surprised when he wanted to have a house of his own.

But I didn't expect that he would build the house himself.

Of course, Yong Yong is unaccomplished in architecture.

Not only has he not learned about it, but he doesn't even know about the concept of architecture.

He asked me for help before building the house.

After teaching him the basic structure of a building, he asked me for information about the structures of buildings I knew.

He wasn't asking about ordinary houses or buildings.

He wanted to wonder about the historic buildings on earth. I thought for a moment and introduced the Tower of Babel to him.

It is said that it was built by humans in order to touch the world of

God.

In fact, there are many people think that the Tower of Babel is only a rare high-rise altar during the period it was built, but Yong Yong likes the story very much.

So he's building such an edifice now.

I lie on the bench and look up at the sky, but I couldn't see the top of Yong Yong's building.

If we were on Earth, his building would have broken through the troposphere.

Although Yong Yong proudly said that he wanted to build it to the end of the world, but this is a sub-dimensional space, there is neither the sky nor space.

The breadth and height of space can expand infinitely through my mind.

I look forward to Yong Yong reaching the boundary of my conscious world.

Of course, he can't.

But then again, Yong Yong is talented.

It can now be said that he has surpassed Ho-Chi.

The disparity between their capabilities can be clearly distinguished now.

I turn around and find that the stupid guy has been surpassed by his nephew.

Ho-Chi is lying on a bench slightly further away, giggling alone.

He looks like someone playing with social networking software (SNS)

on a smartphone.

Not long ago, Ho-Chi said he was bored and wanted to connect the community.

It was cumbersome when Ho-Chi looks at my community right beside me, so I give him my terminal.

So Ho-Chi can view the community, message window, and auction window at any time.

Ho-Chi easily incorporated himself into the community.

He gives valuable advice to other challengers for free. He's probably seen me giving away equipment on a first-come, first-served basis.

People in the community became curious about Ho-Chi because he was much more easy-going than me so they were quickly acquainted.

And that's what happened.

He stares at the community all day.

Anyways, he has a smart-phone addiction now.

I don't know who he's talking to or what topic can be so interesting.

It never occurred to me that my clone would grow in such a different direction.

I eventually failed to overcome my curiosity and approached Ho-Chi.

"What are you looking at? Is It really so interesting?"

Ho-Chi is just smirking and it took him a while to answer me.

"Chatting with Seok Hyeon."

Who is Seok Hyeon?

This is my first time hearing this name.

Looking at the message history, I see them enjoying themselves.

“Who’s this kid?”

***Note:** South Korea often uses the term “kid” when referring to people of their peers or those younger.*

Ho-Chi briefs me on his friend Seok Hyeon.

“14 years old?”

It’s really a kid.

Well, that’s what it would be like to play with Ho Chi.

Unlike Ho-Chi’s words and deeds, that kid’s mental age is only 14 years.

“What? What’s wrong with being young? Oh? There is no correlation between age and behavior, okay? There are many children who are more talented than adults.”

Ho-Chi defended Seok Hyeon adamantly because he was sulking.

“Yes, yes. Little kids can also be very mature. Like you.”

“Hey! How come I’m a kid?! I have held several memories.”

He is indeed just a kid.

People who become agitated when being called a kid are kids...

Ho Chi moved to a farther bench with a look of impatience.

Looking at him, I sigh.

It feels like I'm raising an immature teenager.

It's been harder to raise Ho-Chi than Yong Yong.

“Hey!”

From a distance away, he heard my mental thoughts so Ho-Chi shouted at me.

Ignoring that shout, I lie on the bench again and look up at Yong Yong's building.

Although it is nothing but a big building, its size is beyond imagination, so it's still a spectacular view.

So perfect to stare blankly.

I feel like I'm sunbathing. While I stare blankly, Ho Chi approaches me.

Thinking about what might have happened, I get up.

“What's up?”

“Lee Yeon Hee sent a message.”

Long-time no see.

A truly long time.

There were times when we exchanged messages several times a day, but recently, the exchanges became near non-existent.

It may be because she no longer needed my help after she began to receive God's help.

It is also for that reason that I intend to abandon Lee Yeon Hee and escape from the tutorial alone.

Since she has reached this level, she should have known.

“She said she reached the 46th floor.”

“Oh.”

I’m surprised.

Stages after the 40th floor are all related to divine power.

The purpose is to instill beliefs in people and attract them to specific religious groups by means of God’s salvation, help, and guidance.

Obviously, it is part of the process to cultivate apostles.

I spent a lot of time from the 41st to the 45th floor.

Because I’m neither good at dealing with divine power nor very clear about what to do.

Without Kiri Kiri’s detailed advice, I would have wasted twice as much time as I did.

But Lee Yeon Hee cleared all five floors at once.

Her clearing speed is unprecedented.

There must be reasons behind that.

Maybe the gods who supported her intervened blatantly to help her clear the stage.

If not, then she has the ability to clear it by herself but has been wasting time in the lower floors.

The last reason could be that those floors are just her strong points.

“What else did she say?”

“She asked you to wait for her. She would come up soon.”

After listening to the message from Ho-Chi, I chuckled unconsciously.

The latter reason is more convincing.

Apparently, she was intentionally wasting time.

We have done the right thing to send Lee Yeon Hee the message that we decided to move on rather than wait for her.

Lee Yeon Hee would never have thought to herself that we would escape the tutorial alone without her.

Or that she would be trapped alone in the tutorial.

In all respects, she is a very positive person.

“She’s optimistic. What are you going to do?”

“Now that she’s so confident, we’ll have to wait for her.”

“Confident? She must be crying and running with mustard.”

Note: 울며 겨자 먹기 is kind of proverb that means you do something you don't want. Literally speaking, to Eat wasabi crying.

Ho-Chi, who had thrown out those words, seems to have said enough and returns to the distant bench again.

Although he passed me the message, I don’t think he wants to be involved at all.

I continue to look up at Yong Yong’s building.

I have no sentiments for this place.

Although it is a pity to abandon what I have built during this period, they can be recreated wherever I want if I spent the time.

But it will be different for Ho-Chi and Yong Yong.

The day we leave is around the corner, but that guy is still working hard to build his own house.

Despite recent clues about ways to destroy the boundaries of the tutorial and escape, this space will never survive whether we succeed or fail.

If possible, it's best to keep the space as it is while we clear the tutorial and escape.

I still look forward to Lee Yeon Hee's performance above all.

In fact, that's the biggest reason why I stay here.

Although Ho-Chi is cynical about Lee Yeon Hee, I'm sure Lee Yeon Hee has confidence in herself.

Because that's how I trained her.

If the situation is bleak, I trained her to hold onto victory rather than lament.

Unlike Ho-Chi and Yong Yong, who grew up following their own wishes, Lee Yeon Hee is my protégé.

I trained Lee Yeon Hee according to my wishes and needs while she grew up in the direction I set for her.

Although she's my only disciple that I've never seen before, I know her very well.

“Oh!”

Ho-Chi suddenly shouted.

I wonder if my telepathy accidentally communicated something that brought him sadness, but nothing comes to mind.

“Oh oh oh!”

Ho-Chi runs to me while he shouts.

Rushing to my bench, Ho-Chi shouts.

“I heard that the tournament is going to be held!”

“I know. Did you know that has been talked about for several years? It’s a large-scale competition on the dimensional scale, the preparation required is extremely long. I haven’t received any notifications from the manager yet, so it’s estimated that it won’t be scheduled until three years from now.”

This Tteokbap bait has been shelved for a long time.

Note: 떡밥 = Tteokbap = Originally used to describe the paste bait used to catch fish, but now is a metaphor to describe something popular and hot like a hot topic, hot issue, or hot information that will catch people’s interest.

Regardless of the future, we won’t stay here for the rest of the year.

“I know that too!”

My heart is in a mess when I hear Ho-Chi shout in anger.

Why does he have to screech so loud?

Is he really going through puberty?

Ho-Chi continued to speak out as if he didn’t hear my thoughts.

“The competition is next month!”

“Ah?”

* * *

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Yes. The manager suddenly notified me about it. We didn't ask for it ourselves. It's managers who told us first. I knew that the tournament would be held soon, but it was totally unexpected that it would be held in the next round (when new members come in).]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: I see. Challengers will be busy then.]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Now that you know, do you mind giving us a hand?]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Yeah, no.]

I sent a message to Park Jung Ah and confirm it again.

It seems that the tournament being held the next round has been finalized.

“Is that because of Lee Yeon Hee and me?”

It's not impossible.

While that idea came to me, Ho-Chi glared at me with disgust.

“...This is a grand event held with the whole dimension. You, you're that aren't you? what's that phrase? Excessively self-conscious?”

I bat the back of Ho-Chi's head.

“No, you pinhead.”

Ignoring Ho-Chi's idiotic conjecture, I sort out my thoughts.

But Ho-Chi doesn't stop his mouth.

“Hey, we’re going to participate too, right?”

Actually, this is Ho-Chi’s first chance to meet someone.

I planned not to attend, but if I did, I’d make this kid cry.

Yong Yong will also be disappointed.

I have to think about it before deciding.

“Let me think about it again.”

“Hey, we have to go, please.”

I ignore Ho-Chi’s words and reach out.

“Now give me the terminal back.”

“What!? I have to talk to Seok Hyeon about what we are going to do during the tournament.”

“And I have to talk to Jung Ah. Hand over the terminal and leave.”

Ho-Chi makes a reluctant expression and goes away without saying any more.

Ho-Chi hates it when he sees me chatting with Jung Ah saying that he had goosebumps.

Following his direction of flight, he’s probably headed to where Yong Yong is building the house.

He seems to be trying to tell Yong Yong about the tournament.

I’ll feel guilty if I don’t let them participate now.

In this case, even if I don’t go, I have to find a way to have them attend.

Chapter 215

Tutorial 49th Floor (1)

[Are you going to challenge the next stage right away?]

Ahbooboo asked.

Ahbooboo has a good understanding of the tutorial's system now.

Not only does he know how the stages work, but he also understands what the waiting room can do.

Although he can't reveal it because he is restricted by the system, he actually knows more than what he lets on.

"I will."

I just cleared the 48th floor, so I had the choice to take a break in the waiting room, but I wanted to leave immediately.

I want to end these boring 40s floors (40-49) and go up to 50s floors (50-59) as soon as possible.

The themes of these 40s floor stages are all related to denominations [1] and faith.

The challengers were forced to play the role of apostles of God to evoke faith in people's hearts.

I felt very uncomfortable because of my personality.

Sometimes it goes beyond discomfort and becomes unpleasant.

It occurred quite often.

Fortunately, Kiri Kiri said that these types of stages will no longer appear after the 49th floor.

I stand up after confirming my armor and luggage.

I use the portal to move to the next stage.

[You have entered the 49th stage.]

I am wrapped in a bright beam and moved to the roof of a high-rise building.

When you are summoned to such an open and high position, you must quickly observe the surrounding situation and create countermeasures.

I look around with haste.

The terrain here is special.

The building's location is surrounded by rugged cliffs.

This place is like an island.

The only difference is that it's not encircled by a river or sea, but isolated by the cliffs.

There is a massive bridge that connects this unusual terrain to the area outside the cliff.

Even looking down from this tall building, the bridge looks quite vast.

A group of monsters stood beyond the bridge.

There are people below the building.

They piled up furniture such as tables and chairs to block the bridge while each of them held a makeshift weapon.

Although this defense took a great deal of effort, I don't think they can stop the dense pack of monsters beyond the bridge.

This situation is easy to understand.

My task must be to protect these people from the monsters coming from across the bridge.

I expand Talaria's Wings and descend to the bridge.

Once the monsters arrive at the barricade, a massacre will take place.

I should position myself in the middle of the bridge so that they can't reach those people.

A message appears along the way to the bridge.

It will be too late to take action after reading the message in this kind of stage.

[The 49th-floor stage begins.]

Description: 13 years ago, the planet called Gaya, encountered an unprecedented threat.

After decades of struggle to secure dominion, the origin monsters finally conquered their own territory.

The origin monsters that occupied territory immediately cast infectors [2].

The epidemic began to attack all the lives around them and turned those lives into parts of themselves.

The infectors quickly occupied the mainland.

Because of the power and speed of the proliferation, the mainland's intelligent lifeforms had completely abandoned resistance.

They gave up their cities and fortresses in order to flee.

The last remaining intelligent lifeforms had fled the infection for the past few years.

Their number had been reduced from hundreds of thousands to tens of thousands to a few thousand and lastly only a few hundred.

In the end, when they finally reached the end of the road, they found a glimmer of hope in an ancient book that was discovered by chance.

The book said that on the edge of the Aba Continent, the largest continent of this planet, there was a shrine that had been lost for hundreds of thousands of years, that was, the Holy Land of the Denomination of Hope.

All the denominations on the mainland had collapsed by that time. After the intelligent lifeforms discovered the clues to this surviving holy land, they set off with one last hope.

After several years of difficult journeys, the intelligent lifeforms repelled the pursuit of the infectors and reached the Holy Land of Hope. By this time, there were little more than forty of them.

After a few months of hiding within the Holy Land, the infectors followed their traces and finally caught up with them.

Fortunately, the Holy Land of hope preserved a great deal of divine power. The intelligent lifeforms resisted the infectors for a period of time using the Holy Land's power.

But now, even the protective power of the Holy Land is becoming exhausted.

Faced with the despair of death and the end, the intelligent beings prayed to gods for new hopes.

In light of the earnest prayers of these forty intelligent lifeforms who were more devout than anyone, the God of Hope decided to send the apostle to redeem them.

The God of Hope summoned the apostle before the protection of the Holy Land completely disappeared.

Yes, the apostle is you.

As an apostle of the God of Hope, please become the hope of the remaining survivors.

Please protect them and eliminate their despair.

[Clear Conditions]

- Protect 40 believers.

- Maintain a 20 or above reliability with the 40 believers.

- Destroy the origin monsters that control this planet.

- ?

It is not necessary to read this long message carefully.

Stages like this have been repeating recently so I could roughly guess it's contents.

I land in the middle of the bridge.

After confirming the situation of believers and monsters on both sides of the bridge, I open the reliability window.

[Reliability: 41]

Unsurprisingly the initial reliability is more than 20.

It is not very high.

Kiri Kiri has described to me that a 40 reliability is similar to the feeling one gets from meeting the inn manager for the first time.

That means it's almost nothing.

Seeing me expanding the colorful Talaria's Wings while descending from the sky only amounted to this level of reliability indicates that the believers are in very bad condition.

Because it means that no matter what happens, they can't get rid of despair.

Due to that, I have to fight glamorously.

At that moment, the sound of broken glass vibrates in the air.

This sound comes from the collapse of the Holy Land's barrier, so the monsters across the bridge began to rush.

Instead of using my usual soul sword, I draw and brandish the holy sword.

[Ho, ho, ho, it's time for this body to work.]

Although his voice was annoying and irritating, I need him for this stage, so I stayed silent.

Instead of wielding the sword, I raised toward the skies.

“Go to work, Ahbooboo.”

[Go to work? That's far too cold.]

Although he's complaining, Ahbooboo plays his role.

White lights fall from the sky as a result of the holy spells, surrounding me and the holy sword.

The clouds which seemed sacred are enveloping the entire area.

The holy magic seemed to grant the user tremendous power on the surface, but in reality, it had no effects.

These holy spells are just a performance in order to look sacred in the eyes of the people.

The holy sword ascends from soft light to an intense light that made it difficult for me to open my eyes.

I had hoped that he would do it in moderation.

Such a blinding light is unwelcoming to all except the God of Light.

Although I really wanted to batter and scold him to reduce the brightness, I know that Ahbooboo will not listen.

I held a sword that is brighter than anything else in the world just to end as soon as possible and rush the monsters.

* * *

[Reliability: 83]

Reliability has risen a lot.

I appeared as an apostle of God and overwhelmingly eradicate the monsters so this was natural.

While I was clearing the 40s stages, the reliability messed with my mind.

No matter how inspiring my words were or how hard I took care of them, the reliability refused to increase.

I tried to treat them kindly, but that led to suspicion, decreasing reliability.

Each person had a different standard so if one person relied on me more, another's would decrease, resulting in unchanged overall reliability.

According to my experiences, there is only one definite way to

increase reliability.

Overwhelming power.

People become frightened if the power displayed was mediocre.

Even if it is to protect them, but they do not know when that power will be directed at them, so they become worried.

But if the power that protected them was so overwhelming that it removed all thoughts of fighting against it, people will call it a miracle.

They won't think about what that power is or what kind of purpose is behind it, they will only idolize and worship it.

Even if that power rushes to them.

“Alright, you take care of the rest.”

I say as I throw the holy sword into the air.

Instead of falling to the ground, Ahbooboo starts flying around and asks me.

[What? Me? Even if I am awesome, I'm a little reluctant to deal with so many monsters.]

Ahbooboo said something regrettable.

Indeed, It's impossible for Ahbooboo to deal with monsters that numbered from several million to hundreds of millions.

“Block the bridge. You can do that, can't you?”

No matter the number of monsters, they still have to cross the 'narrow' bridge.

As long as the bridge is protected, the monsters have no other way to

invade the Holy Land.

Ahbooboo replies slyly that he gets it.

Therefore, I leave the rest to Ahbooboo.

To be honest, I'm a little annoyed.

Despite the holy sword's queer quirks, Ahbooboo's capabilities are extraordinary.

This remains true even from my standards.

If Ahbooboo draws out his latent abilities to fight, It'll be difficult to tell if I was fighting or Ahbooboo was fighting.

Ahbooboo can strengthen me through the power that he transmits and eradicates the enemy with the power that he instills.

I just need to move my arms and legs at the right time.

As a result, the battle becomes uninteresting and it will inevitably lead to boredom.

Ahbooboo can soar through the air and eliminate the monsters even without me. I watch him for a while and turn around.

I move towards the building where I was summoned and where the people gathered.

* * *

Unsurprisingly, people were shouting "A Miracle! A Miracle!" continuously and kowtowed to me and Ahbooboo behind me.

Many emotions were mixed with tears on their faces.

There were reassurance and joy as well as uneasiness and fear that have not dissipated.

It's all for me.

At first, they were really unsightly and unpleasant, but after a while, I've become indifferent.

When I approached, I find that these people have many different body types and skin colors.

It seems that there is a mix of different races.

It is no wonder that the phrase "intelligent lifeforms" was used instead of "humans" in the message.

In this case, using "people" to describe them may not matter, but the word "human" may cause some resentment.

I don't remember if it was the 44th floor or 45th floor, however, I misused the term "human", as a result, I was discriminated and the reliability fell to the bottom.

In the end, I failed to clear the stage and had to start all over again.

Just because I said something wrong.

That was a chilling stage.

As I approached them, the people at the temple stopped and began to stare at me.

At first, I thought I should give a speech.

Like, what is God or what is justice?

But with my eloquence, it won't work.

So I decide to say just one sentence.

The strange wails of the monsters from behind are echoing around.

The 40 survivors don't say a word and just stared at me.

There are people who stood bowing their backs and those who maintained their kowtow on the ground with only their heads lifted to look at me.

In this case, it would have been convenient if one of them stood up as a representative.

But it seems that there are no such people in this stage.

In order to break the silence, I speak.

“Uh, everyone.”

I am faced with the eagerness of 40 survivors and speak.

“Let's go inside first. The weather is so cold, why are you outside? Go in.”

Chapter 216

Tutorial 49th Floor (2)

After taking them into the building, I had the chance to examine them carefully.

They were in better shape than I expected.

There are no signs of starvation or illnesses.

It was said that they've been hiding in the Holy Land for several months. Have they been recuperating during that period?

At least food has been secured without issues.

The building's structure reminded me of a high ceiling cathedral.

A pedestal adorned with symbolism stood opposite to the entrance, which gave the impression of a divine temple.

People gathered around the pedestal I reached so I can begin my speech.

I wanted to speak in an informal and comfortable manner, but in order to ingrain my might into their minds to give them a sense of security, I stood in this position, not to satisfy my superiority, but for them.

“Uh, everyone.”

But it was hard to speak like a bishop.

A friend from my childhood told me to follow him to the church so he could give me a chocolate pie. If I had followed him to church back then, it would have been helpful for this.

What a pity.

I had no choice but to speak line by line.

“You will now be safe for a while.”

They blankly stared at me.

I'd like to say something melodramatic to arouse their cheers

Really... I hate how my eloquence can't match my ideas.

“Do you guys have enough food?”

The silence was filled with a mix of “yes” and “no, not enough”.

Opinions vary.

It seems necessary to keep abreast of the food situation.

“...Can a representative come out and speak?”

Silence lingered again.

People just turned their heads to look at each other, but no one came out.

I was shocked.

There is usually a leader to lead them in such a dire situation.

Since people have crowd psychology, it's natural to have a decent leader who has a huge impact on the survival rate.

But among the survivors, there wasn't even an operational captain or an elderly advisor, let alone a leader.

Note: The operational captain is a leader of a group who acts personally to

achieve goals.

I scrutinized the composition of these people.

Strangely, most of them were women, children, or the elderly.

Those with blue skin have women with strong physiques.

Only that ethnicity contained many unusually short men.

How bizarre.

What was the reason the weak members survived in their respective ethnicity?

Did they instinctively prioritized the protection of the weak for the continuation of the race?

Or was it coincidence?

“Please select a representative. I’ll go out for a while.”

After saying that, I leave the cathedral.

These people were so passive.

I’ve encountered a lot, but this was the first time I had been asked to protect a group of people who were so honest and obedient.

The crisis should have stimulated their survival instinct.

Ordinarily, people would not accept such a crisis so they would have strived to survive to their utmost limits.

Therefore, the chances of meeting a madman who riots for no reason are higher than meeting a quiet and honest man.

These people were a little strange.

If there is a cause, we must identify and resolve it.

As soon as I opened the door and went outside, I spot Ahbooboo soaring about and slaughtering monsters who wanted to cross the bridge.

I reread the goals of stage.

To protect these people.

This is a must.

The next objective is to eradicate the origin monster.

That's the problem.

I was allowed to kill the monster without any support, which showed that its combat capabilities were lacking.

The origin monster wiped out the planet's population not by its own power, but through monsters called infectors, so my prediction is most certain.

But it will be difficult to locate and eliminate a single origin monster on a planet dominated by infectors.

This may take several rounds.

This stage is difficult.

I had to seek out the origin monster in hiding and slay it while protecting the survivors.

Even if Ahbooboo stayed there to guard the bridge, the difficulty remains if these people didn't take their own initiative.

At least they can hope for my return.

If such a lifeless group was locked up in the building, they would

commit suicide one by one.

I'm sure they would do that.

I've witnessed this situation several times happening in real time on the 1st floor of Hell Difficulty.

The 1st floor of Hell Difficulty was literally became hell.

Although the government had forbidden people to enter Hell Difficulty, there's always one or two people who enter by accident or by their own foolhardiness.

As the people accumulated, the population of the 1st floor of Hell Difficulty exceeded 30.

This population is the same as a small village.

The Order of Vigilance decided that they could build a society among themselves to continue.

I did too.

But this was not the case.

They had become more and more decadent.

Instead of uniting together to comfort each other, they divided and hated each other.

Then someone committed suicide and left a will.

Since then, like a relay, there would be two or three suicides in each episode.

There are only five people left on the first floor.

I understood the despair they were experiencing.

Because I had experienced it.

Just being isolated from the world and locked up in the waiting room was enough to drive people crazy.

After the waiting room's time limit is reached, the challengers are deported to the stage which was the beginning of another hell.

Even if you sat at the stage's entrance and did nothing, it was simpler said than done.

It's never easy to spend a month alone at the end of a dark corridor.

In a single step, there would be hidden arrows eager for their hearts flying over.

The challengers on the 1st floor felt death hidden within the darkness as they looked ahead from the stage entrance.

I still remember the moment when I first returned to the waiting room after an arrow shot me, then immediately challenging the trap a second time.

I really felt like I was going to die.

Overcoming that fear lead me to become who I am now.

The God of Adventure first became interested in me during that time.

Perhaps the fear they faced is greater than mine.

The amount of fear accumulated is correlated to the amount of time the challengers lamented and stayed on the 1st floor.

After a month, they will be locked in the waiting room again.

On a positive note, they get to see each other's faces, but only staring at each other for 3 days while nibbling on dried meat would make them question their survival.

Living only on dried meat and water each day would negatively impact their morale.

Although the waiting room's restorative abilities can heal the body, bland taste in such a situation can have a great impact on their lives.

I had to live on dried meat and water until Idy cooked for me on the 12th floor creating a new experience.

Ultimately, there's no hope for a better situation.

The Order of Vigilance would only be able to send support if they go up to the 2nd floor.

Because the auction window is available only after the 1st floor is cleared.

There's no escape from the mire of despair.

Suicide is the only hope for those trapped there.

Their deaths would be like the "GAME OVER" screen from video games, returning to the main interface after losing.

They have the delusion that death will free them from hell.

Or they believe that death is a better alternative than being trapped in hell.

It's such a pity.

Their whole situation is pitiful.

However, Lee Hyung Jin, who managed them and had a close relationship to them, was different.

Since the beginning of the suicides, Lee Hyung Jin has tried his best to stop them, but now he is also suffering from lethargy and depression.

Although he did not tell me directly, I clearly understood his self-disgust in our conversations.

Lee Hyung Jin is isolated in Hell Difficulty like those planning to commit suicide.

But unlike the challengers on the 1st floor, he is trying to move forward like me even if it's only bit by bit.

Fortunately, Lee Hyung Jin is on the 13th floor.

He said that since his abilities encountered a bottleneck and he planned to give up clearing for some time.

He wants to challenge the 13th floor repeatedly until he can achieve meaningful growth.

The monks on the 13th floor are friendly and generously offer valuable advice to the challenger.

I hope that the monks can offer some meaningful guidance to Lee Hyung Jin.

Because I don't think I can do that.

As soon as I appeared, I saw holy sword soaring like a fly.

Although it looks frivolous, a large number of infectors are slaughtered each time he flies over and uses magic.

[How's it going?]

After spotting me, Ahbooboo flew over and asked.

"It's a mess. Get some rest. I'll take over."

[Ok. Perfect timing because my magic was running out.]

I turn my head to the retreating figure of Ahbooboo.

There's another thing Ahbooboo needs to do.

"Ahbooboo, sorry, you need to set up a barrier."

[Barrier? What are you doing?]

"An instant massacre."

After a moment of silence, Ahbooboo grumbles.

[Do you need to do that? I said my magic is low.]

"Yeah, no."

After hearing me, Ahbooboo muttered something I didn't understand, perhaps some ancient swear words, and then responds with a sigh.

[Please go as far as you can before you release it.]

Wait, why does he sound like he's letting me go to take a shit in the woods?

Now that I think about it, he isn't wrong, so I go anyways.

After getting rid of Ahbooboo, who has been muttering, I walk towards the other side of the bridge.

It wasn't long before I was face to face with the infectors that were rushing towards the building.

Each Infector had different appearances.

Some looked like wildlife, some looked like monsters, and others looked like people.

They are literally just monsters as a result of mutations after being infected.

They are no different from zombies in movies.

I raise my hands to them and draw a line from left to right in the air.

“Mind slash.”

Infectors are cut in half by the blade of the invisible aura.

I felt a strange sense of catharsis after the row of infectors split in half and rain blood.

[What was the point of drawing a line in the air?]

Seregia asks.

“It’s cool.”

When people see it, they’ll think the infectors were bisected by my hand gestures.

If I must explain it, then that’s why.

The rest of the infectors will still rush towards me without hesitation regardless of their allies’ death.

Their foolish judgment is ironically their advantage.

Faced with pawns who believe that they can win by blindly rushing forward with numbers, large-scale magic is the solution.

“Fire wall.”

Flames flares up from the ground.

The rushing infectors are burnt beyond recognition.

The infectors are temporarily halted so I take this opportunity to pull out the soul sword and shoot it forward.

After flying hundreds of meters, Seregia hit the ground and asks me.

[Start?]

“Yes, release it.”

As soon as I said that, the soul sealed in the soul sword was released into the world.

These were souls gathered through my soul collecting skill.

Although I can't control them, Seregia can since she is assimilated with soul sword.

The souls running out of soul sword attached themselves to the infectors.

I don't know the infectors' numbers, but I'm sure it won't exceed the number of souls sealed in soul sword.

I'm certain.

Because the number of infectors gathered here does not exceed one billion.

After confirming that the souls are firmly attached to the infectors, I activate my skill.

[Soul Steal]

This is the power skill that the God of Death gave me.

A skill I often used after I obtained it on the 6th floor.

It weakens the enemy and restores my strength upon their demise.

It can also cause fatal damage to the enemies' mental form or soul.

The souls attached to the infectors are no exception.

The souls will writhe in pain and in turn impact the infectors.

Due to the torturous pain, the souls are forced to cling to themselves.

In brief, it's like attaching the scotch tape to the soul and tearing it off.

I don't know what the principles are.

I learned this technique through the clues from the God of Death and Kiri Kiri's advice during training, so I knew that it was feasible. But that's all I knew.

It will take a while to fully understand the technique and make good use of it.

All of these infectors fell to the ground and began to twist and convulse. Only then did the view became wider.

I kicked a couple of infectors that were moaning and struggling.

They did not respond to external shocks.

To avoid troubling Ahbooboo, who is preparing the barrier.

I retrieved the soul sword and spread Talaria's Wings to fly into the sky.

I start my flight in order to find a suitable place to slaughter them all at once.

Chapter 217

Tutorial 49th Floor (3)

“Zit Pop.”

***Note:** Sibam boom as been changed to Zit Pop.*

Unlike my chant, the roar of the explosion was earthshaking.

Instead of enjoying the explosion, I move to escape from the blast radius.

I had released my technique while floating high in the sky.

Although the explosion point was set to be as far as possible, distance meant nothing in the face of this technique.

I felt the intense heat and impact behind me.

Even with the endurance, I cultivated for so long and the flight speed of Talaria’s Wings, I still couldn’t completely negate the explosion’s impact.

I would have been reluctant to use the technique if not for Talaria’s Wing’s support because it has developed to such an extent.

Actually, should I control the explosive force?

But I’m unwilling to do that because the skill would lose its charm if the destructiveness decreased.

[The God of Light is excited!]

Of course, he is.

His reaction has always been consistent.

I like consistency.

[The God of Harvest is satisfied.]

This God became interested in this skill not long ago.

The God of Harvest.

I may know what this God likes.

The God of Harvest was mentioned in the message when the Demon King was summoned on the 26th floor, so I learned a little about this God.

According to Kiri Kiri, the God of Harvest is no different from the well-known God of Death.

His most important characteristic is harvesting as many lives as possible in the simplest and easiest way.

I knew why the God of Harvest felt satisfied after seeing my technique.

Because every now and then, I would see a message saying that “the God of Harvest is looking forward to it”.

Anyways, I’m escaping desperately to avoid being affected by the explosion.

I couldn’t afford to look back and fly perilously towards the Holy Land.

* * *

“Sigh, I almost breathed it in.”

It took a lot of effort to get into the barrier that Ahbooboo set up.

I'm panting for breath.

If I took a breath carelessly, things would've become troublesome.

"Ahbooboo."

[Ah, don't talk to me. I'm busy.]

Ahbooboo spoke to me bluntly while he maintained the barrier.

"I need to be cleansed."

Ahbooboo whined to express his feelings.

Despite his murmuring, he cleansed my body with holy spells.

Although not completely removed, the poison stained on clothes and skin were cleaned.

Looking back, an overwhelming scene unfolds before my eyes.

Outside of the wind barrier that Ahbooboo constructed, thick dark blue smoke fills the air.

After I increased the explosive force of Zit Pop to its maximum, I added poison ki to the aura of the explosion's source.

So after the explosion, the poison smoke began to spread, causing extensive secondary damage.

The scene became more appealing to me than the lethality of the smog.

The days when I dodged flying arrows are still vivid, but now I can trigger a supernatural disaster.

At this point, I'm beyond even those considered to be superhuman.

This moment made me realize that I've never stopped growing.

“Not bad.”

[Not bad!? Are you serious!? Is that what you're talking about!? That's a disaster! Warrior, would you like to maintain the barrier!?]

“I don't know how to use a barrier.”

Spells like barriers and seals are some of the most difficult spells even among the most advanced magics.

If you want to use this kind of magic, you have to transcend human magicians or borrow the help of Gods.

I once told Kiri Kiri that I wanted to learn sealing magic.

I didn't even know Wind Arrow at that time, but in retrospect, I'm glad Kiri Kiri didn't laugh at me.

[Ah... really, that skill wasn't intended to be used in this way.]

Ahbooboo grumbled.

Zit Pop was developed after I adapted Ahbooboo's Spatial Rift Mind Slash to my own tastes.

It is now impossible to see Zit Pop as a prototype born from Spatial Rift Mind Slash.

[I don't know where the monster that Warrior is going to destroy is, but this continent is doomed.]

“Probably not the whole continent. I'm not sure, but it's said that this is the largest continent on the planet.”

No matter how widespread the explosion was, no matter how far the smog spread, it wouldn't encompass the entire continent.

It would be impossible to measure it by the standards of Eurasia, the largest continent on Earth.

It may not even fill all of China.

[No, it's truly done for.]

Since he's so convinced, I ask Ahbooboo to explain it to me.

[Where do you think the smoke will go? The planet's climate has been destroyed. If it rains, it will be poisonous, rivers, lakes and seas will be contaminated. There's nowhere to hide. The smoke can melt steel as long as there's enough.]

Is that so?

I didn't mean to destroy the ecosystem.

[It's not over yet. If you want the smog to disappear, you have to wait for time to slowly dilute it. And the most ridiculous thing, isn't that poison contagious? The poison that can cause instant death is contagious. As the poison slowly dilutes, infectious diseases will sweep across the planet. Didn't you confirm that it was contagious last time through a corpse?]

[As I said, It's a disaster. Warrior, you've just destroyed a planet.]

I felt thorns in Ahbooboo's words.

It's not like grumbling that I've made him suffer helps.

Did he resent me for destroying the ecosystem?

I had no idea.

Regardless, the planet is doomed.

There are 40 survivors.

All the other creatures on this land has been infected, joining the mass of infectors released by the origin monster.

It may not be limited to land creatures, the same could be true for underwater life forms.

In my opinion, it is impossible to go outside until all the poisonous smoke has gone away.

No matter how powerful my resistance is, it's not a wise choice to break through the smoke blocking my view.

It looks like we'll have to wait for the rain or wind to disperse the poisonous smog before we go out.

The situation is not bad.

Anyway, the initial plan was to get rid of the infectors, create a relatively safer environment, and then rectify the survivors.

Then we will find the origin monster.

The infectors around here should have been wiped out, so I can embark on the journey without any concern.

After sorting out thoughts, I move forward again.

Then there is Ahbooboo's voice behind me.

[Warrior, where are you going?]

"I'm going to see the building inside."

[...What about me? What should I do?]

The answer is obvious.

"You have to stay there and maintain the barrier."

This is of course.

If Ahbooboo removed the barrier, the poisonous smoke would pour into the Holy Land.

I don't know what will happen to me, but all survivors would die.

[Who knows when the smoke will disappear!?!]

"It's hard to say, I don't know, too. Maybe 3 days?"

Hearing what I said, Ahbooboo was gasping for breath. I ignored him and held up the door handle.

[Warrior! Warrior? You'll be out in a moment, won't you? Right? Will you stay in for a few days? Warrior?]

[Warrior? You'll come out later, won't you? Warrior? Warrior... hey, you!]

Listening to Ahbooboo's eager plea, I thought of the past.

When I first met Ahbooboo on the 26th floor, he had been begging me not to leave him alone, and eventually even said vulgar language to me.

Whether in the past or the present, Ahbooboo hates being left alone.

Looking at Ahbooboo's reaction as always, I feel a little better.

It's fun to tease him.

As soon as I enter the building, I slam the door shut.

I laugh again at the thought of Ahbooboo, who starts swearing after seeing me do so.

Going into the building with a happy heart, I was stunned on the spot as I turn my head.

An unexpected scene awaits me inside the god temple.

I ask hurriedly when I see people standing on chairs with ropes hanging from the ceiling around their necks.

“What are you doing?”

When people see me, they begin to weep and salute, which makes me nervous.

After hearing what they said, I realize that they thought I was dead after they saw the abnormal phenomena outside.

Because no one can survive in such a big explosion.

I don't know why the explosion happened, but now that I, the apostle who has been summoned, have disappeared, there was no hope for them. That's what they think.

Before the aftermath of the explosion disappear, the infectors come together and decide to commit suicide.

I opened the door and came in before they committed suicide.

Hearing what they said, I sighed unconsciously.

Although sighing may not look good in front of them, I can't help it.

“Fortunately, I am alive.”

I saw a boy nodding his head after listening to my words.

The boy is the representative chosen by the survivors.

I ask them why they choose the boy as a representative when there are still older people. They reply.

Because he is a nobleman.

The world is going to perish. What's the point of the class system? At this time, they even chose this little guy as a representative based on his noble origin.

I shouldn't have expected anything from the survivors.

With regret, I take the boy to walk around in the Holy Land.

The boy introduced the situation of the survivors according to my request.

Who survived and why.

Nothing special.

Then I asked about food.

"We can get food from the center of the Holy Land."

We walk towards the center of the Holy Land under the guidance of the boy.

There is a beautiful courtyard behind the building in which the temple is located, with a spacious space in the middle of the courtyard.

"You mean the food can be summoned here?"

"Yes. Thanks to the mercy of the God of Hope."

"How much is it?"

"...Forty people eat only one meal a day. "

When I asked about food before, opinions were divided.

Some said that food is enough, others said that it is not enough.

If one meal a day, it's not enough.

“Because some people think they’re lucky enough to have a meal.”

Yeah, yeah, it’s possible they would think so.

No, it’s impossible.

I come here as an apostle of God and a savior.

If I ask them, they should have a higher ideal than “survival”.

If I were in the same situation with them, I would reply that the food was enough to sustain me.

I’m not sure I would say that.

From the boy, I can probably guess how weak these survivors are and how many times they have been betrayed by the people they depend on.

“Have any apostles been summoned before?”

I have seen the sentences on the message that other denominations have died out.

Those denominations may have summoned apostles before they collapsed.

“After the monster appeared, many people were summoned by the denomination and the kingdom. But not apostles, there are saintess and warriors.”

Then they all died.

My reliability was so low from the beginning because of them.

If this kind of stage comes up again, there’s one more thing I need to pay attention to.

A variable, the predecessors summoned before, may have damaged

the summoner's reputation.

“Don't worry. I...”

I wanted to say I would protect you, but I stopped in the middle.

I'm just a person who disappears after the clearance.

I don't want to tell such a lie anymore.

“I will kill all the monsters.”

“But monsters will keep appearing. Master Apostle, no matter how strong you are, it's useless.”

The boy adds quickly.

“Please keep watch over us all the time. This is relatively safe for you.”

The boy's trembling voice is full of earnestness.

This is the safest way from the standpoint of survivors.

The young man trembled so hard that he firmly said what he wanted to say. I think it's a correct decision for survivors to choose him as their representative.

“No problem. As long as the root cause – the big monster, is killed, other monsters will never appear again.”

I said while touching the boy's head gently. But the teenager did not feel at ease, his eyes were full of deep uneasiness.

[The origin monster has been destroyed.]

[Stage mission updates.]

“Look, the origin monster is already... dead?”

“Yes?”

“Yes.”

Chapter 218

Tutorial 49th Floor (4)

[Stage mission updated.]

-You have achieved incredible results in a small time frame.

You've eliminated a considerable amount of infectors spread across the planet.

As if you were unsatisfied, you've also eliminated the origin monster that started to take root on the planet.

This legendary feat will be passed down for thousands of years.

As the Apostle of Hope, you are the warrior who saved the planet from its catastrophe, but there is one last task you must accomplish for the survivors.

Although the origin monster has been eliminated, there are still many monsters roaming the land on the planet.

Help the remaining intellectual lives rebuild their homes on this ruined land.

[Clear condition]

– Maintain a reliability of 40 or above 20.

– Protect the survivors until they have laid a solid foundation for their new homes.

Things have just gone south.

As I scratch my head, I notice a boy staring at me in a panic.

“Hey... what’s going on?”

“No, nothing.”

Yes. Damn it.

As Ahbooboo said, the planet’s ecosystem is on the verge of extinction.

Due to the contamination caused by the poison that I mixed with Zit Pop.

Having to build new homes in this situation was unexpected.

And I have to protect them.

That’s ridiculously difficult.

It would take at least a few days for the poison to dissipate.

It’s uncertain how many months or years for it to be completely diluted if the gas has spread to the entire planet.

Even if it’s diluted, Ahbooboo said that it is capable of causing an epidemic plague.

It will take a long time to dilute the gas to a harmless degree.

Putting aside whether it’s even possible to dilute it to a harmless degree.

The survivors need me to protect them until they build the new homes instead of collecting supplies or food, so it seems that they don’t need my assistance to build homes.

Survivors should be knowledgeable and skilled enough to build new homes, so protecting the survivors from leftover infectors who would’ve attacked them is the theme of the stage.

As the Apostle of Hope, I would earn additional points if I can lead them to become faithful believers.

Therefore, the stage's focus is to lead the unusually incompetent survivors to start their new life on their own initiative.

This is really troublesome.

There seems to be no solutions.

I can't wait to death for the planet to be cleansed.

[The God of Nature looks at someone and gloats.]

Ugh, the annoying person, he really is.

That god most fervent every time I use Zit Pop.

I don't know if it's because nature was destroyed or because I had attacked Spirit King.

Probably both.

"Go in."

"Ah? Ah yes, okay."

I pondered as I saw the boy go back inside the building.

The only option is to purposely fail and try again.

I collect my thoughts as I walk through the Holy Land.

After planning my next challenge, I move to the bridge to reclaim Ahbooboo.

[Warrior! I knew you would eventually come out. Huhuhu, were you bored without me Warrior?]

“Bored”, what bullshit.

I was much better alone.

“Ahbooboo.”

[Yes, warrior.]

“Things got messy. We’ll have to fail this time.”

[Oh, yeah. Um... shall I undo the barrier?]

I nod to Ahbooboo’s words.

Ahbooboo immediately releases his barrier.

The transparent holy wall guarding us from the outside air disappears.

Soon the poisonous fog will roll into the Holy Land.

As a result, the survivors will instantly perish, failing the stage mission.

Although it’s a pity to overturn the game when we nearly reach the end, I can’t progress with things this messy.

[Uh?]

“Huh?”

As I watch the smoke pour into the Holy Land, a new curtain of the divine power surrounded the Holy Land.

I thought Ahbooboo might have reapplied the barrier, but seeing his flustered state rendered that guess invalid.

[The God of Hope intervenes in his Holy Land.]

[Clear condition has been met.]

[The God of Nature is panicked.]

With the sudden news, my body was forcibly moved.

I was moved into darkness.

I'm used to it because I've experienced it several times.

This means I was moved to a God Temple.

I try to scan my surroundings.

The darkness here is different from the nihility I experienced at the temple of the God of Slow.

It's only darkness without light.

Thanks to my night vision, I can still dimly see my hands.

There is nothing around me.

Only the floor.

This kind of temple may be common.

This is the best god temple I've visited since stage 40.

Because it's just dark and empty.

No, it's not empty.

I feel another existence.

It's very weak, like a fruit fly flying alone in the dark.

[Fruit fly? Are you talking about me?]

“Are you the God of Hope?”

[Yes.]

My metaphor may have been too offensive causing a deduction of points.

[Don't worry. I'm in a good mood thanks to you.]

“Do you like fruit flies?”

[No... That's not the reason.]

I can hear a panic in God's voice.

So I first apologise.

But I think he might really like fruit flies.

The Gods I've met before all exude a strong presence.

But now the sense of existence of the God of Hope is so low that it reminds me of flying insects.

[Of course. If gives people a strong and huge feeling, it can not be called hope.]

“I see.”

[Do you truly understand?]

Actually, I don't.

I just wanted to keep the conversation going.

“I want to ask you something.”

[Oh, my ideas and actions are consistent. What is it? Tell me.]

“I want to know how stage was cleared.”

The God of Hope laughed at my question.

Laughter sounds light, as if it was tickling around my ear.

When the laughter stops, the God of Hope asks.

[It's all over, is it necessary to know?]

“I want to know.”

[I set up a barrier to protect the Holy Land and subordinated the survivors. The result is the same as if you've protected them while they built their homes, therefore satisfying the clear condition.]

Although the God of Hope answered me, it doesn't resolve the fundamental question.

I had intended to ask again, but the God of Hope interrupts me.

[Stop. Don't ask again. If you want to ask more questions, you'll have to pay contribution points.]

As soon as the God of Hope says this, a series of messages appear before me.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty 49th Floor cleared.]

[All abnormal phenomena and injuries are recovered.]

[Awarded 9000 points as a clear reward.]

[Awarded 9000 points for the first clear reward.]

[There are Gods who have good impressions of you, as additional 1000 points are awarded.]

[The God of Hope is watching you.]

[The God of Hope wishes to pay additional rewards. Do you accept?]

I ignore the clear messages and focus on the God of Hope.

[Ok, what do you want to know?]

“I want to know why and how you saved those people.”

[Why? Do you even need to consider the reason? Someone wanted to remove the barrier and kill the believers in my Holy Land, so I saved them.]

That reason is not enough.

“I don’t think so. You have no reason to care about the life or death of your believers.”

The God of Hope’s doctrine pursues hope.

Whether the believers face setbacks or salvation at the end of their hope has nothing to do with hope itself.

Although he may be reluctant to have fewer believers, I didn’t expect him to interfere with the stage personally.

What’s more, people in the tutorial can’t be regarded as real believers.

[Well, you understand Gods quite well. I saved the children just because I liked the situation.]

The God of Hope reveals his thoughts.

[In such a short time, you brought them hope and despair over and over again. Your presence alone was hope for them, but at the same time, your disappearance has become despair. The power you possess symbolized their hope to survive so they become nervous when you leave.]

The God doesn't stop explaining.

The reason is longer than I thought.

[They can only live on my mercy in a world polluted by your poisonous fog. They will never return to their hometown and will be trapped in the Holy Land forever. Even in such a dire situation, they will not lose hope for the future. It will eventually pass and their safety in the Holy Land is guaranteed. That's what I like. You brought them new despair when they were ready to start anew. Because of that, they will never lose hope.]

The story should have a happy ending, but a poisoned world becomes a variable.

So it brings people new despair, but at the same time, it gives rise to hope.

[Although it's just a world trapped in the tutorial, I like the ending of the story very much and want to give it a clean finish. In fact, I don't even want those children to escape the despair and start a new life.]

“So you want people to despair forever.”

[Of course. Hope cannot be established without despair. Those who free themselves of despair will praise the power that saved them, but no one will praise hope.]

I knew that the God of Hope was not interested in salvation, but I had no idea that he would so actively push his believers into despair.

The God of Hope, who was supposed to be more righteous, now seems nefarious.

[Evil, are you still distinguishing between good from evil? Why don't you put such a troublesome and useless standard on yourself first?]

I don't really want to.

As the God of Hope said, the standard is troublesome and useless.

“Now can you tell me the method you used?”

Regardless of how the God of Hope wanted the stage to end, this is blatantly an act of interference.

I have never heard that a God can end a stage without a vote.

[It's my holy land. That kind of decision is possible.]

“Can you explain it in detail?”

[That's fine, but it could cost contribution points.]

“Fine.”

The God of Hope is silent for a while.

Are you calculating contribution points and information prices?

[What do you think is the greatest characteristic of the Holy Land?]

“I have no idea.”

[...Can you at least try to think about it?]

It has to be answered by the God of Hope regardless.

I don't have to rack my brain for an answer.

[A Holy Land is the place where God lives and where no other God can interfere with it through divine power.]

I have two questions.

Ahbooboo had set up a barrier with the power of the God of the Sky.

[That sword set up the barrier just outside the influence of my Holy Land, which is smart.]

One question is why has a meaningful place like the Holy Land appeared in the tutorial.

Next, I ask the God of Hope if it was really okay to put the Holy Land in the tutorial.

The God of Hope gives me the answer immediately.

[It's not a real Holy Land, but it's not entirely fake either. To put it simply, it's like having a second home change for the public to use as a villa. Since I am nominally the owner of the building, I can exercise the owner's right to interfere.]

I feel that this statement is controversial.

[Don't ask too much about it. You won't get an answer even if you spend all your contribution points.]

The God of Hope ends the topic with this sentence.

It was a poor explanation for what would've consumed all my contribution points.

I wondered if there is anything more to ask.

No.

I'm about to let him send me away, but the God of Hope asks.

[You still have some contribution points left. Do you have any questions left to ask?]

The God of Hope has been asking me questions in turn, inducing me to answer them, or answering in a very general way, in order to reduce the consumption of my contribution points.

I don't know why.

I wonder if there is anything else I want to ask the God of Hope.

“Yeah, no. I’m going to leave.”

[Really?]

The God of Hope asks again.

At this point, there was nothing left to ask so I think the God of Hope wants to tell me something.

[You’re right. I have something to tell you.]

The God of Hope laughs, tickling me.

Although the voice is still very light, it focused the nerves in my ears.

[Don’t you want to ask me about that?]

“Are you talking about?”

[About your plan.]

Chapter 219

The Tutorial 49th Floor (5)

[Ask me about your plan.]

I take a long and gentle breath.

I don't want to be perturbed.

Even if the God has been reading my mind.

I didn't expect the God of Hope to know about the conversation I had with the God of Slow in her temple.

I thought that God could only read my superficial thoughts at best and would not know what occurred at other temples.

I finally understand why the God of Slow didn't want to answer my questions.

The God of Hope's laughter tickles my ears again.

He gave a soft smile after his chuckle.

The gentle and ambiguous murmur draws all my attention away.

“What do you mean?”

[You didn't want me to ask me about your plans? My apologies.]

“You're sad?”

[Yes, I am. So why don't you ask me about your plan?]

Pitiful.

No God would be sad for such a thing.

[Tell me.]

There are two reasons.

First of all, there is no need to obtain the answer from other Gods if I've already gotten it from one God.

And the second one.

"I don't think you will like my plan."

[Why do you think so?]

"The hope you understand is stronger than anything else in the world. Therefore you'd actually like the System's constraints and wouldn't be bothered by it."

I've been able to distinguish the Gods to some extent with my recent experiences.

Laughter echoes in my ears again.

[It's rude to say so. I am hope.]

I disagree.

That's just a personal interpretation of it by the God in front of me.

[Your thoughts are unimportant, ignorant, and foolish, human.]

"No, the only thing that matters are my thoughts. Just as you judge hope by what you believe."

The laughter around my ears stops.

Even the sound I didn't recognize disappears, what remains is a silent world that spread endlessly.

[I have something to tell you.]

"I've heard all I wanted to hear. Now I wish to proceed to the next stage. Please send me away."

A portal appears by my feet as soon as I finish my words.

I didn't expect the portal to appear by my will regardless if the God permitted it.

I hurry to the portal and to move onwards, but the God of Hope murmurs.

[Are you going to run away?]

"....."

I keep silent by the portal for a while.

The laughter of the God of Hope, which had disappeared, echoes again.

[Interesting. But it is inevitable. Your judgemental abilities are too bizarre to be human.]

"Tell me."

[Now you dare to even command a God.]

The God of Hope's presence began changing.

His presence that had felt like a small, frail insect in an open space became overwhelming and oppressive.

I can't stop the force from pressuring my body.

I dare not even think about it.

Because I am still in this space.

Now I am the fruit fly standing before a God.

[Yes, I wanted to treat you like a disposable toy just as you worried. When the time is right, I will drop a fishing line for you who continues to swim deeper and deeper into despair. But it seems that you won't bite my hook even if you died. It's incredible to be in despair and refuse the hope. This helped me understand you better than any other God.]

The God of Hope is sending out ferocious power.

The voice of the buzzing little insect has been replaced by that of a giant monster with tusks exposed roaring around my ears.

[How does it feel to be oppressed by my power? Are you not happy? Aren't you excited about the height of the wall you are going to climb?]

The roaring God of Hope continues.

[Of course, I know about your ambitions. All the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple know of it. I only ask you one question. Is this goal truly for that Lizardman? Be honest, perhaps it's just for your self-satisfaction. If you really want to save that lizardman, it is not too late to become an apostle of the God of Slow. You should accumulate enough contribution points to trade with the Hundred Gods Temple. It'll only take 300 years.]

Hearing what the God of Hope said, I understand his intentions now.

“...So this is what you wanted to tell me.”

[Yes. You are accustomed to fighting in despair, so I'm going to give you a little hope. There is nothing more harmful to a deep-sea fish than light.]

The God's goal is clear.

It doesn't matter if I'm unpersuaded right now.

What the God wants is to leave a scar in my heart.

When the day where I tire and give up comes, this scar will whisper to me and tempt me to take a shortcut more comfortable than the current one.

[I used to think so too before. But now that I see you, you won't waver so easily. The God of Slow spoke of your essence, a moth that wants to be a fire. For you, despair is not the darkness, but the light.]

The God's vicious presence becomes as warm as the sun.

Then the God of Hope whispers with heat that would've melted my body.

[I'll tell you what the God of Slow didn't mention.]

[As you thought, the poor souls who are locked in the system are not only goblins and lizardmen, but also Gods.]

[There is certainly a God among us who wants to be released from that bondage. You should also know who that is.]

[You don't have to feel anxious, go ahead. The most powerful God of the Hundred Gods Temples will support you.]

* * *

I pondered about it for a while.

"I don't understand."

[What?]

"I don't understand why you told me this."

[Are you curious?]

“Yes.”

The God of Hope's presence returned to that equal to an insect. Then he chuckles again as if it's very interesting.

[In that case, you'd want to grasp the essence of it through a phenomenon. It's a great method because you tend to focus on results. Very well, I'll tell you. Since your curiosity hasn't been aroused, your contribution points were not used.]

[You know, the number of Gods who are interested in you are decreasing. We've determined that your core essence is struggle. We know that you've set an unrealistic, dangerous, and difficult goal for yourself with no intentions of giving in. That's why they abandoned you.]

Because they think I'm just a moth that will burn down.

The God of Hope adds.

[Your analysis isn't wrong. In fact, you also know that your goal is impossible to achieve, right? That's why you would make it your objective. If it was a goal you can achieve in a few years, you wouldn't have targeted it in the first place because life will become meaningless after it is achieved. This means that life before achieving that goal is also meaningless.]

[The Gods think your goal is as absurd as your idea. The truth is, a mortal man who is fated for death will never accomplish such a task. But the problem is...]

[You've been trying to carry out that impossible goal the whole time.]

[I know humans very well. I've seen how fragile they are and what they've craved for. So I know how many obstacles you have to overcome and the height of the mountains you have to climb in the future.]

[The gods don't value you greatly because there are other Hell Difficulty challengers in other dimensions. Even the God who supports you doesn't think you'll achieve your goals. In my eyes, you are very likely to fail, but I think about you more sincerely. Although the hope is slim, there is still a possibility for you.]

After a long explanation, the God of Hope announces in a low voice.

[Now go.]

The next moment, my body is moved from the Temple of Hope to Kirikiri's field.

Before I could adjust to the sudden light, Kirikiri came running and screaming.

“Houjae!”

* * *

Kirikiri is especially annoying today so I buy her a cake to stop her pestering me and send her away to sort out my thoughts.

I'm not yet certain of what the God of Hope truly desires.

But I still need to organize the information he gave me.

First, the God of Hope revealed that there are several Gods who are disgusted with the system's control and sincerely support me.

From his performance, he hopes I can optimistically accept the Gods' assistance.

Optimism will be a stumbling block to my future obstacles.

I look at Kirikiri.

She is eating cake while staring at me.

I can't tell whether the cake is being eaten from the mouth or the nose.

The dialogue with the God of Hope made it clear that the Gods were also restrained by the system.

Kirikiri's attention is no longer on the cake, she stares at me.

Most of the Gods think that I will one day renounce my goal or finally compromise with reality.

But there are also Gods who continue responding to and support my actions.

As the God of Hope said, they also want to be freed from the system's constraints.

They must hope that I can create some variables in their favor.

"Right?"

Kirikiri giggles, then picks up the plate of cake as if nothing had happened.

The next one is information about the Holy Land.

But I don't need to ask Kirikiri about it right now nor is it available or useful at the moment.

I just recall what the God of Hope had mentioned.

Next, I speculate how the Gods read my mind.

First of all, the God of Hope knows about the conversation between the God of Slow and me.

"That's because Houjae is not an apostle of a God. As a challenger without any affiliations, your actions can be observed by all the gods in the Hundred God Temples."

“Yes, I know that. I just think it’s a little strange for him to be able to observe what happened in other temples.”

“Gods don’t observe challengers by viewing the spaces in the tutorial. They observe by sharing challengers’ views and ideas through challengers’ point of view.

There was an error in my speculation.

I thought the Gods watched the challengers with something akin to CCTV, but in reality, their observation method is actually closer to peeping at the challengers’ thoughts through the first-person point of view.

There is one last clue left.

I know Gods can read my mind.

Because they will feel lost, happy, and sometimes angry because of my ideas.

And what they can read is limited to the surface of my deepest thoughts.

But I had misunderstood the extent that they could read.

Through many conversations with Gods, I realize that what they can read is just the surface content of my mind.

The reason for my illusion is Kirikiri.

I always regarded her as the standard for these Gods, which led me astray.

Compared to the Gods, Kirikiri can read my deepest thoughts.

The difference is obvious.

“Hehe.”

“This is not a compliment.”

It is not yet known whether she is just a manager or something else.

Anyway, even if I wanted to ask, I can't pay the information fee.

“Yes!”

Regardless, I am sure now.

There is no way for these Gods to accurately read the thoughts that I deliberately hide.

I know that the goal I am challenging is an endless abyss.

But I'm no lunatic who dedicates themselves to meaningless challenges.

I started the challenge in order to achieve my goal.

Chapter 220

The Tournament (20)

“Anything else you want to ask?”

After listening to the information about the 50th floor, Kirikiri asks.

“Anything else?”

“Yes.”

I think it over.

What should I ask Kirikiri?

I’ve been forced to inquire lots recently so it’s become hard for me to come up with the right questions.

“Relax. I’m not forcing you.”

Kirikiri seems a little disappointed, so I ask.

“Is it time to replace my equipment?”

The holy sword and soul sword do not need to be upgraded.

Their performance is good enough, but most importantly, the difficulty of the stages can’t keep up with my strength.

So there is no need to find more powerful weapons.

However, I will change my armor pieces periodically.

There’s a fine line between actively promoting risk for growth and

completely ignoring safety.

I ask Kirikiri if it's time to replace my armor, but she shakes her head.

“No.”

“Has my potion stock dried up? Let me see.”

I open my inventory and check the remaining consumable items.

The stock of potions are still sufficient.

There haven't been many opportunities to drink a potion lately, so naturally, there are more left.

“Tissues... plenty. Ketchup. Mayonnaise. Ah, there's no mayonnaise.”

I met some people and received their hospitality at a stage after the 40th floor.

Naturally, I ate the food they provided.

Some of the foods were tasty and some were not.

I would secretly add some seasoning or sauce if the food wasn't tasty.

“No, not that.....”

Kirikiri shakes her head while looking despondent, so I ask.

“Then, what is it?”

Kirikiri sighs before answering me.

“Nothing, you don't have to know it. It isn't important enough for you to pay for it.”

Kirikiri says that, but I'm unconvinced and curious.

We try to pinpoint the right answer by exchanging questions as if we were playing Twenty Questions, but couldn't reach a conclusion.

Note: Twenty Questions is a game in South Korea in which one side asks a question and the other side guesses the answer by asking 20 questions in reverse. – JiuJiuBa

* * *

[Welcome to floor 50's waiting room.]

Seeing the welcome words after entering the waiting room deeply touched me.

It's just halfway.

50 out of 100 floors.

It's ridiculous that I've only come halfway in 2 years, approaching the 3rd year.

I finally managed to get here.

I don't know how long it will take until I get out.

It may take less than a year at my current pace, but Hell difficulty cannot be easily judged.

I don't know when and where a time-consuming obstacle may appear.

In order to deal with such a situation, I must be diligent to improve myself.

I pull Ahbooboo out of the inventory to study magic.

[Huh? It seems you've cleared the previous floor. Are you in the waiting room again?]

“Yes.”

Ahbooboo is now speaking like a full-fledged challenger.

I'll ask him about how much he knows about the world one day.

I'm about to study with Ahbooboo, but a magic circle appears on the ground.

To be precise, it appears by my feet.

[Round 32, Day 0, 00:00]

[The Tournament will commence.]

[Please enter.]

[Time left until mandatory summoning: 29 minutes and 59 seconds]

[You can leave at any time after entering.]

“What’s this?”

* * *

[Lee HoJae, 50th floor: What’s this?]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor:... What’s this? You bastard, it’s the tournament.]

[Lee HoJae, 50th floor: Why has it started now? I haven’t been informed.]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor:... You were informed. The managers have notified us and I personally told you. Round 33! Today! The 3rd tournament! You answered absentmindedly no matter how many times I told you, which is odd. You didn’t remember it at all!]

Did you say that?

I don't remember.

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: As per your request, the Order of Vigilance doesn't need you to do anything. The Order has created a system that can work well on its own. You can enter like everyone else.]

[Lee HoJae, 50th floor: I see.]

Lying on the bed in the waiting room, I recalled something.

It seems I've gotten information about the tournament from Kim MinHyuk and Park JungAh in the past.

Did KiriKiri want to pass the information about the tournament to me?

That makes sense.

The information fee is expensive.

After pondering about it, I jump out of bed.

Kirikiri watches other challengers as well as me.

If the challengers connected me had the information already, she wouldn't have mentioned it deliberately.

That means there is the information that no one in the Order of Vigilance knows, including Kim MinHyuk and Park JungAh.

The information might have something to do with the tournament.

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: What? I feel uneasy now. I didn't expect that we would miss a piece of information. You said you don't exactly know what it is?]

[Lee HoJae, 50th floor: Yes.]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th floor: I'm sorry. Although I promised I wouldn't ask you to do anything, I have to break that pledge. Can you get in as

soon as possible? Just in case something happens. We'll try to find out what piece of information is missing as soon as possible.]

[Lee HoJae, 50th floor: Okay.]

After the conversation with Kim MinHyuk, I start checking my equipment.

After making sure I didn't miss anything, I stand on the portal.

[Time left until mandatory summoning: 13 minutes and 22 seconds]

A while has passed since the portal opened.

[Hu, hu, hu. I'm looking forward to it! I heard that people like Warrior are gathered there? A Shuraba will descend.]

Note : Shuraba means the scene of carnage. According to myth, it is the location where Asura and Sakra devanam Indra fought. – GodlyCash

Ahbooboo mutters eerily.

Well, it won't.

It's not so much a group of people like me, but rather a gathering of townsmen.

Instead of correcting Ahbooboo's misunderstanding, I stand on the portal and spoke the iconic word.

"Transfer."

The space around me starts shaking.

Although I have been able to detect the change a while ago, I haven't applied the experience to magic.

I don't know how long it will take to learn the rudiments of space

magic.

It's still far away.

[Welcome to the Tournament.]

[Tournament Day 1, 0:17]

I'm moved to a secluded forest.

How unexpected.

Previous tournaments were held in the residential areas like floor 30 or floor 60.

I thought this one would take place in the residential area of floor 90, but instead I'm transported to a forest...

More importantly, there is nobody around.

I thought it would be crowded with people, but I can only sense a woman and a man.

Only two people.

[Lee HoJae , 50th floor: What's this?]

[Kim MinHyuk , 30th floor:... Hey. Tell me honestly. You pretend to read all my messages, then ignore them, right?]

Yep.

I decide not to send a reply to Kim MinHyuk after seeing his message.

"Hello?"

The woman pacing around comes to greet me.

“Yes. Hello.”

I greet the man who approached late then request the duo to explain the situation to me.

The woman speaks with embarrassment.

“Didn’t you read the guide? The Order of Vigilance informed us last month.”

No.

I haven’t been in the community in a while. How could I have read that?

“Why don’t we proceed? You can listen to the rest as you go. I can deal with all the monsters enroute alone anyways.”

Boasts the man a step behind us.

He looks to be in his early 20s.

After entering the tutorial, challengers will not suffer from natural aging.

Given that, the man can be two or three years older than he seems.

But that’s unlikely.

Because they don’t recognize me.

This proves that both of them are challengers who have only recently entered the tutorial.

“Yeah. Let’s head on first. I’ll explain it as we go.”

While walking along the forest road, I get a detailed explanation from the woman.

The woman tells me her name is Lee Jin

I think it is a pseudonym, but she insists it's her real name.

I didn't tell her my name.

According to Lee Jin, this time the Tournament has lots more content than before.

As a result, the rewards has increased correspondingly and the duration has been increased to one month.

"First of all, if you want to enter the venue, you need to get there with two randomly assigned team members."

"Why increase the meaningless process?"

"I'm not sure, but many people in the community are saying that the content was prepared for players who have not experienced party play yet."

I heard the laughter from the man ahead.

This bastard is starting to annoy me to no end.

You, one strike.

Disregarding him, there is something I don't understand in Lee Jin's words.

"Player?"

"Yeah."

I expressed doubts about the strange word, but Lee Jin says nothing.

Player?

She used the word so naturally, I'm embarrassed to ask again.

I take the chance to ask Kim MinHyuk instead.

[Lee HoJtae , 50th floor: Hey, What's a player?]

[Kim MinHyuk , 30th floor:... Please. Why do you sound like an old man? That's what people call challengers in the community.]

Kim Minhyuk told me that people who challenge the stages are called players, while the challengers who stay in residential areas or specific stages are called NPC.

[Kim MinHyuk , 30th floor: I'm really, really busy, Okay? If possible, ask the people around you about this kind of thing or wait till evening. Let's meet tonight. I'll give you a lesson on common sense.]

A lesson on common sense?

That really does make me sound like an outdated old man.

[Kim MinHyuk , 30th floor: Don't you think so?]

Kim MinHyuk truthful message stabs my feelings so I close the dialog box.

Lee Jin probably likes to explain and educate others because she's always talking about something.

In addition to the simple combat competition, the tournament has a variety of new content.

For example, you can try to complete the labyrinth within a limited time or tackle a Time Attack Stage as a party.

There are lots of activities.

“We can’t finish all the events in time. Everyone in the community says it’s best to challenge two or three events.”

The Tournament this time has changed in many aspects.

If the previous tournament is like a colosseum, this one is more like a comprehensive amusement park.

I haven’t seen it with my own eyes yet, but I felt it from Lee Jin’s description.

“What do you want to challenge?”

“I don’t know.”

My plan was to return to the stages after a few days without challenging anything.

Of course, this is no emergency.

I just don’t want to spend a month here wasting my time since the items and elixir rewards in the championship prize pool are useless to me.

I tell Lee Jin that I’m just going to meet some friends and take a few days off.

“Why? Just try one. This is the first time this has happened, who knows when we’ll have this chance again? Do it for the experience. I hear that some events aren’t dangerous.”

After listening to Lee Jin’s words, the man walking in front says sarcastically.

“Hey, looks like he hasn’t been here long, just leave it. Since his equipment is all shiny, he may have found a patron among the top ranked players. I’ll handle it.”

Erm... Let me think.

Is that a strike?

Then two strikes.

There's still one count until a strikeout.

But I'm in a bad mood.

Okay, let's think of it as a bean ball.

Note: A bean ball is when a pitcher throws the ball directly at the batter's head.

[KEEEK!]

Then an ugly monster pops out in the middle of the forest.

The unusual creature looks like a combination between a dog and frog.

“Back off! I'll handle it!”

After his roar, I stare at the man's face as he draws his sword...

The man turns to me and asks.

“Yes? Do you have any complaints?”

“Get down.”

[keek!]

The horrendous monster immediately falls to the ground.

It watches me from the ground, it seems quite intelligent.

Even if it could understand me through my skill, Time Before Babel, it's honestly commendable that it can grasp the power gap between

me and it.

In the face of a sudden situation, the flustered man sends alternating gazes at me and the monster.

This guy is even less intelligent than the monster.

It's hard, but I say it again mercifully.

“What are you doing? Get down.”

Chapter 221

The Tournament (21)

“What are you doing? Get down.”

“...What?”

The man ignorantly asks. Perhaps he hasn't figured it out yet.

I thought he would get down on his own initiative, but he is incapable of understanding words, so what am I supposed to do about it?

“Suddenly...”

“Get down.”

I couldn't wait any longer, so I force him down.

It was easy.

I just released magic above the man and use it to press him to the ground.

Pretty simple.

This is the usual method I used to suppress isolated and weak enemies in the stages. Now I've mastered the essentials and can use less magic to achieve the same results.

The man forced to the ground lost his ability to speak.

Usually, there are no groans when I press people down.

There are occasionally some squeaking noises, but this is involuntary.

I decide to put him on hold before starting the conversation.

I hope he can make progress during this down time.

However, I understand the man's feelings.

After all, it's not the first time I've seen such a poser.

Above all, it's two men and one woman walking together.

In the limited space of the tutorial, I can understand why he would have that mindset.

So I can understand.

I also understand why I'm being irritated by the man's tone.

The tone of speech is terrible. Who wouldn't be angry after listening?

I just want to calm down.

“Right?”

[keeeekkeek!]

Hearing my mumbling, the monster agrees with me with a cry.

What is he doing?

The monster looks like a mixture of dog and frog.

His head is as smooth and shiny as an amphibian, but the limbs are hairy like a dog.

He stares at me with fear in his eyes.

“That, that.”

“Emm?”

I forgot about the woman.

Lee Jin looks at me with flustered eyes and asks.

“Well, what’s going on...?”

She doesn’t understand the situation.

I think the current situation can be easily understood, but for others it doesn’t seem so.

I decided to explain it to her from the beginning.

“The monster is discerning. As soon as he jumped out, he knew that he should lie down. This guy is lacked observational skills, influencing my mood, so I force him to lie down.”

My explanation is simple and easy to understand.

There should be better ways to explain it, but I’m not greedy for a higher standard because of my poor vocabulary.

“How did you do that?”

You want to know how?

I roughly explain the principle.

“How else? He has control force. How else can it be done?”

“You can push down from a space that is out of reach, so as long as you have magic, you can do it.”

It seems that Lee Jin wants to keep asking. So I say something casually.

She talks about control force all the time. It seems she is interested in theories.

At the current level of these challengers, this is an area they couldn't reach or should even care about.

This woman likes to explain. Unexpectedly, her thirst for knowledge is so strong.

It seems that she has no interest in the man who lies on the ground in the frog position or the actual frog monster who lies on the ground in the same position.

[This is a scam. Anyone can do it. Warrior, you're putting on airs.]

"So noisy."

"What?"

Ignoring the nagging Ahbooboo and the woman who is questioning me, I bend down.

I lighten the pressure on the man and speak.

"How do you feel?"

Of course, he doesn't look like he can hold on.

He doesn't reply.

I've weakened my power to the point where he can speak.

His attitude is still bad.

I stand up and say.

"Our meeting is fate. Take this opportunity, I will educate you. If you want to live with this attitude all the time, you should have the corresponding strength. Follow the training methods I teach every day

and your strength will increase naturally.”

Of course, he will not want power or anything else in 10 minutes.

This is none of my business.

“Hey, you did it wrong, didn’t you?”

[keekkeek !]

“Not you.”

[keekkeek !]

“Ok,I get it. Stop being noisy.”

[keekkeek !]

The monster constantly barking, so I hit him.

I had thought its intelligence was high, but it only had excellent crisis handling abilities so I corrected my judgement.

[keekkeek !]

“Well, I know it’s an accident. Shut up. Now I’m talking to him.”

[keekkeek !]

Finally, I turn my head away from the monster.

Turn to the man with his head down in sweat.

Not long ago, he was in a state of mental distraction. It seems that during the time when I talked with the monster, he has recovered his spirit.

Physical strength and recovery are good.

But it isn't enough to endure my training.

The man is bathed with sweat and his legs are shaking.

If you keep on pushing your limits for an hour, even the challenger who is physically superior will become like that.

He did it exactly according to the no-equipment sports I had practiced before. Now I think his internal organs are shaking.

If you leave him alone, it may cause shock. I have to give him a potion.

I will give him it after torture him.

“Hey, did you do wrong or not?”

“Yes, I'm in the wrong.”

The man answers quickly.

After suffering for an hour, the man has the same attitude towards me as the frog monster who keeps glancing at me in horror.

It would be nice if it stays like this.

By the way, his voice is still very strong.

Not enough torture.

“Why did you do that?”

“I...”

“Still no answer? Down.”

The man fell down on the ground in a rush.

I'm not sure if it's because he's done it so many times, but his body moves like lightning to the familiar movements.

The dust is blown away by his violent movement.

The silent holy sword speaks

[You're more capable of torture than I thought.]

[Really?]

[Really. According to your personality, people would be immediately killed if they caused you discomfort. I thought you were preparing to behead him when he lies on the ground, but instead you torture him.]

Ok, all right.

I now know what you think of me.

[It's a pity that I can't torture you like this. If only you were human.]

[Ah, what did you say!? Why!? Is it because I'm not coquetry enough?
]

There is a rush of butterflies in my stomach. I resist the urge to vomit...

Although I can't torture this crazy sword, there is still a way to punish it.

Since the noise from Ahbooboo has damaged my hearing, I throw it back into inventory for it.

About 10 minutes later, I pull up the man who rolls on the floor, struggle to stand.

I ask again.

"Have you self-reflected?"

The man gasps and answers yes.

“Hey, you laugh at others when they speak to them miserable, Is that right?”

“No!”

“Then why would you do that?”

“Because...”

“Down again.”

The man rolls over and finally faints.

It's not good to wake him up just to torture him again. Since my anger has subsided I decided to let him go.

After pouring a potion into the man with rolled eyes, I put him on the back of the frog monster.

“Can you carry him?”

[keeeekkeek !]

Yes, I know.

I unintentionally got an obedient carrier.

We continue along the forest path while listening to Lee Jin's explanation of tournament.

She explains more enthusiastically than before.

“With Japan and Australia ? ”

“Yes. It's probably because there are too many participants, so the residential area is divided.”

We will share a residential area with Japan and Australia who have participated in the second tournament with us together.

I not sure about Japan, but among the challengers in Australia, there should be some people who have a grudge with us.

Another conflict may happen.

There are many participants in the tournament this time along with many kinds of events. Perhaps due to this, we can take the residential area where the dormitory is located at the center.

Lee Jin says that if you want to participate in the tournament, you need to form a team in a residential area and sign up together for the competition.

You become an official participant once you and your team move through the portal.

It sounds complex.

We listen while walking in the woods.

Several hidden traps and magic circles are found along the way along with other frogs.

These monsters talk to the frog monster walking by my side for a while and then run away.

“Can you understand what the monsters are saying?”

“Just a little bit.”

Lee Jin asks me.

After walking together for several hours, our relationship has become a little closer allowing us to casually ask each other questions.

“I can’t understand them completely. What they say is very vague.”

“Why?”

“Because they know I can understand them.”

The knowledge of the time before Babe is bidirectionally compatible.

Although the frog monster can't understand what Lee Jin says, he can fully understand what I say.

So they speculate that I could understand their language accurately.

I'm not certain, I just believe it so.

While explaining to Lee Jin, I also affirm my hypothesis.

Because the frog monster freaks out after listening to my explanation.

“But are you really not going to participate in any event? I hear there are prizes in the tournament.””

I reply that I would not participate.

I can guess what kind of rewards will be given.

Maybe give an item box with good weapons or some statistics.

But they are useless to me.

Especially elixirs, I wouldn't feel any change after its consumption.

Drinking an elixir is similar to consuming vitamins, it's of little help.

There's no need to beat others for such a prize.

I don't expect to compete with other challengers.

Although I believed I would before, I have lost my expectations.

I don't know the level of other challengers, but they are certainly not as strong as me.

If you fight other challengers just to experience a sense of urgency, you may accidentally kill them causing some trouble.

“What a pity. If we can participate together, the prize is as good as ours.”

Even if I wanted to participate in the tournament, I would not form a team with Lee Jin.

If I have to, I could consider joining Park Jong-Sik.

Because even without me, that team is most likely to win the championship.

Lee Jin seems to have a clue on the way and asks if my name is Lee Hojae.

I affirm her suspicion.

Since then, Lee Jin has been asking me to participate in the tournament.

But more concerned about how she is unwavering after learning my identity.

She becomes more interested to team up with me and win prizes.

To be honest, I'm surprised.

I thought that if I revealed my name, the normal response would be her fearing me. However, I didn't expect her to be so joyful.

This makes me strangely confused.

Is it because I haven't interacted with other people for a long period of time?

People have forgotten me.

Perhaps it's simply because she's not a challenger from the early periods.

Maybe it's just because she's an unusual person.

In any case, it's convenient for me to have a good conversation.

In addition to the tournament, I also ask some questions about the community and other challengers' trend.

So I don't have to annoy Kim MinHyuk anymore.

After walking for three or four hours, we come to the end of the forest path and see the portal.

Seeing the portal, Lee Jin says.

The portal will take you to your residential area.

I send a message to Kim MinHyuk notifying him that I will arrive soon.

Kim MinHyuk replies that he would send someone to pick me up at the other end of the portal.

He adds that I don't have to hurry over because there is nothing to do, but I have nothing to do but to find him.

The place I arrive through the portal looks like a residential area.

There are beautiful brick buildings along the street.

It looks like a floor 90 residential area.

Nothing special.

“It’s clean.”

[keeeekkeek !]

The frog monster behind me expresses his approval.

...Why did this guy follow me here?

I pull down the man onto my back, wondering whether to send the frog monster back through the portal when there is an explosion in the sky.

Bang! Bang!

I’m frightened and hurried to look up to the sky. The sky is full of colorful fireworks.

It’s fireworks.

What’s this?

Firecracker in the tournament.

I don’t think it’s arranged by the system.

I see a lot of people walking around with firecrackers and ignition tools on the buildings.

I don’t know how it’s prepared, but it’s spectacular.

Different from the sparks and flashes that occur in the battle, the colorful fireworks appearing one after another are very beautiful.

Fireworks continue.

I am enjoying myself when a notification comes up.

[The God of Light is excited!]

[The God of Light decides to bless his apostles.]

[Voting begins.]

[For:1, against:98]

[The God of Light feels that he is losing face.]

Chapter 222

The Tournament (22)

[The God of Light feels ashamed.]

It's ridiculous on one hand, but it's normal on the other.

I'm accustomed to the occasional foolishness of the God of Light.

I chuckle upon seeing the God of Light's message, but soon I realize that I'm not alone.

At least, those who also watched fireworks outside the buildings have received the message.

In addition, some people are not laughing, but cheering.

Those cheering are the ones who stood on the roofs and set off firecrackers.

Are they believers of the God of Light as the message says?

I thought the message referred to them as believers because they set off firecrackers, but on second thought, they may be truly believers.

The people on the roof are all excited and elated.

I don't know why.

Under the system's sanction, the God of Light fails to give the blessing. Logically, I wonder if they should be depressed.

But people are cheering as if they have been blessed.

Someone comes towards me while I watched them.

It's a normal-looking man.

“Hello!”

The greeting is also normal.

I respond to him perfunctorily.

The man says he's a member of the Order of Vigilance sent by Kim Min Hyuk to be my guide.

Surprisingly, the man knows me.

“Have we met before?”

“Yes. I've seen you before in the grand conference and tournament.”

After listening to him, I begin to recall.

Of course, I don't have any memories of the man in my mind.

“A previous grand conference... the third or fourth time?”

“The fourth time. But it was the first time for me.”

It seems that he joined not long ago.

The members of the Order of Vigilance that I've been in contact with are those who entered in the early days. So it's possible that I don't remember him.

If you ask me if I remember all the early members, I would deny it.

“But what about the frog? Is it the guy I met at the intersection?”

I ponder about it Instead of answering immediately.

I choose an answer that would cause trouble as little as possible.

“...Taming.”

“Wow... You really can do anything up at that level. It’s said that you are a warrior, so I didn’t know you such an ability. It’s amazing. There’s no problem walking around with this guy, right?”

“Probably.”

Probably, I think.

So long as this guy doesn’t suddenly cause trouble.

I can subdue it on the spot even if it does.

In fact, if I want to avoid trouble, I can deal with it at any time. However, this is the first time a monster has followed me for no reason.

So I want it to stay with it as long as possible to its reason.

The man suggests I follow him to Kim Min Hyuk.

Before leaving, I pull down the man on the back of the frog monster.

At this point, he should be able to take care of himself, I think. Then I lean him against the wall

I say goodbye to Lee Jin.

Although Lee Jin feels a little sad, she doesn’t pester me anymore.

It seems like she stopped not because of me, but for the members of the Order of Vigilance around me which felt a little strange.

When I walk around with the man, we get people’s attention.

It's normal.

Because there is no one else who walks around with a frog monster.

It would naturally attract people's attention.

People gather together to see the frog monster.

Interestingly, people are more interested in the tamed monster than me.

What they desire to know is how the taming is implemented.

Occasionally, people ask me questions or say hello directly.

After continuing my way, I reached the building where Kim Min Hyuk is located.

The building is big enough for the frog monster to enter.

In front of the building stands a gatekeeper.

After talking to the man who brought me here, the gatekeeper lets us in.

The gatekeeper's attitude is a bit strange.

What's stranger is his attitude towards me, which resembles people's reaction to me in the past.

As soon as he knew my identity, his body stiffens.

It's gone beyond tension and became anxiety.

That's a normal response.

"What's your name?"

[Keeekkeek !]

The frog monster who follows me quietly shows presence.

I turn my head towards the frog and speak.

“Not you.”

I’m not curious about the frog’s name.

The man disturbed by the frog says.

“Jeong Myung-chul”.

I ask him in which time did he come in, he says the second time.

Then we walk into the building.

I am led to a large conference room.

The meeting is in full swing in the conference room.

Unintentionally, I get in the way of the meeting.

“Long time no see. How are you?”

Suddenly an old man comes to talk to me, I contemplate who he is for a while.

Luckily, I remember him.

“Long time no see, uncle.”

The Japanese uncle with a long beard still seems to be the core of Japanese challengers.

Most of the other Japanese challengers in his party only offer assistance so the substantive propositions are put forward by the

Japanese uncle.

He says Australian staff are arranging the dormitories.

No wonder I didn't see any Australians along the way. It turns out that they had all gathered elsewhere.

I am dazed throughout the meeting.

They are talking about how to enforce the rules, how to communicate and get along with foreign challengers who haven't met yet, but I it doesn't matter to me.

Actually, it is.

I just need to sit here quietly.

Kim MinHyuk tells me that if I feel bored I can go outside, but I refused.

Because there's nothing to do outside.

It would be really annoying if someone recognizes me.

So I'd rather stay in the conference room.

It's not that there's nothing that arouses my interests at all.

"Religion?"

"Yes. It's been spreading fast lately."

The bearded uncle says religion is spreading among Japanese challengers.

The funny thing is that it isn't a pseudo-religion.

What they worship is the real God.

“Various denominations are springing up, but the scale of believers of the God of Light seems to be the largest. I don’t know how many there are.”

“The God of Light? Insane...”

I curse, but I hurriedly stop myself. I don’t know when the Time before Babel skill has reached level 15. It seems that half of the swearing has been translated.

One of the Japanese challengers gets angry with eyes wide open.

It’s rude to belittle or slander others’ religions, but since I have already offended them, I want to take this opportunity to solve the problem.

I ask the Japanese challenger, who is especially angry after listening to me.

“Why the God of Light? Since you want to believe in God, shouldn’t you believe in a God more dignified and decent?”

“You mean to say the God of Light is not decent?”

The hard question comes back to me.

I didn’t get the answer I wanted so I end the conversation with an apology.

But the man continues to mutter in anger even after hearing my apology.

“Hum, these stupid people don’t understand the God of Light.”

...Wait a moment?

I think I heard something wrong.

Before I ask again, Kim MinHyuk stands up.

“There are quite a few people in Korea who believe in the God of Light.”

Really?

At this point, am I the weird one?

Is there anything worth worshiping in the God of Light?

In the end, I couldn't hide my doubt and ask why people believe in the God of Light.

The answers come from all over the conference room.

“He is cute.”

“Because of his loveliness.”

“And his divine magic is amazing.”

“I think it is because the nature of the God of Light is a fresh shock to those who are used to the religions of the earth.”

Somehow I think that the first two reasons are the main reasons, but I decide to move on.

I don't deny the benefits of religion.

Religion can become a great moral support for the challengers who are trapped in the tutorial.

The world is full of monsters, even if you leave.

Indeed, it is natural to search for a God who exists in a world where God's salvation is needed.

Although I am surprised that the object of worship is the God of Light.

The discussion about the God of light reminds me of the fireworks.

“Oh? really? It’s good to know that you love it. In fact, that was just a rehearsal. The formal fireworks festival will start tonight according to the arrangement.”

Most of the challengers on the Japanese service side are looking forward to the event, explains bearded uncle.

The uncle seems to have been trying to bring some entertainment and happiness to the challengers.

That’s probably why he gets along so well with Kim Min Hyuk.

I also mention the shame of the God of Light at the end of fireworks.

The Japanese believers of the God of Light are calm and don’t lose their temper, instead of nod and smile joyfully.

Their smiles makes me a little upset.

The meeting is finishing up anyway.

After thinking about it, it would be better to tell them.

“That... The religion I mentioned earlier.”

“Em? Do you have other questions?”

It is okay to believe in religion.

The problem is that they don’t know the nature of God.

I’m afraid that when they finally understand the nature of God, they would be trapped in a situation where they can’t escape.

“It’s a good thing to worship God, but I hope you will restrain yourself from trying to get close to them.”

“May I know why?”

“Well... The biggest difference between the religions on earth and the gods here is accessibility.”

“That’s true.”

People can confirm and feel God’s existence at close range through the messages God sends to them in the tutorial.

Although these gods aren’t physically close, they give the feeling of being close.

Thus a group of believers will sprout.

They want to be closer to God.

“There will be people who aren’t satisfied with their status as believers, so they try to be apostles or subordinates of the Gods.”

I’ve seen this type of person many times in the course of the clearing the 40-49th floors.

There are countless people who intend to let go of all the troubles in the world in order to be subordinates of the Gods.

As the God of Slow once said.

“We have to stop it.”

“Well... Can I ask why? I think it’s personal freedom, not something we can ban or control.”

“The problem is that we know nothing about the nature of God, especially the God of Light.”

The God of Light is mentioned once again and the Japanese challengers who look like believers show their displeasure.

I ask them.

“What do you know about the God of Light?”

He likes glittering things.

He likes explosions.

He’s cute.

The answers are all like these.

“That’s one-sided. You don’t know what the God of Light represents. When we think about light we often think about sunlight or light itself. For us, light has a positive significance like illuminating the world or driving out darkness.”

“Is that so?”

“Our knowledge of light is limited to what is available on earth. But what light is in the universe can be completely different. According to the Gods’ interpretation, light can be both good and bad.”

The challengers become silent. I continue.

“The most dangerous thing is that the light contains the concept of brightness according to the definition of the God of Light, which involves relativity. Brightness no longer determined by an absolute value, but by the contrast. In this case, it will be a very dangerous thing to be an apostle of the God of light.”

I explain to those who do not understand the relationship between God and relativity.

I’m explaining, and Kim MinHyuk next to me says something in a low voice.

“What’s wrong?”

“Er... One of our people who wants to be an apostle of the God of Light.”

“Who?”

“Lee Joon Suk.”

Ah... That guy, he’s the blitz wizard.

Chapter 223

The Tournament (23)

“If it’s as you said, then Lee Joon Suk might be in trouble.”

Kim MinHyuk lowers his head and whispers.

Kim MinHyuk words remind me that Lee Joon Suk’s main skill is lightning.

He is one of the top contenders on South Korean server.

He’s been a high profile rookie since the inception of the Tutorial, as people expected, he’s been growing rapidly.

He would indeed get a reaction from the God of Light every time he launches his skill.

I answered that I understood.

I’ll have to talk to him alone after the meeting.

I turn back to others in the conference room.

It will take too long to tell them everything I understood about the Gods and I wasn’t sure what I knew the correct.

But I should at least be warn them at a minimum.

So I chose a topic that would alarm them the most.

“Think about it. The God of light is a God who enjoys explosions, so if a bomb explodes in the center of the city, he would not mourn for the death of the people.”

The Japanese believers express their displeasure.

Their facial expressions makes me uncomfortable.

“Admit it. The laws and morals we know don’t matter to Gods.”

Of course, God can’t interfere with us.

There has never been a sign of God on earth.

The communication between God and challengers is also limited to messages and receiving powers from them through divine spells.

“That’s something we humans need to cope with and guard against. If an incident breaks out, a message saying that the God of Light is pleased will shock the believers, but it won’t break their contact with God.”

The bearded uncle retorts.

“The problem... it’s not the Gods, but the people who want to imitate God. As I’ve said before, people like that will surely appear.”

“Could you explain it a little more?”

I decide to explain it to him in detail.

“There will be a lunatic who becomes more and more like the God he worships because of their way of thinking until they finally identify themselves with a God. For example, although the God of Light likes explosion, he doesn’t purposely create explosions. But he’ll become excited when an explosion does happen.”

Clearing my throat, I continue.

“It’s the lunatics that will cause explosions everywhere to gain the favor of God. Furthermore, they can become delusional and start regarding themselves to be a God or the incarnation of God, worsening the issue.”

It is especially dangerous for superhuman challengers.

If such lunatics have a certain level of strength.

And if a lunatic clears the tutorial and leaves.

Uncontrollable damages will occur.

I've seen this kind of person many times throughout clearing the 40th floors.

My own experiences is an example.

Those are the lunatics who judge and kill people while claiming to be God's spokesman or slaughter livestock as offerings to God.

So many maniacs.

Although not as extreme, there are also many people who just want to imitate the Gods they worship.

I've seen this outside the 40th floors.

For example, the empire on the 26th floor that worshipped the God of the Sky.

The Demon King on the 35th floor who worshipped the God of harvest.

The Great Mother cultivated a race that sacrifices their relatives to all the people in the world to become an apostle of the God of Goodwill...

"It's not religion that's dangerous. Given the situation in the tutorial, religions will play a positive role in many cases. However, there are always a few dangerous lunatics."

The biggest problem is that we can't get rid of the maniacs who have been completely blinded by their religion or God simply because they

have dangerous ideas.

Because that's their belief and justice.

The challengers are distributed on different levels of the tutorial, so the believers can't preserve order.

"Well....."

I told the bearded uncle who seemed to be in deep thought.

"I hope you can handle it well. It's not something I should be involved in nor am I interested in it."

The bearded uncle nods.

"Thanks for your advice, I've noted it."

Subsequential topics in the meeting did not interest me...

There were some topics I understood, but I didn't intervene since they handled it themselves.

After the meeting, only Kim MinHyuk and I are left in the conference room. I pulled out the matter I wanted to ask.

"As far as I know, Lee Joon Suk is very capable and wouldn't fool around."

If Lee Joon Suk is receiving the attention of the God of Light and getting his abilities acknowledged, Kim MinHyuk would not have specifically mentioned it.

"It is true. But..."

Kim MinHyuk briefly explains.

Lee Joon Suk certainly doesn't have to worry about it as he is still a promising prospective star.

As a hard difficulty challenger, it's not usual to worry about your strength.

But his situation is much more serious since his level exceeds the potential of the stages.

"To what extent?"

"His level is second only to you."

"What about Jong-sik?"

As far as I know, Park Jong-sik is a leader of the Order of Vigilance and a top challenger in hard difficulty stages.

I remember because Park Jong-sik brought Lee Jong Suk when we met before.

"That guy has been overtaken long ago. Although I am not sure, there is probably a huge gap between them."

Is that so?

Park Jong sik's time with the Order of Vigilance may have delayed his growth.

"Even if it's not related to Gods, his overall behavior is disturbing."

"What?"

"He has a tendency to judge people by their strength. More importantly, it's suspected that he instigated the public opinion in the community to support this idea."

If Kim Min Hyuk said that, it means he may have been at odds or had conflicts with others.

Well... the solution isn't difficult.

“I’ll fix him before the tournament ends.”

I didn’t think Lee Joon Suk had personality problems.

I’ve met him several times and even talked with him. I have never felt anything strange about him.

It seems that attitude sprouted naturally because his growth was too swift, widening the gap between him and others, causing him to look down on them.

Just tell him that he is no more powerful than others or that he is nothing special, his pride will easily sink.

Of course, you have to torture him to get that message across.

“Thank you.”

“So are you done?”

Kim MinHyuk shakes his head.

“I’ll be busy until night. I’ll have a meeting with Australian side after they’ve arranged the accommodations.”

Oh, them.

I’d better stay out of his meeting with the Australians.

I think a lot of those people are still uncomfortable looking at me.

“Okay. The person who brought you here just now will send you to the dormitory. Take a good rest. I’ll stop by in the evening.”

I affirmatively nod.

I’m about to leave when I suddenly remember one more thing to ask Kim MinHyuk.

“The people are a little unusual.”

“What are you talking about?”

“They don’t fear me.”

Of course, those who’ve been in the tutorial since the beginning still fear me, but those who’ve joined recently treat me like a normal person.

In the past, the new challengers would be weary of me after hearing about my hype , but now it’s different.

“Of course, we’re all working hard to beautify your public image.”

“What, that’s all?”

“Hired supporters. Just give them some points and they will make comments to stir up the community and turn the public opinion towards the direction we want.”

“Hey, why do you do that? It’s not the NIS.”

Note: NIS is used in the raw. It’s an acronym for the National Intelligence service. – GodlyCash

“Are we better than the NIS?”

Kim MinHyuk replies with a chuckle.

I look at him and shake my head.

“It’s a fact that your notoriety will fade away with time. It’s because you only periodically displayed your strength so your terror will fade with time. What’s more, the overall level of challengers has improved. As an object of comparison, you no longer appear in front of the public. The most important thing is that other members such as Jung

Ah also have notoriety, which means that they have split your share. Those hired supports are just confusing the public.”

After listening to Kim MinHyuk’s explanation, I think it made sense.

With nothing more to ask, I get up and leave.

I shake my head at the sight of Kim Min Hyuk taking over piles of documents from the inventory after he bid me farewell.

An incomprehensible passion.

The allocated dormitory is as narrow as before with only one bed and table.

I am told that there are some larger and more luxurious rooms, but the Order of Vigilance allocated the lowest class rooms for the officials to maintain fairness.

I like the room and don’t care about whether it is good or bad, so I just take it.

I left the frog in front of the dormitory.

I can see the frog squatting in front of the dormitory through the window of the 2nd floor.

[keeeekkeek!]

The frog turns around. Maybe he heard the window open.

That’s cute because it’s like a dog.

If only the head was not a frog.

Leaning against the window frame, I open the inventory.

I pull out Ahboobooboo who was imprisoned for spitting out rude remarks.

Ahbooboo is very sad, so I comfort him for a while.

When he's in a better mood, I ask.

"Release a blessing in the room."

[Why do you suddenly want a blessing?]

"To experiment with my solidified poison ki."

The stabilization of my poison ki crystal is nearing completion.

It's not complete enough to give to other challengers, but it's enough for me to use.

You can bury the solidified poison and use it as a booby trap, it works well as a grenade too.

Work on the crystal focused on changing its shape and reducing its size.

My devoted hard work causes the time to fly and soon it's evening.

After eating the food from my inventory which served as dinner, I resume my study on poison ki crystal.

After a few hours, someone knocks on my door.

I am concentrating so I don't check who is outside the room.

"Come in."

I thought that Kim MinHyuk would come in, but it's Park Jung Ah instead.

I smile at her.

"Long time no see."

Park Jung Ah smiles and says yes.

“Kim MinHyuk will come later. He says that I lack common sense and intends to teach me. Why don’t we just call Jung-sik too and have a drink together?”

Park Jung Ah shakes her head.

“He’s not coming.”

“Huh?”

“He’s coming. I told him not to come.”

“Hm?”

Park Jung Ah mocks Kim MinHyuk by saying that he sometimes has no insight.

Then she comes towards me with a smile.

Park Jung Ah grabs my collar without scruple, noticing her hand movements, I understood what she wanted.

Was this her personality?

Yes, it is.

“Wait a moment.”

I pull my hand before Park Jung Ah touches it.

I say to her who seemed very puzzled.

“We haven’t seen each other in a while, let’s catch up first.....”

“What? Why?”

I needed to explain the situation to Park Jung Ah who is wide-eyed and embarrassed.

Park Jung Ah looks hurt to see me avoiding her.

It was just a simple step back, but it seems to have a drastically different meaning to her.

My instincts warned me to convince her as soon as possible.

I explain my poison ki skill like rap fired from a machine gun.

Tell her how dangerous and contagious the poison ki skill I've been studying is.

"Then... you don't hate me. right?"

Yes, of course.

I nod vigorously.

Park Jung Ah told me that when I stepped back, she thought I had changed my mind because I hadn't seen her for a long time, so she felt very uneasy.

She also said that I went to Kim Min Hyuk first and then towards the dormitory directly as if she was sadly the only one looking forward to our meeting.

If thought that way, that's true.

Although I've recently talked a lot, I was unintentionally ignoring her so I apologized.

Fortunately, Park Jung Ah eases and beams her smile again.

Then she asks me to wait a while and suddenly sprints out the room.

[Is this warrior your lover?]

“Yes.”

[My God, so it turns out that warriors can love, but I can't. It gives a real sense of how absurd the world is.]

“If you spout bullshit again, I'll throw you into inventory.”

However, Ahbooboo only laughs at my threat.

[She's back, the warrior of love! So she hurried to get that, she's quite adorable.]

Before I could ask Ahbooboo what he meant, Park Jung Ah swings open the door.

I immediately understand Ahbooboo's words.

Park Jung Ah has a large glass bottle in her hand.

She puts the glass bottle on the desk and speaks.

“This is a superlative elixir. It doesn't matter, right?”

After that, Park Jung Ah comes straight to me so I speak in a hurry.

“Jung Ah, how expensive is that elixir is? Why don't we just wait a few days.....”

Before I finish speaking, she pushes me down to the bed.

Park Jung Ah is clearly weaker than me, but for some reason, I cannot resist.

Was this her original personality?

Yes, it is.

“Now keep your mouth shut. Oh wait, don't shut your mouth, leave it

open and stay still.”

[Oh my lord.....]

Chapter 224

The Tournament (24)

“Cough! Cough!”

Coughs mixed with whines fills the room.

Kim Min Hyuk sighs at the sight.

“Is that OK?”

All eyes turn towards Park Jung Ah in bed.

Park Jung Ah is hiding under the blanket with a face reddened from a cold.

“Don’t worry. You don’t have to mind it since you can’t even do that.”

According to the symptoms of my poison, this is what happens near the end of the recovery period.

If it was truly serious, it would be hemoptysis instead of just coughing.

Past that would be death.

“Well, she’s not a newbie, it’s the first time I’ve seen a 70th floor challenger catch a cold.”

Park Jong-sik says.

That’s right.

Even easy difficulty challengers become immune to mild colds once they’ve passed the 20th floor.

In addition, Park Jung Ah has put a significant effort training her resistance skills such as Poison Resistance because of assassination threats.

“Why don’t you send her to a better room first?”

Park Jong-sik made a conjecture.

Would that be better?

“It’s okay.”

Park Jung Ah’s hoarse voice is heard from within the blanket.

What’s there to do if she says it’s fine?

“Then we’ll leave. Thanks to a certain someone, we’ve become busier. Please take care of her for a few days.”

“Alright, I have nothing to do anyway.”

They reminded Park Jung Ah to take care of herself and then bid farewell.

As they leave, Kim MinHyuk sends a message to me.

[Kim Min Hyuk,30th floor: Jung Ah may feel sorry for us and insist on getting up. You make sure she rests as long as possible. Just take a week off.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 50th floor: Aren’t you flooded with work now?]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Yes, but not that much. Take this opportunity to give her a break.]

Kim Min Hyuk tells me that Park Jung Ah always pushes herself on a daily basis.

Her perfectionism had exhausted the people around her, although

things have recently improved, she's still harsh on herself.

Kim Min Hyuk also says it's worrying because even though she doesn't exhaust the people around her, she is still too cruel to herself.

[Lee Ho Jae, 50th Floor: Okay. There's a good medicine for that.]

[Kim MinHyuk, 30th Floor:... I don't know what it is, but I'm anxious.]

I spot Kim Min Hyuk and Park Jong-sik walking outside the dormitory building through the window.

I wave to them when they look towards the window, then sat down beside the bed.

Park Jung Ah's face peaks out from hiding within the blankets.

"I told you to wait a few days."

She hides in the blanket again.

"...Sorry."

Don't say that.

I open the blanket and put my hand on Park Jung Ah's forehead.

If a normal person had such a high fever , they'd be sent to the emergency room immediately, but it's not so serious for Park Jung Ah.

She'll be fine after some medicine and a nap.

"Ahbooboo, release another blessing. The previous one is no longer effective."

[Okay.....]

Ahbooboo replies.

He's been like this since last night.

The talkative Ahbooboo had become gloomy at some point.

[Hey, what's wrong?]

[It's nothing... Just a little uncomfortable.]

This bastard is a sword isn't he?

[Hey, look at Seregia. She hasn't said anything. No agitation, as silent as always.]

[Actually, I was also a little shocked yesterday.]

The quiet Seregia suddenly spoke.

Ah, you were shocked too?

[Yes. Warrior, is this the way the world is?]

Seregia asks

That's unusual.

[What?]

[Nothing...]

Somehow Seregia seems gloomy too.

Ahbooboo says she wants to be the plant in the fishbowl while floating around in the air. I scold him and tell him to release the blessing.

The scent of poison that has been vaguely lingering around the nose

disappears.

“Haven’t you harmed yourself or something lately?”

The still Park Jung Ah asks.

I nod.

“It’s been a while. What’s up?”

“Nothing... I am just asking. I’m afraid I’m getting in your way.”

She’s asking me if she’s taking up my training time.

Of course not.

I came to the tournament with thoughts of taking a rest for a while.

If the schedule was really tight, I would’ve already returned to the stages by now.

“It’s amazing. I’m always busy accelerating my growth.”

“I’m doing it now.”

“Yeah?”

Training is always a must.

I’m adjusting aura in midair while chatting with her.

“Then... Even last night? ”

“...Of course not last night. That’s dangerous.”

[It is.]

[It’s awesome.]

I ignore Seregia and Ahbooboo are particularly in sync today.

Dealing with aura is different from playing with clay.

A mistake during its operation could lead to a disaster.

I don't know what Park Jung Ah is happy about, she is laughing

It is good to see her laugh.

I take the herbal powder from the inventory, put it in a bowl, and mix it with water.

Fortunately, it was grounded in advance.

When the powder is completely dissolved, I hand the bowl to Park Jung Ah.

“Drink it.”

“My sense of smell tells me not to drink it.”

“It's good for you. Drink it quickly.”

Park Jung Ah drinks it in one breath.

It should taste like hell because it's far too bitter.

As expected, Park Jung Ah's face crumples up and coughs.

I quickly take out another drink from my inventory for her.

I've drunk it before, so I know how nauseous it is.

“What's this?”

“An herb called Sanguncho.”

This is the herb used by Myong Myong when I was poisoned.

In addition to detoxification, it has a sleep effect. It is the perfect herbal medicine.

I saw it in the store so I bought some.

“You’ll fall asleep for a while. You’ll feel better when you wake up.”

“Sleep?”

“Yes.”

She won’t sleep for days like me.

I adjusted the dosage.

She’ll only sleep a day or two so she can get up and eat...

Maybe.

I move the chair to the bedside and wait for Park Jung Ah to fall asleep.

It’s been a long time since I looked after someone like this.

It’s the first time since I’ve looked after Myong Myong.

“I don’t feel sleepy.”

Park Jung Ah says.

I can see her trying to keep her eyes open in order not to fall asleep.

It’s clear she’s drowsy.

Park Jung Ah asks me to talk to her.

I ask her wanted to hear. She says she wants to hear about what happened since the end of the last tournament.

I decided to talk about what happened to me as I cleared the 40th-49th stages.

I had many stories to tell because those stages were different since I met many people instead of constantly slaying monsters.

These stories might be interesting for Park Jung Ah and can help her in various ways.

As I talk, Park Jung Ah falls asleep.

She tried everything to avoid sleep like biting her mouth or pinching her legs, but lethargy eventually consumes her.

I properly cover her in the blanket.

I get up from the chair and head to the window.

There was a lot of disturbance outside just now...

Because of the frog monster in front of the front door of the dormitory.

A frog is sitting in front of the building where people pass frequently would definitely will cause a stir.

That guy is frozen like a haetae statue.

People probably knew the frog would truly not attack or hurt them so they watched and touched it.

Fortunately, no one attacks it.

It's like watching animals at a zoo.

I can see that people have changed a lot nowadays.

Compared to before.

They no longer have a kind of ruthlessness...

Although they haven't reached my level, I felt that everyone was tumbling over dangers in the past.

Everyone stayed sharp and built mental walls against each other.

I knew that breaking those walls was the goal of the Order of Vigilance and Kim Min Hyuk, but it is strange to see people so docile.

It looks like another world.

"Frog."

[keeekkeeek!]

I call the frog over the window and it answers immediately.

This guy is more dog than frog.

It's usually a person's mind that determines their identity rather than their physical bodies, but this guy doesn't seem like that...

"Roll around."

The frog begins to roll around at my command.

It doesn't roll casually, but follows the movement of the man I had tortured before...

People seem to have fun watching the frog.

Those are the same reactions to seeing a little dog performing tricks on his master's instructions.

[Why are you abusing the poor frog again?]

[It's not abuse. It's an effective exercise.]

Of course, it will cause some muscle pain afterwards.

That's because it doesn't exercise normally, so it can't be helped.

I stop the frog threw it some meat chunks from my inventory.

The frog begins to eat.

I'm worried about whether I should've given it worms instead of meat.

People seem to enjoy watching the frog eat the meat.

This makes me feel like a dolphin keeper.

They ask if they can feed the frog.

I reply that it is okay so long as the food is not harmful to the frog.

In fact, I don't know what is harmful to it, but the frog should be able to distinguish edible food.

People take all kinds of food from their inventory and give it to the frog.

The frog refuses food with strong fragrances, but eats lots of raw meat and vegetables.

[How surprising.]

“What?”

[You get along with people better than I thought. Is it because you're all fellow countrymen?]

“Hard to say.”

I don't think so.

I recall when I met people in the past.

It was during second tournament.

I was nervous at that time.

I was afraid I would never get along with others.

I was afraid that I would be a loner even after returning to earth from tutorial.

My psychology at the time was to get along with others, I didn't want to be different from them...

I didn't want to leave the tutorial anymore.

Naturally, I lost my passion to grow and to clear the floors. I became more comfortable with the status quo.

Maybe in my heart, I intended to fail the stages.

[How about now?]

Ahbooboo reads my thoughts again.

Next time you meet kirikiri, ask her what happened.

"It's different. The distance between me and them is much further now than then."

Although I think the distance between me and the public is getting further, it's interesting to see that Ahbooboo thinks it the opposite.

[How...?]

How are we becoming further apart?

It's difficult to explain.

After pondering for a while, I decide to use my attitude towards the people in the stages as an example.

"I used to treat people in the stages different from those I met here. That's because they're actually different types of people."

They are not the same.

Even if I can get along with the people in the stages, They will eventually leave me.

In Idy's words, they are imprisoned.

However, there was an exception on the 18th floor after the end of the tournament.

I was very discouraged at that time.

[How about now?]

"The same. I treat them the same way. Because they are not different."

So I gradually became alienated from people.

I treat the people I meet in the stages and the other challengers the same way.

I can laugh and converse with people I meet in the stages.

I can eat with them, understand them, and resonate with them.

Under the condition that it doesn't negatively impact me.

Even now.

The sound of someone turning over came from the bed behind me.

[But you don't seem to treat people that way.]

[Of course. I'm human too. Even if I only meet people once or twice a year, there will be people who are more welcoming]

[Is that so? Those people should really be thanked.]

[Yes.]

Chapter 225

The Tournament (25)

Before heading out, I check my clothes and subspace bags.

Nothing is missing.

“Are you going out?”

Park Jung Ah asks me while lying in bed.

Park Jung Ah is still bedridden after a week.

This is taking longer than I expected.

I made a miscalculation because I’ve never experimented on anyone aside from myself. Park Jung Ah has also been pushing herself before this which had caused a lot of stress and fatigue.

“Um. I’ll be late today because I have things to take care of.”

I’ve been consistently patrolling daily, but today I’ll return late.

I took the wet towel on Park Jung Ah’s forehead and replaced it with a new one.

“Do you want me to buy anything before I return?”

There are many small street vendors near the dormitory.

Even though there was contention in the previous tournament, the Japanese are conducting their business in earnest...

After their business became prosperous, Koreans and Australians

followed suit and began to sell their own food.

Food quality improved as a result of the rising business competitions...

Points were used as a form of currency and the food was inexpensive so even newbies can afford them.

Park Jung Ah told me to buy as much as I want.

I exit the room after saying that I understand...

[Is it time to finally start some shit?]

This is the first thing Ahbooboo asks right as I leave the room...

“Start some shit? What did I do?”

Ahbooboo doesn't answer.

His silences strangely makes me feel bad.

[keeeeeek!]

The frog happily greets me as I exit the front door of the dormitory.

“Ah, Good morning.”

I walk along the main road with the frog in tow.

I feel like I'm walking a large dog.

Many people played with the frog during our walk.

Some were Koreans and others were foreigners.

The frog has become a small celebrity among the challengers in this residential area shared by challengers from the South Korean,

Australian, and Japanese servers...

It's a monster, it doesn't attack people, you can feed it, it can respond to you, it's absurd.

No one would hate that.

"Frog!"

[keeeek !]

A girl from from a distance calls the frog who in turn responds to her vehemently.

The frog is quite famous.

So I've also become famous.

As the owner of a cute frog.....

My public image has become quite different.

We arrive at a huge square after continuing along the street for a while.

There are two portals on this square.

One is connected to the residential areas of challengers from other countries, the other is an entrance to the tournament.

This tournament has attracted challengers from all countries on earth.

The tournament is huge because the tutorial system has summoned players from every country to participate.

Not all servers and residential areas are as peaceful as ours.

There are also some dangerous servers.

Some residential areas have conflicts between each server while other residential areas have different alliance factions in strife with each other.

Some of them are in discord because of past or recent international situations that happened on earth.

An example of this would be the relationship between North and South Korean servers.

Fortunately, there is no real war between them.

Regardless, there's a monster crisis ongoing on earth, The players gathered here are key figures who can deal with the situation and bring hope back home.

Some servers say that they'll stop any bloodshed at all cost.

The American server is a prominent example of this...

Some servers are trying to mediate disputes, while others are establishing military alliances with other servers to prepare for war.

Those servers vowed to war if something happened to their allies which in turn made it difficult for others to wage wars.

This is the case with Latin America, West Asia, and the Middle East.

South Korean server policy adheres to the idea that so long as the rules are not violated, they will not initiate an attack.

I have never united with any other country whose alliances were in constant turmoil.

South Korea was accused of being stubborn at the joint conference involving the nations of the world. But our delegate, Mr. Kim, left them only one sentence: "We have a player who has reached the 50th floor of Hell difficulty".

That's me.

As a result, other servers became very grateful for the South Korean server's noninvolvement policy.

Since then, Korean server has been recognized a neutral area so joint conferences are held every day in the Korean residential area.

Not only that, other servers seem to have learned that the South Korean server has a safe residential area so many people who live in dangerous areas come over...

They bought street food, some would even move here.

As the population grew, so did the street market in the area.

The center of the city is starting to resemble a shopping mall. No matter where you go, it's crowded and bustling.

Although everyone welcomed this atmosphere, the leaders of South Korea, Japan, and Australia are very busy maintaining security everyday.

"Hyung! Here you are!"

There is a man shouting at me from a corner of the square.

It's Lee Hyung Jin.

It's inconvenient to walk around with a big frog in tow in the bustling square.

Somehow, I successfully reach Lee Hyung Jin.

"Hyung, let's get in. The others are waiting."

As Lee Hyung Jin said that, I enter the tournament stage through the portal.

[You have entered the Tournament Stage – The Field of Survival.]

The Field of Survival.

It's the stage with the most challengers recently.

However, it's not quite the same as the 12th-floor of Hell difficulty where a person must survive in extreme conditions.

Ten teams who enter the field of survival must capture instance dungeons every hour while the system calculates and ranks their cumulative points.

With each ranking, the team with the lowest score will be eliminated.

Only the team that maintains the highest score until the end wins the rewards.

Many players prefer this because it's safer than other stages allowing them challenge with ease and have the chance to win even with relatively weak power.

When I move to the waiting room, I find three people were waiting ahead of me.

Some I know and some I don't know.

“Hyung, it's been a while.”

“Yes.”

Lee Joon Suk greets me first with an energetic face.

I'm here because of him and Lee Hyung Jin so it's natural that he greets me.

There's another person I know.

It's Lee Jin, the person I met as soon as I entered the tournament.

“We meet again!”

Lee Jin is very happy to see me again.

I respond moderately.

Lee Jin asks me what I’ve been doing recently.

I roughly answer and turn to Lee Joon Suk.

“How do you know each other?”

Although I want to ask why Lee Jin is here, I have to be a little more tactful.

Lee Joon Suk tells me that he met Lee Jin while patrolling the streets and became friends.

I began to see how this situation was drawn after listening to him.

The spot that Lee Joon Suk is standing on makes me uncomfortable.

He ambiguously stands in the range of my attack.

I don’t know if this guy knows that his life is at the mercy of my sword.

Of course not.

Anyways, that’s how I interpreted it from my point of view, but objectively he actually quietly squeezed between me and Lee Jin...

It’s clear what this position means.

After a few pleasantries, I turn to the last person.

A Western looking man offers to shake hands with me.

“I’m John Overton.”

The man introduces himself as an American server challenger.

I notice that neither Lee Joon Suk or Lee Hyung Jin knew that this man was joining us.

“I’ve gained permission from the Korean Order of Vigilance. I know it’s impolite to join you without talking to you in advance, but I wanted to join you here to witness your capabilities.

It seems more impolite to state that he wants to see my capabilities rather than to join us in silence.

Before I say something, I ponder if I should persuade him to go away or just walk away ourselves.

He shouldn’t have come here because he doesn’t believe that I’ve reached the 50th-floor of Hell Difficulty.

The system should’ve sent a message long ago authenticating my achievement...

“I’m also a challenger of Hell Difficulty.”

“Which floor?”

“6th floor.”

Ah.....

Lee Hyung Jin and I both show sympathy.

It’s a very difficult stage.

I openly accept John Overton joining us.

[The 1st round begins.]

[Please choose the difficulty of the Instance dungeon.]

The list of dungeons are shown on the information windows.

A dungeon's difficulty is marked by the number of stars.

No accurate value is displayed, so it is impossible to know how difficult each star represents.

“Even rankers of hard difficulty are hard pressed to pass 4 stars.”

Lee Joon Suk seems to have cleared a dungeon before.

“Yes. In addition, My best performance reached a 5.5 stars dungeon.”

It feels a little awkward to look at the proud Lee Joon Suk.

There are 10 star dungeons on the information window.

He only succeeded in clearing half of the stage.

I'm disappointed with his satisfaction at attaining a meager result with no intentions of going further.

He should attempt higher difficulty levels since he still has room for improvement.

And finally I have a chance to tackle this stage with Lee Hyung Jin.

So why bring along Lee Jin?

There is no need to evaluate Lee Jin's strength.

She can't be counted as a combat strength at all.

I don't understand Lee Joon Suk's intention to bring her, but it's a pity.

I ask the experienced Lee Joon Suk to choose a dungeon with a moderate difficulty.

There is no need to challenge the highest difficulty immediately.

I also have to monitor Lee Joon Suk's and Lee Hyung Jin's fights.

Lee Joon Suk chooses a dungeon with a difficulty of 3.5 stars.

[Please wait patiently for other teams to make their choice.]

A 10 minute wait time is displayed above.

The system provides much more time for consideration than I thought.

Since there's nothing to do, we begin to talk to pass time.

John Overton and I naturally talk about Hell Difficulty.

"Yes. Fortunately, there is a person who is close to my floor. He is on the 11th floor."

In addition to John Overton challenging 6th floor, there is also a challenger on the 11th floor in the American server.

"He's been bottlenecked on the 11th floor for a long time. It's a stage where you have to find something."

"Ah, knocking down the wall behind Ji Jeo Wang's throne will reveal a secret space. Please tell your friend next time."

Lee Hyung Jin recently passed the 11th floor so he reveals the answer.

I recall that fact after listening to him.

We soon get close to John Overtonn.

He became a precious friend who we can share and resonate stories

about Hell Difficulty with.

“What is the most challenging obstacle you’ve encountered in Hell Difficulty?”

John Overton asks.

“There’s a lot, but I think the most challenging obstacle for me is the 1st floor boss room.”

“Yes. Although I have heard about it in advance, it was still speechless when I faced it. Since I didn’t have enough courage to resist Hell Difficulty so I tried to escape through the door, but it wouldn’t open...”

“Yes. Hahahaha. I knock down the door, but it didn’t even budge.”

Anyone who has seen the lava pond in the 1st floor boss room will resonate with this.

Standing on a stone bridge just over shimmering lava is a completely different experience from just reading about it in a message...

“The 4th floor boss room dropped me on a mountain without saying anything. I didn’t know which way the Goblin King was so I accidentally went in the opposite direction when descending the mountain. I wandered the hillside for 4 days until I located a fortress that lead me to the other goblins.”

Lee Hyung Jin and I both laugh at John Overton’s confession and comfort him.

I recall how perturbed I was since I was suddenly sent to an open mountain from a confined space.

“But I was very happy then. I was on the verge of mental collapse at that time. I was able to progress alone to 3rd floor, but I was suddenly asked to kill goblins on the 4th floor. I felt better after being able to see the moon and sunrise outside.”

“Yes, me too.”

I nod and expressed sympathy with them.

Despite the fact that I was focused on killing goblins at that time, I remembered the admiring the wonderful night sky.

“Are there absurd or quirky things on the other stages?”

“A lot. Tell your friend on the 11th floor to buy a subspace bag filled with food and toilet paper before entering the 12th floor. The Inventory cannot be opened in the 12th floor.”

“Inventory?”

“Yes. I was prepared and suffered less because of a Hyung’s warning. However, there are way too many oversized bugs.”

“I had a different problem. I went in naked of any preparations. I’ve had a lot of trouble trying to take a shit...”

Once the conversation ball started rolling, all the things I kept in my heart began pouring out.

It was fun to complain to each other about the disgusting designs of Hell Difficulty.

It’s like drinking with friends and complaining about the hardships of military service.

Lee Joon Suk and Lee Jin are really close to each other, but we are too immersed in the conversation to pay them any heed.

Chapter 226

The Tournament (26)

“Good idea.”

“Yes, it is.”

John Overton asked me to organize a gathering of Hell Difficulty challengers to hold various discussions about Hell Difficulty.

It is definitely a good proposal.

The gathering would bring great help to those suffering alone as Hell Difficulty challengers in the servers of other countries.

Just like me, both Lee Hyung Jin and John Overton enjoy talking to each other.

What they need is empathy.

It would be beneficial for the people trapped on the 1st floor of Hell Difficulty.

Most challengers of Hell Difficulty are stuck on the 1st floor just trying to survive.

They think they are completely different beings from me and Lee Hyung Jin.

They treat me and Lee Hyung Jin like mutated geniuses to justify their stagnant behavior.

I wonder if they would gain some motivation if they see people besides us challenging Hell Difficulty.

There must be challengers on the 1st floor in other servers, so communicating with them may improve their lives.

I should seek Kim Min Hyuk for advice.

The event is in everyone's interest.

The suffering challengers from servers of various countries can improve their mental state by gathering together, but there are other purposes as well.

No one knows when conflicts between servers will erupt.

Although the tournament will come to an end soon, we still need a way to alleviate or eliminate these conflicts.

We don't know when the next tournament is and, most of all, the situation may be the same outside the tutorial.

And at the center of that discord are the challengers of Hell Difficulty.

Even if the main force in every server are the Hard Difficulty rankers, Hell Difficulty challengers can't be ruled out as combatants.

Even if they are in the minority, their potential cannot be ignored because they challenged the highest difficulty.

It is of great significance for these people to unite with each other since they will play a leading role in political conflicts.

I'm at the top of the Hell Difficulty challengers.

With me as a symbol, it's not unreasonable to host a party just for Hell Difficulty challengers.

And it wouldn't be hard to convince the other server's Hell Difficulty challengers to gather together.

They'd all be eager to get some information.

So long as they want to avoid death and continue progressing, they'll definitely want to learn from my experiences and know-how.

Just like John Overton right now.

I can easily subdue any disturbance that may happen at the party so it wouldn't be a risky venture.

The proposal is completely beneficial in many ways.

Obviously I can't do it alone, so I'll put this matter on the agenda and ask others for their suggestions.

"Ha ha!"

Lee Joon Suk's voice comes from afar.

And then there is the sound of something breaking.

"You really work hard."

Lee Hyung Jin says.

Somehow he doesn't seem as friendly as his words sound.

His tone is curt.

"I feel the same way."

Said John Overton.

His words might have a double meaning for some reason.

While we were talking, Lee Joon Suk focused on the instance dungeon.

He wasn't like this at first.

No, on second thought, he was like that at first.

As soon as the stage starts and enemy monsters appear, me and the other Hell Difficulty challengers quietly step back.

Unlike us, Lee Joon Suk charges swiftly forward the moment he sees the monsters because he will handle this battle alone.

Although it's considered cowardly to leave the fight to your teammates, Lee Hyung Jin and John Overton receive this willingly.

I understand them.

No matter how feeble the enemies in the front look, there is no need to unnecessarily waste energy...

You never know when an unexpected threat will come.

This is how we survived and we'll do the same in the future.

I step back to watch Lee Joon Suk and Lee Hyung Jin fight.

Lee Joon Suk fights alone, not only because of us poor Hell Difficulty challengers, but for another reason as well.

It's the female challenger named Lee Jin that he brought along.

Looking at Lee Joon Suk who is exaggerating his skills against enemies that can be easily subdued, his intentions can be easily guessed...

"He'll die an early death if he continues like this."

Lee Hyung Jin mutters.

That's no way to talk about a colleague who is pushing himself ahead.

I ask in a tone of surprise when I hear those harsh words.

“Do you hate him?”

“Absolutely.”

His quick response rivals that of a robot.

I ask John, who is nodding.

“You too?”

“Of course I do.”

I’m surprised that even John Overton hates him despite being from a foreign server.

I ask them what kind of history they have, but it was brushed off as nothing.

Then I ask why if there is no history.

“It’s not just him, all Hard Difficulty challengers are bastards. “

“It’s more annoying since that behavior is typical for Hard Difficulty challengers.”

Both Lee Hyung Jin and John Overton spoke their minds.

The issue isn’t their personal feelings, but the overall public image of Hard Difficulty challengers.

I continue to inquire.

“I don’t like them. They are far too arrogant. The level of Hard Difficulty can only be taken with a grain of salt. “

“Yes, it’s clear that instance dungeons are not very dangerous, but they act like they’ve miraculously survived.”

That seems to be a common feature among Hard Difficulty challengers.

If even John Overton said that, the same could be true for other servers.

There are some people among the Hard Difficulty challengers who love to show off their superiority.

It's a characteristic that everyone knows about, causing the Order of Vigilance to be concerned about this problem.

According to the Order of Vigilance, Hard Difficulty challengers are boasting about themselves too much in the community, causing other people discomfort.

It is said that the factions that make up the Order of Vigilance are mainly composed of Normal Difficulty rankers.

Although Park Jong-sik is in charge of managing the Hard Difficulty challengers, there's a limit to sanctioning them because he is also a Hard Difficulty ranker.

Kim Min Hyuk asking me to keep an eye on Lee Joon Suk is an extension of this problem.

I'm well informed about this problem, but I thought that only Easy and Normal Difficulty challengers would be troubled by this matter, I never thought that this matter would also disturb Hell Difficulty challengers.

After listening to Lee Hyung Jin and John Overton, I learned that the higher difficulty challengers seem to be more displeased than the lower difficulty challengers.

"American servers will directly determine the whole server's direction of development according to the wishes of Hard Difficulty challengers. I found out how serious the problem was after seeing their tourism."

"I hoped they wouldn't brag to the community as veterans who've

overcome the adversities of hell. It's really embarrassing to see that kind of thing....."

"Although the translator didn't translate the meaning, I'm able to interpret it. It's disgusting to see how hard they work to comfort each other as if they've done something extraordinary. "

"They're just eating each others assholes....."

Note : They're just sucking up to each other in a sense. The raws specifically say assholes/buttholes so I'm leaving that. – GodlyCash

Emm...

Let's stop here.

Lee Hyung Jin and John Overton have been complaining about Hard Difficulty challengers for a while.

They began to swear as they talked, for no reason.

After listening, it turns out that their discomfort doesn't stem from being challenged by those of a lower difficulty.

They feel dissatisfied because these people have something they don't.

Colleagues who can challenge the floor together and spend time in the waiting room.

Their difficulty is relatively less dangerous.

So they have a higher hope of surviving into the future.

I understand them.

"Is that what Hell Difficulty challengers from other servers think as well?"

"Yes."

“Of course.”

There’s another reason to bring Hell Difficulty challengers together.

It seems necessary to resolve their sense of relative deprivation.

The party can only be held in the irregular tournaments, but the companionship they’ll feel will reduce their solitary pressure.

“Hyung Jin, John, don’t compare yourselves to challengers of other difficulties. This is not a good habit. Especially at Hell Difficulty. Nothing changes just because you compare what you don’t have to others. What’s important is how you overcome each obstacle in your situations.”

I’ve rambled on for a while, but both Lee Hyung Jin and John Overton aren’t convinced.

I think I am a bit too old-fashioned when I finish my speech.

However, I am speaking the truth so I hope they heed my words.

It’s impossible to move to another difficulty regardless.

The number of Hell Difficulty challengers will not increase abruptly and the actual hazards will have no significant drop so it won’t be simple to tackle.

As we move forward in time, things will only worsen.

I know that these people are in a hell-like situation, but only their actions can free them from their own hell.

Unfortunately, this is the only way.

After my sermon, the originally lively atmosphere suddenly cools down.

The enthusiasm and sympathy they’ve experienced after such a long

time probably caused their enraged behavior.

The thoughts that had been hidden deep inside their heart suddenly rises to the surface.

I would know.

* * *

After the battle, Lee Joon Suk comes over.

He's completed almost the entire dungeon alone, but there is no dissatisfaction on his face.

On the contrary, he is grateful to have a chance to stand out.

“We have to divide the team into three groups here. We should split into three teams and then rendezvous at the last stage of this dungeon.”

There are three branched paths in front of Lee Joon Suk.

I ask if we could maintain a single group, but Lee Joon Suk informs me that there are 3 tokens we must collect at the end of each branched path in order to complete the dungeon...

The description is quite detailed.

This guy may have known about the dungeon beforehand.

“You and Lee Jin will be a team. “

“Yeah, got it.”

Seeing him answer so readily tells me that it was meant to be arranged this way.

“I'll go with Hyung Jin to this branch. “

“Do I have to go alone?”

John Overton asks.

“No.”

I turn my head and glance at the frog who has been silent.

“Keeek ! ”

The frog raises his forelimbs in a swoop as if he was waiting for my signal.

What a flexible frog.

“You’re with the frog. It’s just the right amount of participants.”

John Overton starts to look like death after being told to team up with the frog.

It’s easy to work with the frog.

Obedient and discerning.

You can also mount it.

His torso is furry because his body is a dog’s instead of a frog’s...

“But I came here in order to witness your strength...”

“Keeek!”

“Look, the frog wants to be with you. Go with it. “

“...No, I...”

“Keeek!

“OK, fine.”

Chapter 227

The Tournament (27)

[You've obtained the token.]

After breaking through all the traps and reaching the end of the branch path, we finally retrieved the token in the form of a blue gem.

[You're not allowed to enter yet.]

[Please wait until all teams have retrieved their tokens at each branch path.]

It seems that there's a team that hasn't retrieved their token yet.

Maybe it's John Overton and the frog.

The frog would be of little practical help.

Or perhaps it's Lee Joon Suk and Lee Jin's group who hasn't obtained the token yet.

Because Lee Joon Suk must want to proceed slowly.

Lee Jin may think the same way.

"It's quite interesting."

I nod after hearing what Lee Hyung Jin said.

I can see why everyone repeatedly challenges the tournament stage to gradually raise their records.

The tournament isn't just competitive, but it's also fun.

It felt like playing a virtual reality game, solving puzzles, avoiding traps, figuring out the correct direction, they were all enjoyable.

“Do challengers of other difficulties use this method to clear stages?”

Asked Lee Hyung Jin.

I shake my head.

“No. They would never find the stage enjoyable this way.”

What if the stages in the tutorial were designed just like this?

The tournament is able to maintain a relaxed and joyous atmosphere to increase motivation among challengers regardless of their difficulties instead of inducing tension and fear...

Challengers may achieve higher results in the future due to this.

On the contrary, the opposite may occur as well.

In any case, there won't be as many people dying due to the new design.

“Big bro, What's wrong?”

“Nothing. I'm just pondering something...”

As I am in deep in thought, Lee Hyung Jin beside me asks.

This guy is talented at reading faces, which is not always a good thing.

The other two groups haven't finished their branch so I give Lee Hyung Jin a break.

Then I continue my internal strife.

My end goal is to escape the tutorial system.

I don't want to escape alone, I want to also liberate others trapped in the tutorial.

As long as they want to.

The problem in this case is that the tutorial system itself could crash.

No matter how superhuman I am, it's an almost insurmountable challenge to destroy the system created by the Gods with a human body.

But I still want to consider the consequences of that.

Because I'm toiling away to achieve this goal and making this futile dream a reality.

So I want to scrutinize it in advance.

If the tutorial truly disappeared.

The tutorial exists for two purposes.

One is to cultivate the apostles of God and have them collect the essences from origin monsters.

The other purpose is to cultivate superhumans through the tutorial so that they can suppress the monsters in the external world.

The first reason is trivial, but the second is a necessity.

If I completely get rid of the tutorial one day, people who have nothing to do with it will suffer.

I'm concerned about that.

If the tutorial is destroyed, a new tutorial needs to be created so I'm pondering how I can incorporate the tournament's design into it.

It should be enjoyable so that it can stimulate the interest of the

challengers.

Just make it more like a game.

Naturally, problems concerning the tensions and the mindset of the challengers may arise, but there are also those who risk their lives to play games.

Overall, it shouldn't be a pressing concern.

Above all, this will prevent people from committing suicide if they can't withstand the despair.

For now, the concept has been sorted.

It is pointless to worry anymore.

I haven't even completed the first goal of escaping the tutorial so I shouldn't think too far ahead.

Now is the time to solve the more urgent issues.

“Hyung Jin.”

“Yes, Big bro.”

“Have the other teams arrived yet?”

“No.”

“Then stand up. Let's spar.”

“...Huh?”

“Hurry up. It'll only take 10 minutes.”

Lee Hyung Jin's face loses blood after hearing what I said.

He calls me as he unconsciously retreats

“Big bro.”

“What?”

“Give me a break.”

* * *

“You always have this problem. It’s good to be realistic and intuitive, but it’s not good to constantly avoid danger. Am I going to kill you, huh? ”

“Th-That’s dangerous!”

“Hey! It’s dangerous to go to the supermarket in winter! Many people die when they fall on the icy roads. We all bear that risk when going to the supermarket. It’s natural to be at risk when you’re trying to gain something. “

Although I’m the one who said it, I find my metaphor a little strange.

So I change the topic.

“Before thinking about how dangerous it will be to spar with me, you should think about how valuable it will be to you. This is an opportunity that no one else will ever get. “

“Still...”

“Sparing is no more dangerous than walking on icy roads. The gap between our strengths ensures that there won’t be any dangers. “

“But there could be accidents.”

That’s what the skill difference ensures that there are no accidents.

Everyone is afraid of the potential damage and the death that follows

danger, but Lee Hyung Jin's avoidance of danger is surprisingly high.

It's even more surprising since he's a challenger who has made it to the 13th floor of Hell Difficulty.

I question how such a safety oriented person made it to the 13th floor.

It took me a while to convince Lee Hyung Jin to stand up.

Others would think I'm pestering him like a teacher if they saw this.

I give Lee Hyung Jin a little time to warm up.

His warm up lasts more than five minutes.

"Let's get started, big bro. Please."

Ugh, this coward.

After his words, Lee Hyung Jin makes a quick leap towards me.

I'm a little shocked.

I didn't expect him to come straight at me.

And it's quite swift.

He would be faster than the past me if I didn't have Blink.

I put out my hand and ready a counterattack.

As Lee Hyung Jin rushes towards me, he sees this and swerves to the side.

But because of his inertia, he goes past me.

This bastard, what is he doing?

His sprint puts him all the way back creating a huge distance and then rushes up again.

I turn around to prepare for his attack again.

However, Lee Hyung Jin changes his direction again as he approaches me.

Then he runs far behind me a second time.

“Hey, bitch, stop messing around!”

“But as soon as I close the distance, I feel like I can’t do it! What can I do!?”

Lee Hyung Jin protests.

I ask him to explain in detail, he claims he would feel impending death once he enters a certain range so he felt he couldn’t do it at all.

I smack my lips at his explanation.

A wonderful intuition.

“Ahbooboo, help him.”

[Yes, warrior.]

Ahbooboo comes out of my waist and flies towards Lee Hyung Jin.

Lee Hyung Jin mistakes it for an attack upon seeing it and starts running away.

I feel a headache at the sight of him.

Eventually Ahbooboo catches up to Lee Hyung Jin by tripping his leg, thus ending the game of tag between a sword and a man.

Then Ahbooboo is clasped in Lee Hyung Jin's hands.

Although Ahbooboo acts like that, he is a holy sword gifted by God.

His main feature isn't his own attack prowess, but assisting the wielder and supplementing his strength.

In addition, Ahbooboo has a very special ability.

“AHHHHH!”

Lee Hyung Jin screeches in madness.

That's the response of the person holding a holy sword for the first time, how amazing.

Being directly connected with a holy sword and feeling the power its transmitting is not a common occurrence.

Interestingly, people tend to regard this power as their own.

Those who wield Ahbooboo become powerful and arrogant, in turn, Ahbooboo will lead the wielder to become more savage.

That's what happened to the warriors on the 26th floor and to those on the 40th floor who accepted Abooboo in order to be safe.

He is not so much a holy sword as a magic sword.

Lee Hyung Jin swings the sword horizontally.

I know what he's doing.

This is the skill with the over exaggerated name called Spatial Rift Mind Slash that Ahbooboo uses to deceive people with.

In order to encourage him, I take this move directly with my body.

Lee Hyung Jin shows an unbelievable expression upon seeing the sword's effect.

I'd be surprised too if I could suddenly launch a sword attack across space.

But the skill doesn't actually cut space.

After struggling with his thoughts, Lee Hyung Jin comes straight at me.

Lee Hyung Jin sprints straight forward and crosses one interval, the next interval, and the final interval at melee distance.

I'm satisfied with the result.

Lee Hyung Jin chooses to stab me.

"Boowoong", there is a sound of vibrations in the atmosphere as he brandishes the sword.

I don't dodge and instead counter it directly with a precise jab from my hands.

Bang!

A slight shock wave occurs followed by a roar.

I rub my hands and retrieve Ahbooboo from Lee Hyung Jin, who has fainted because of the shock wave.

"Thanks for your hard work."

[My pleasure, but is that the end? He doesn't know what he just experienced.]

Ahbooboo comments.

Obviously Lee Hyung Jin wouldn't understand that technique.

He would still be lost even if I explained it to him.

“Forget it. I wanted this guy to have the courage to face death even if only for a while. “

[Really?]

I don't want Lee Hyung Jin to risk his life to clear stages like me.

But Lee Hyung Jin may face an inevitable situation someday.

If Lee Hyung Jin is faced with the worst possible situation where he can't escape, I hope he'll push himself a step further instead of giving in to frustration.

Although his move was made in the rashness of emotions, he did take the initiative to approach death.

Remembering that feeling will help him a lot.

[Well, ordinary people don't grow in this way.]

“That guy is not an ordinary person.”

[Is that so?]

That is so.

He's a challenger who's climbed to the 13th floor of Hell Difficulty.

Sometimes I think about it.

Would I be able to do as much as Lee Hyung Jin in Hell Difficulty if my only goal was to survive?.

I doubt it.

I would have perished early.

I can recall how tense I was back in the days of the 18th floor when the curse disappeared.

[Your team members have retrieved their tokens.]

[You're not allowed to enter yet]

[Please wait until all teams have retrieved their tokens at each branch path.]

It seems another group has obtained the token.

There is one group remaining.

Maybe it's John Overton and the frog.

It's going to take a while.

Lee Hyung Jin is still in a coma so I lay him down in a comfortable position and examine his condition.

There is no abnormality.

[I'm surprised.]

Ahbooboo says.

I heard him say this not long ago.

I was in my dorm room watching people play with the frog.

[I didn't expect you would teach others in this way. You not only figured out what's most important for him, but also helped him overcome his shortcomings.]

“Why, do you think I'm incapable as a teacher? Eh?”

I am in a bad mood for some reason.

[No. It's not so much that you can teach, but rather that I just didn't expect you to devote so much effort to such a weak person. Although he has some potential, he is too insignificant compared with other beings you have met before. Is it because he is your fellow countryman?]

"Is there a trend? Did you think I would treat the weak like rubbish?"

[Do you not?]

Holding back my anger, I try to come up with a response.

"...No. Haven't you seen the people who exist simply to be protected? Those are the weakest beings you can ever meet."

[I thought that your humanity had not degenerated to that extent at that time, so I brushed over it.]

I get a reflexive urge to throw Ahbooboo into the inventory.

But I resist.

I'm answering his questions and have a dialogue with him right now.

"When I judge a person, their weaknesses don't matter. I don't care how strong or weak others are."

[But...]

"I'm usually angered if my opponent's strength does not match my expectations, especially when they have higher capabilities than me."

Ahbooboo becomes silent.

Is he reflecting on my words?

Or sorting out his thoughts?

If not, is he doing something else?

[Warrior, it's typical and normal to look down upon the weak. The world belongs to the mighty. I don't think it's wrong to worship power. It's inevitable that we consider the weak unnecessary. It's even stranger to be angry in front of weak enemies.]

Ahbooboo is a gift from the God of the Sky.

It's quite natural for Ahbooboo to act this way considering God's character.

But since I agree with him, my way of thinking is not normal.

"I think so too. I want my enemies to be stronger because I want myself to be in more perilous situations."

I'm insane.

"Perhaps that's the difference between me and this guy."

I point to Lee Hyung Jin, who is still in a coma.

[What does it mean?]

"This guy tries his best to clear stages in order to survive, but I constantly rushed towards my death back then. As you said, this is not a normal way of thinking, but paradoxically, that's how I survived. "

[Except you don't think so anymore.]

"Yes."

Although not completely different, there have been some changes.

I'm nothing but a moth according to God of slow.

But now I don't want to die trying to achieve my goals.

Ahbooboo calms down as if he had nothing left to ask.

Now it's my turn to ask questions.

I call him.

"Ahbooboo."

[Yes, warrior.]

"Don't you think you've been questioning me excessively lately?"

He replies a bit late.

[What?]

"You always dig into my intentions. I had thought you just wanted to understand me more since you're my companion, or that you were worried about my well-being because you cared. However, recently you've been trying to dig into my most intimate thoughts."

I get a feeling of silence from Ahbooboo.

This never happened before.

Perhaps this only happens when he is disturbed enough.

A link between me and him has opened in a way I don't understand.

"I feel like you're investigating me."

[I... Warrior, that...]

"You'd better think of a good answer if you don't want to break in two right here."

Chapter 228

The Tournament (28)

“You’d better have an adequate answer.”

Ahbooboo’s feelings are conveyed to me through my hands as I hold him.

The more Ahbooboo shakes, the more vivid and rich his feeling becomes.

[Warrior, that... I...]

He seems to want to say something, but he stops as if he hasn’t sorted out his thoughts.

He stutters a few words, but then becomes silent again.

I’m willing to wait.

I’m not in a hurry, so I hope Ahbooboo can give the answer his full consideration.

Ahbooboo doesn’t answer me until a low snore comes from Lee Hyung Jin, who is still unconscious.

His answer is very simple.

[I’m sorry, warrior.]

An apology.

That answer has many meanings.

I am satisfied because he doesn't deny what he's done.

I've spent a few months observing Ahbooboo before asking this question.

In order to ensure that my suspicions were correct, I revealed certain information about myself to sound him out.

It wasn't just a suspicion, It's confirmed that Ahbooboo was spying on my intelligence and thoughts.

Like Ahbooboo, I keep silent for a long time before I reveal my answer.

Ahbooboo must be burning up inside while waiting for it, but I wanted to give the answer only after a lot of deliberation.

But maybe I've already made this decision.

"You know, I understand your situation, but tone it down."

The words after my deliberation are dry.

I wanted to say something cool and powerful, but when people try to do something they don't usually do, their brain refuses to function.

[Yeah... Thank you.]

I nod after I listen to Ahbooboo.

I have solved another problem.

The issues concerning Ahbooboo have ended.

I've also considered other outcomes. For example, Ahbooboo may give me unsatisfactory answers, but that doesn't mean that he'll justify his behavior or fight to prove his innocence.

I got to know him through our time together since meeting on the

26th floor.

Ahbooboo knows me as well.

So I don't believe that he would do those things.

I'm glad and relieved.

His approach was obviously wrong, but considering the relationship between the Gods and Ahbooboo, I can understand his intent to improve his understanding of me.

I'm being watched by the gods for 24 hours a day.

Ahbooboo's behavior doesn't make me uncomfortable.

Most of all, I don't think Ahbooboo was just spying on me during the time I spent with him.

That's why I did this.

I had planned to turn a blind eye to this matter to let it turn over as soon as possible, but I still needed to tell him.

I wanted to warn him in advance.

Before he crosses the line.

I wanted to tell him that this was as far as I can allow.

The link that transmitted Ahbooboo's feeling disappears.

I have a new hypothesis regarding this link.

Perhaps Ahbooboo didn't clear the link between us, not because he was too agitated, but because he wanted to convey his feelings to me.

He may've had difficulties articulating his words.

I'll need a better grasp on this link.

The entire space becomes quiet after Ahbooboo becomes silent.

I can only hear my breathing and the low snoring of Lee Hyung Jin, who is still unconscious.

Seregia remains silent as usual.

I wake up Lee Hyung Jin.

Lee Hyung Jin reflexively opens his eyes as soon as my hand touches his body.

“Get up, man. How long do you want to sleep?”

Lee Hyung Jin stands up and looks around without saying a word.

He probably dozes a lot while clearing stages, so he is very alert when he wakes up.

I can't help but think of the timid herbivores because he has the habit of closing his lips and holding his breath to confirm his surroundings.

Lee Hyung Jin sits next to me and scratches his head.

“That... Have the other two teams not arrived yet?”

I nod.

I thought the remaining team would be John Overton and the frog.

But this is taking too long.

Even if he's teamed with the frog, John Overton shouldn't have this much trouble dealing with the instance dungeon.

If so, he wouldn't be able to pass the 6th floor of Hell Difficulty, let

alone live to the present.

So it seems that Lee Joon Suk and Lee Jin are the ones who haven't retrieved their token yet.

I decide not to think about what's keeping them from proceeding.

It's rude.

"How did it feel to face death?"

Lee Hyung Jin laughs maniacally after hearing my question.

"I don't know what to think about it. What's the matter with that sword? It drives me crazy."

I chuckle at Lee Hyung Jin when he asks me if it's better to throw away the sword.

Ahbooboo would usually pop out a comment or two, but he is unusually quiet now.

"I don't know. The moment I rushed in felt incredible. How should I describe it? Joy? It might be closer to pleasure. Why is that... I felt like I was going all-in on a gambling party. I had a similar feeling when I was climbing the floors, but this is the first time it felt so intense."

"Do you gamble?"

"No, I'm just saying."

That pleasure is closer to suicide jumping off a roof.

This is caused by hormones secreted by the brain in the face of death.

I advise him as someone who has experienced it countless times.

"Don't get addicted to that feeling."

I warn him in advance even though I don't think Lee Hyung Jin would fall into addiction.

Lee Hyung Jin replies that it would never happen.

“Hyung, I'm not sure of myself. Can I really do it?”

Just like the last tournament or during the Day of Great Harmony*, I'm asked this question every time we meet.

**Used to be translated as Grand Conference before, but Day of Great Harmony (the first translator's version) is more closer to its original meaning. I'll keep it in following chapters. – Jiujiuba*

“You can.”

“But I don't have the confidence to be like you.”

That's for sure.

“It'd be too greedy to aim for my level. There are too many differences in our efforts.”

“Is that so...”

“Hyung Jin, you've come a long way. Most of your upcoming floors follow a set theme so it's relatively easy to clear them with information alone. It'll be different from the 6th and 11th floors.

As long as there is enough information, some stages can be cleared in a day.

So I believe Lee Hyung Jin can make it.

“The most important thing is that you're on the 13th floor. Purposely fail the floor until you're able to reach the room where Armout is. You'll experience countless failures, but also countless paths to grow. The 13th floor monks are extremely powerful relative to the floors nearby and are very welcoming. They'll advise you whenever possible.

If you can achieve a significant growth on the 13th floor, the future floors will become less threatening. Spend a year or two on the 13th floor. You'll be unstoppable in the next few floors as a result."

Note : Armout is the name of the Master Monk who resides in room 33 at the end of the 13th floor trial. – Godlycash

Lee Hyung Jin is silent to my advice.

I believe the 13th floor is the safest way to develop oneself in hell.

Going through the 11th and 12th floors improve a challenger's survivability while the 13th floor improves a challenger's personal skills.

Even challengers who depended on long range attacks or recovery abilities for a party to clear the 11th floor would gain the strength to fight alone after spending enough time on the 13th floor.

This would take a long time to hone, but it's better than climbing floors because the monks are friendly enough to communicate and advise the challenger.

Lee Hyung Jin brightens up after hearing the hopeful and practical advice.

I continue to talk to him about the 13th floor and make suggestions for improving himself. At this time, the message that the last group has obtained the token pops out.

[You've obtained all the tokens.]

[You may proceed.]

* * *

The last ones to retrieve the token are Lee Joon Suk and Lee Jin.

No one asked them why they were so slow.

Everyone can easily guess.

It's just that Lee Hyung Jin and John Overton were giving uncomfortable looks to Lee Joon Suk.

They really despise Lee Joon Suk.

Lee Joon Suk doesn't mind, on the contrary, he seems to be enjoying himself.

It's not that he doesn't care about those two, he's just too distracted to pay them any mind.

He is really enjoying himself.

“Keeek ! ”

The frog says “long time no see” to me while looking energetic.

Long time no see?

It's only been two or three hours since we separated.

After thinking about it, the frog seems to be satirizing because Lee Joon Suk and Lee Jin were late.

It's a pity that I'm the only one who can understand the frog.

In the final room of the dungeon stood a towering golem.

Golems usually take the form of stone statues in video games, and their actions are sluggish.

It's fine to relax right in front of it.

“It'll be difficult for me to combat that with my ability. Electric shocks won't do much I'm afraid.”

Lee Joon Suk mutters.

This guy's reliance on his power skill is making him vulnerable to enemies who are non-conductive.

He'll need to prepare counter measures against throwing weapons in the future...

I'll talk to him about it later.

"I'll do it."

Neither Lee Hyung Jin or John Overton seem to want to step up.

Most importantly, Overton only came along to witness my combat prowess.

[Woah.]

The golem roars and charges towards us.

I stretched my hand and drew it in a downward motion.

"Mind Slash."

The golems split in half vertically like tofu.

The magic crystal in its chest has been cut as well in that process so it'll never rise again.

[Was that necessary?]

Seregia breaks the silence and asks.

Seregia strangely dislikes it when I do pompous things when I activate a skill.

Of course it is necessary.

[Stage cleared!]

[Calculating results.]

[Points earned: 390]

[Current rank: 4th.]

[Please wait patiently until the next stage begins.]

The stage has been cleared.

4th place.

According to the rules, the lowest score of 10 teams would be eliminated.

But I'm not satisfied with my rank.

“Let's challenge something a little more difficult.”

I tell them while they are still staring between me and the golem's remnants.

After a while, John Overton asks me in surprise how I did it and if I could teach him, but I stop him and speak to Seregia.

[Look, Seregia. It's meaningful.]

[No, it's not.]

* * *

“Let's challenge 10 stars.”

Lee Joon Suk is shocked at my declaration.

“Big bro, let's challenge 6 stars. The most difficult dungeon I've

challenged is only 5 stars. I have no clue what we'll have to deal with at 10 stars, besides we have plenty of opportunities so shouldn't we go up one by one? “

Note : Changing “hyung” to “big bro” because that's what a previous translator did and honestly there is someone with the word Hyung in their name. – GodlyCash

“Very well, then. choose a stage we can challenge together.”

“Alright.”

Lee Hyung Jin and John aren't dissatisfied with the difficulty choice either.

John's eyes are brightening in eagerness to witness more of my strength.

It didn't feel good to be watched by a man with burning eyes.

We picked a dungeon and waited to start when an unexpected message popped up in front of us.

It's a voting message.

[Voting begins.]

[For: 13, against: 0.]

[In order to test the challengers, the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple have decided to randomly change the stage.]

[Stage information]

Explanation: This is a stage specially designed to test emerging challengers from Earth.

Because of the rush of production, this dungeon has no special features.

Difficulty: ???

[Voting begins.]

[Do you want to challenge the new stage?]

[Please choose for or against.]

“For.”

[For: 1, against: 0]

The message window has been updated.

I agreed as soon as I read the message.

Voting ends when one side has the majority.

It's the first time I've encountered this situation, but other challengers who fight in parties have experienced it many times before.

“Keeek!”

[For: 2, against:0]

The discerning frog votes for it.

I didn't even think frogs could vote.

“This... this is far too risky. The difficulty level is question marks. That means it's more than 10 stars. Wouldn't it be better to just veto it and challenge another stage?”

Lee Joon Suk asks.

“Just approve it.”

“I'm for.”

Lee Hyung Jin votes in favor.

It turns out there's another discerning guy.

[For: 3, against: 0]

Lee Joon Suk and Lee Jin are hesitant because they are panicking so I turn to John.

The stage can start after one more vote.

"I came to witness your powers, but isn't this too risky? No, it's dangerous because we get the chance to vote. Let's follow your friend's advice where we refrain from it and challenge something else."

"Vote for it."

"But..."

"You'll be forced to abstain if you don't."

Chapter 229

The Tournament (29)

[For: 4, against: 0]

[Entering the stage.]

We arrive on a desolate wasteland.

Under the cloudless blue sky and the boundless wilderness, I can't help thinking that this place was haphazardly made by the gods.

Fortunately it's very spacious because the horizon can be seen no matter which direction you look.

Our opponents stand 200 meters away from us.

Those guys should be the stage's targets.

I was a little surprised when I saw the message showing that the gods created this stage specifically to test me.

The gods are unable to accurately measure my capabilities.

It's been like this for quite a while.

Kirikiri, who had warned me that a stage would be extremely difficult, had to shed tears of sadness in front of me when I returned after easily clearing the floor.

Although, she only cried because we had betted on cake.

It is unknown what gods have prepared to test me or whether their arrangement can properly measure my capabilities.

So I believed that my opponents on this stage would adapt to the corresponding strength of the challengers.

But the gods' method is way simpler than I thought.

They prepared a welcome ceremony for me.

My enemies are donned in the same clothes with the same two swords as me.

Using my face and body, they exude the same pressure as me.

It's a great choice.

The most recent actual threat I faced is the mirage on the 17th floor during the 35th floor trial.

The easiest method to measure my strength is to create a mirage with the same powers and magic as me.

The mirage I met on the 17th floor had better equipment and abilities, but I still managed to get the upper hand.

However, I'm not confident I can surpass these guys.

[In 600 seconds, the stage will start.]

"Big bro... Those things look just like you."

"Right?"

There are 6 mirages.

It matches the number of contestants.

Do I have to overcome not only my own mirage, but the mirages that spawned as a result of this party?

I don't know why there are six mirages.

"Listen, everyone."

"Yeah?"

"Run away. Don't look back. Don't stop until you reach the end of the stage."

I point in the opposite direction of the mirages.

"Keeek!"

The frog begins to run the moment I finish speaking.

Soon after, Lee Hyung Jin also starts sprinting.

The frog is quickly overtaken by him.

The next one to run is John.

It becomes clear which players are from hell difficulty based on who's escaping immediately.

Oh, I see. They both just hate Lee Joon Suk.

Maybe they don't like Lee Jin either.

"What are you doing? You guys should go too."

Lee Joon Suk and Lee Jin, who are dazed staring at the two hell difficulty challengers and frog fleeing, start running away themselves.

Lee Joon Suk sprints with Lee Jin in his arms.

Flashes of electricity and light on his body seem to come from a mobility technique related to his lightning power skill.

After seeing them off, I slowly walk towards the mirages.

A transparent barrier between us blocks me since the stage has yet to start.

I lean close to the barrier to observe my mirages.

“How exciting.”

[This could be extremely dangerous, warrior.]

[Why don't you call those people back? They can be used as disposable shields.]

[Or they can be used to test the capabilities of the mirages.]

Ahbooboo and Seregia say one thing after another.

“No. Their presence will only hinder me.”

[We don't know what kind of mirages these are. On the surface, they seem to have the same level of strength as you, warrior, but I can't estimate their hidden potential. Since they're the creation of gods, they may be stronger than you, so your choice needs to be carefully considered.]

[The stage will begin after 540 seconds]

“Don't be a wimp.”

[Huh?]

“It doesn't matter if they're made by gods or whatever. As long as they only equal me in power, I'll win.”

* * *

[Stage will soon begin.]

[What's the plan?]

“To try my best.”

I don't know since when.

I have been concealing my limits.

I don't know my upper limits because I've never come close to it, so even the gods should be unable to calculate my limits either.

What was my reason for it?

Maybe it's because a martial arts magazine had advised readers to keep their skills hidden.

Or maybe it's because I didn't want to show off everything.

But more important than that, I have yet to meet a situation where I'm pushed to my limits.

No matter what kind of situation I come across, there is no need to preserve my spare energy if it's dangerous enough to warrant my full strength.

What's more, I have no reason to hide my potential when the gods gracefully sent six mirages to measure my strength.

My soul sword exits her sheath.

Ahbooboo soars around my area to assist me.

[This is bad. Those mirages possess the exact same swords as you. Are they all fakes? Just copies of me, right?]

Ahbooboo complains.

Perhaps they are.

I first met Ahbooboo inside the stage, but he became my reward for successfully clearing the 26th floor.

Maybe the Ahbooboo that the God of the Sky gave me is genuine.

Maybe not.

[The stage commences.]

As soon as the message appears, I rush forward.

I rush towards the mirage positioned on the far right.

The mirage spreads Talaria's Wings and brandishes his swords.

It's not surprising that the mirages possess the same power skills as me.

I activate my skill as our sword auras collide.

[Blink]

Blink is one of my oldest skills, I received it after clearing the 2nd floor.

I'm experienced enough to use it as easily as breathing.

I blink in the same location, but in a different stance to slash down the mirage's blade.

But the mirage wields his sword again without yielding to my offensive.

I underestimated the enemy.

I sacrifice my right arm to brandish the sword with my left arm.

My slash creates a trail of aura that tears the space along with the

mirage into pieces.

The mirage shatters upon death.

“.....”

A trivial end.

Vital organs like the heart and neck are in pieces so his resurrection isn't a worry.

“Isn't he much better than I've heard?”

One of the mirages whispers.

Despite losing one of their comrades, the other five are indifferent.

“He's more reckless than the rumors stated.”

“We're reduced by one from six, but he sacrificed one of his arms in turn. I can't count that as a fair trade.”

Listening to their snarky remarks, I'm furious at how dense they are.

I snatched my right arm that was sent flying in the sky.

I ripped off the sword equipped on my right arm by holding the arm in place with my mouth and grabbing it with my left hand.

“Don't be too hasty, challenger. We only came to measure your limit. We have no intentions of harming you. ”

“Are you guys apostles?”

I inquired about the mirages.

“Why do you think so?”

“If you guys were truly my mirage, you would not be so weak.”

Several mirages laughed.

What a bunch of nuts.

If these guys were truly my mirage, they would never die so easily.

In fact, the mirage who just died had sensed the attack from my left hand.

But he couldn't resist it.

I would have stopped it.

I'm capable enough to stop it.

But the mirage couldn't.

He had the leisure to react and should've recognized the attack beforehand.

Despite knowing this, he still didn't react so he must've believed he could've resisted it.

He must have thought he could take or evade my attack and then he prepared his next move.

My true mirages would've stormed me the moment I rushed over to one of them.

Instead of standing there and laughing like this.

They are not my mirages.

They're just people who put my body on.

So it's easy to guess who these people are.

Gods cannot directly interfere to that level, so their disciples must be in control.

“Correct.”

One of the mirages confirms my suspicions.

Their arrogant tone is really unpleasant.

I recall the mirage I faced on the 35th floor.

My current situation is opposite to the 35th floor.

My mirage rivaled me in skills and power, but my experience was superior.

This time they have superior experience.

I calmly analyse the situation.

They can use my powers from a higher realm, but they also have limits.

Note: This is a repeat of floor 35, I'll try to look at the world again to see if it's truly realm. I recall one of the definitions we had was “state of being”. I believe it something like “different dimension” or “different level” in terms of power scaling. I'll continue to work on this. – GodlyCash

My limit is their limit.

This is a confrontation between apostles who can use my powers from a higher realm and me using my powers more skillfully.

“This will be fun.”

Firstly, let's upset the situation.

I mold my aura in the air and spin it.

“Stop, challenger! We’ve only come to test your limits! “

“Lalala, I can’t hear you~.”

“We should subdue him before testing him.”

The mirages speak a few words to each other then spread their wings and rush towards me.

Aside from them, I sense an additional threat from a different direction.

I know what that threat is.

My technique, Spatial Rift Mind Slash, unfolds before me.

When I used it, I never noticed that the technique was so conspicuous.

It seems necessary to improve this skill to be more covert.

After breaking through the barrage of Mind Slashes, I calmly attack the apostles.

It’s clear that the apostles have yet to familiarize themselves with my strength.

They’re trying to unleash attacks that exceed my limits, so they repeatedly miss opportunities.

I can’t overwhelm all five of them at the same time, but I can maintain aura spheres with one arm alone.

Designate Opponent, that increased my power proportionally to my opponent’s level, and Perseverance, which increased my strength proportional to the number of enemies, are very helpful here.

Zit Pop is almost finished.

The apostles that had rushed at me in irritation and impatience start

to form faces of discomfort and embarrassment.

Now, they step back with obvious panic, unlike the beginning.

However, they did not try to stop my Zit Pop.

The apostle formed their own aura spheres.

They were invisible, but those must also be Zit Pop.

You guys want to perish with me?

Good.

“Let’s go to hell, you bastards.”

The invisible aura spheres start to glow from the generated heat.

“Zit Pop.”

* * *

Another flash.

Under the collisions of Light Swords, everything burned and everyone was blinded, but those problems were insignificant.

Everything in this area has already been consumed by flames.

The empty wasteland can no longer be found as a result of being melted by flames.

Sensing that the whole space is filled with light and heat, this is what I envisioned hell to be like.

No, the God of Light would enjoy this so it’d be heaven to certain gods.

I can leisurely sort my thoughts thanks to my light sword.

The first two forms of Light Sword can be simplified as stabbing and slashing.

As the friction between the accelerating aura intensifies, so does the dissipating light and heat.

The destructiveness of this skill is far beyond the capacity of the users.

If used improperly, the user will be in a more perilous situation than the enemy. The user will not be safe even if the technique is used successfully. It can still be considered a suicidal technique.

It's very powerful, but it requires too much focus and skill to use.

By the time I mastered the first two forms, I considered discarding the technique.

If the knight on the 16th floor hadn't mentioned the peculiar third form, I wouldn't have continued to hone it.

The third form of light sword returns to its foundation as a defensive swordsmanship.

Light Sword is a technique that burns and destroys everything including the user, but the third form is a defensive technique.

It is counterintuitive.

I once thought that this insane technique was created to destroy the world and see who would survive in the end.

The completion of the third form requires me to rotate the energy.

The third form is the sustainable use of Light Sword.

An omnidirectional attack.

It doesn't matter where I direct the technique, everything will be destroyed by the Light Sword.

So I twist and rotate this force, turning myself into the eye of a typhoon to escape from the storm.

When I was left with no power and a weak body on the 35th floor, I used Light Sword to slay the demon king.

“Time Confinement.”

I use Time Confinement again.

As time slowed down, everything else slowed along with it.

I've lost count of how many times I've activated Time Confinement since the beginning of this battle.

Our initial confrontation feels like distant past.

One of the apostles' Light Sword is being absorbed by our immense chain of energy.

Compared to the intense concentrated rings of energy, the Light Sword seems weak and insignificant.

I don't sense this with my eyes.

Because of the strong light, my eyeballs are in a constant state of recovery and can no longer function.

Even if my eyes were still functional, this is not a fight that can be observed with the naked eye.

The world through the eyes of magic is magnificent.

The six rings formed by intersecting light and heat are slowly rotating.

Time is supposed to slow to a near halt through Time Confinement,

but the world around me continues to move slowly.

Six rapidly rotating rings are absorbing everything in the surroundings.

Little by little we close in on each other.

The five apostles and I initially tried to distance ourselves, but the force of attraction pulled us closer together.

But I can't withdraw any energy.

I'll die on the spot the moment I hold back.

On the contrary, I need to pour more strength to keep it under my grasp for fear of losing all of it.

The end is approaching.

The rings of energy will collide soon.

The result is obvious.

Everything will be engulfed in flames.

It is fun to imagine a landscape filled to the brim with the inferno.

I observe the massive flow of energy in Time Confinement.

Time Confinement abruptly ends and the rings of energy that were moving slowly now rotate violently.

[Warrior! We'll die if it goes on like this!]

Ahbooboo screams.

We understand each other so well.

Despite the fierce clash, his voice is conveyed with clarity.

[It'll be fine.]

After leaving him with that sentence, I reactivate Time Confinement.

I feel Ahbooboo nearing his melting point so I wanted to safeguard him in the inventory like I did with Seregia, but I don't have that kind of luxury right now.

I continue examining the clash and flow of energy within the slowed world.

I don't know how many times I can use Time Confinement before we die together.

Perhaps I should worry more about my concentration and mental limits rather than the time limit.

The efficiency of Time Confinement has vastly improved compared to the past.

I don't know if it's due to the improvement in my concentration or simply the will of the God of Slow.

If I can maintain this efficiency, I'm certain I can use Time Confinement thousands of times more before my death.

In other words, if I can't maintain my concentration and mental strength, death is inevitable.

If I persist, I'll be able to enter a new realm.



PDF by: traitor/1ZEN



GANDARA 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- VOLUME 9 -

**-AUTHOR-
Gandara**

[Centinni]

Chapter 230

The Tournament (30)

[Lee Joon Suk's Perspective]

Bang!

I couldn't guard against the shock waves that came from the distance.

I'm trying my best, but I'm limited to simply surviving.

The shock wave's impact tosses me into the sky and sends me rolling on the ground.

"Eaguh..."

I feel like one of my ribs popped out.

The explosions have been going on for more than ten minutes so nobody in the party escaped unscathed.

We should just be thankful that no one has died yet.

I trip during my rush to escape, I pause, then examine my surroundings.

The battle zone in the far distance is shining a light so difficult to look at, it feels like a second sun has appeared.

Thanks to this light, the world in front of us dyed white.

Whether it's lush green trees or bright red fruits, all of them become painted in this single color.

The earsplitting roar continues like a song.

The rumble felt like the sound of the wind acting as background music in this white world.

The heat wave scorches my back.

The source of the heat wave is so far from me and yet I'm burned to this level, it's incredible.

"Hey! Lee Joon Suk! Come on!"

Cries Lee Hyung Jin.

Lee Hyung Jin is surrounded by a white barrier he has set up to withstand the shock waves.

Everyone is hiding under his shield.

I grab my waist and stagger towards Lee Hyung Jin.

My heart feels sluggish.

Am I really going to die like this?

Meanwhile, another shock wave from the explosions hits my back.

I almost lose consciousness because of the sudden impact.

I'm sent flying by the force and into Lee Hyung Jin's protective barrier.

"Be careful landing! Mass Teleport!"

Lee Hyung Jin rips the scroll and shouts.

In the next moment I'm teleported into the air.

It's literally the void.

There are no walls, ceilings, or floors.

We're in the air tens of meters from the ground.

Lee Hyung Jin teleported us into the sky using his vision instead of specifying coordinates in order to prevent anything from overlapping.

We could've overlapped with birds, but Lee Hyung Jin ignored this risk and continued to teleport several more times.

Besides, no ordinary bird would live to fly in this environment.

Teleport is a very dangerous spell because it forcibly moves the body without any precautions, but we've used it so often today that there is no need to worry.

My ribs are dislocated, but I manage to stand on the ground.

The frog lands safely with Lee Jin on his back.

Although the frog's body is a dog's, it is still a frog after all since he's unharmed after falling from the sky.

We arrive to a high mountain ridge through teleportation.

Our current location is quite far from our previous point so the heat was nowhere near as dangerous.

While I scanned the surroundings, I felt something come up my chest.

A washbasin of blood spews out from me.

After spitting out the rest of it, I drink an elixir from my inventory.

The nuclear weapon-like explosion could contain radiation which could explain my weakness and exhaustion.

I'm a man of great endurance, but despite being supplemented with high quality potions, I still couldn't prevent my condition from declining.

The moment I exposed myself to the poison, my eyes, nose, and mouth started bleeding along with my skin melting.

My visceras feel like they are being burned over fire.

If Lee Hyung Jin hadn't warned me to recover by drinking an elixir, I might have died on the spot or committed suicide to escape the pain.

“Are there any elixirs left?! “

Lee Hyung Jin shouts.

We are very close to each other, but I'd have to shout at him to communicate.

So instead of shouting back, I just shake my head to tell him that there are no more elixirs.

Lee Hyung Jin's face darkens.

He points to Lee Jin, who's convulsing on the ground.

Lee Hyung Jin and the frog were protecting Lee Jin this entire time, but she still crossed the threshold of life and death many times due to the secondary poison released by the explosion alone.

She's already consumed six bottles of elixir.

She doesn't have any elixirs left, neither does Lee Hyung Jin so she's no different from a corpse.

Lee Hyung Jin ponders for a while, then takes out a strange sphere from his inventory and brings it right in front of Lee Jin.

Then Lee Jin disappears, leaving behind only the sphere.

“What is that!?”

Lee Hyung Jin answers with a yell.

“A monster ball!”

“.....”

I was stunned for a while, then Lee Hyung Jin clarifies himself.

“It’s a life support device contained in a subspace! This is my only one!”

Lee Hyung Jin delivers me the important information as short as possible.

John Overton is wearing something akin to a gas mask and gives Lee Hyung Jin a thumbs up.

Suddenly, the mountain begins to shake.

The ground fluctuates up and down as if it were an ocean wave.

Having experienced such a strange earthquake for the first time in our lives, everyone looks back reflexively.

There is no need to hear this as it can easily be seen.

We see the vast expansive forest just down the mountain where we had just teleported from.

The forest is on fire.

The shock wave from the explosion is rapidly flattening a city-size forest.

The forest was already burning down and now it’s being swallowed by the shock waves leaving behind no trace of it behind.

It looked as if God took an eraser and started erasing the vast forest off the face of the world for his own amusement.

Looking at the scene from the mountaintop felt like watching an invisible monster devouring the world.

“Mass Teleport!”

After shockwave flattened the whole forest, it begins to close in on the foot of the mountain, so Lee Hyung Jin readies against it with another teleportation.

I look around after another successful and dangerous landing.

This time we arrive on a shoreline.

I look back, but the mountain range blocks my view.

They're the mountains we were just on.

The explosion's roar became more manageable with the mountain in between, but most importantly, we're no longer directly exposed to the extreme light.

Chapter 230.15

The Tournament (30.5)

The invisible shockwaves caused by the explosion reached the mountain then slowly lessened.

“Ughhh.” John Overton scrambled to remove his gas mask and emptied his stomach’s contents. The absence of blood in his bile ruled out the possibility of poisoning.

I checked my stomach. I didn’t feel like vomiting after puking out a massive amount of blood a moment ago.

“Hah...” I let out an exhausted sigh, and a symphony of sighs and gasps surrounded me. “Are we safe?”

“Not yet,” Lee Hyung Jin mumbled while shaking his head.

“How many more times are we supposed to teleport, and how far are we?” I asked.

“On the other side of the planet,” said Lee Hyung Jin while taking out another scroll from his inventory. Even though my vision was blurred and my legs trembled, I readied myself for another round of teleporting.

* * *

“How’s the situation?” I asked.

Lee Hyung Jin took a look around before replying, “We should be on the other side of the planet. Any further, and we’ll start to feel the heat’s intensity increase. “

The environment here was too extreme, and one could feel the

temperature rising regardless of whether you took a step forwards or backward. The coolest area here was located on the other side of the planet, where the fight had taken place.

The power I had used was real, even though it seemed blasphemous, and my ability shocked even myself. Was I even human? It wouldn't be inaccurate to call myself a god, no? If I used this kind of strength on Earth... ah, I'd kill everyone without a doubt.

Even if I used a quarter of my powers, humans would still bow to me and treat me like a god. As someone whose skills could change a planet's geography, what better word other than god could describe me? Ah, my power was too divine.

I used to think that I was only strong enough to clear the Tutorial's stages and save people from the monsters appearing from gates on Earth; I never imagined that my power could be so devastating.

"Hey," Lee Hyung Jin, who was holding a shovel, called out while I was thinking.

"Yes?"

"What are you thinking about? Here, take this." I took the shovel from him, confused. He also handed John a shovel.

"Kea-ek!"

"Sorry, I don't have an extra shovel, but you can use your paws." Shockingly enough, Lee Hyung Kin was somehow able to understand the frog.

"What is this shovel for?" I asked.

"What else? It's for digging the ground," Hyung Jin said as he began digging with John and the frog following in suit. I also shovelled into the ground.

Around 30 minutes of digging later, we dug a pit so deep, that no one would be able to escape out of it easily. We were all challengers who

worked together, so of course, or work should be beyond satisfactory.

We had been fretting about what to do, but since Lee Hyung Jin made us dig, I assumed he must have thought of an escape method.

“This much is enough for now. Let’s take a rest. I’m tired.”

Exhausted, three men and a frog sat together inside the pit. Even though we wanted to rest, there wasn’t enough space for us all to stretch our legs and sit comfortably. If we had the strength to move, we would have widened the hole, but since no one did, everyone just sat in a cramped manner, without complaints.

Surprisingly, the frog’s body was rather warm and soft; it was rather comfortable to lean on. Soon, warmth filled the pit. Along with it came the stench of blood and sweat. Lee Hyung Jin took something out of his inventory and sprayed it; it was a bottle of deodorant.

I inwardly laughed. He reminded me of Doraemon.

“I’ll call you Doraemon from now on.”

“Shhh. “

I wanted to crack a joke to put all of us at ease, but Lee Hyung Jin gestured for me to shut up. He placed his ear against the bottom of the pit and waited for a bit.

“I’m going crazy,” He mumbled and got back up. With an uncomfortable expression, he took out a small ball from his inventory; it was the space Lee Jin had just gone into. Clutching the ball firmly in his hand, Lee Hyung Jin sighed, and John stood up with a helpless expression.

Lee Hyung Jin immediately reprimanded him, roaring, “Sit down.”

I was about to ask why he was acting so bellicose when a message window suddenly popped up. It was a notification about a vote.

[Voting commences.]

[For: 99. Against: 0]

[The Gods of the Hundred Gods Temple have decided to send you back outside the stage. Your stage score will be decided after the remaining members pass or fail the stage.]

[Voting commences.]

[Do you wish to exit the stage?]

[Choose Yes or No]

“Yes.”

“Kea-ek!”

“Yes.”

Before I'd even finished reading the message, Lee Hyung Jin, John, and the frog had all chosen Yes. The majority of the five members had voted in favor, so the voting session ended immediately.

[Your wounds have healed and your magic, restored.]

Within seconds, we had been moved from the pit to the center of the tournament square, a peaceful place with no reverberating explosions or the haunting fear of death hanging above your head.

“Ah! We made through! “

Hearing the shout, people in the square looked over in wonder. I realised that we had actually returned when I saw people making teams and purchasing food as if nothing had happened.

Could they even imagine what we'd just experienced? Even if I told them, would they believe it?

“Are you okay?” Lee Hyung Jin, who had fallen to the floor with outstretched legs, asked me.

“Yes. Thank you very much. I survived because of you,” I said thankfully.

“If you’re that grateful, get me some elixirs,” He said as he took out the space ball where Lee Jin resided. I immediately remember Lee Jin’s state before entering the space. There was a chance that she may not have received the system recovery while staying inside.

“Wait here for a bit,” I said, and Lee Hyung Jin nodded. Standing up, I began sprinting.

Although I’d been running for the whole day and previously exhausted, the relief of surviving that brutal stage gave my legs a burst of energy.

While I ran to the headquarters of the Order of Vigilance, I thought about how grateful I was for coming back alive. It was just like a movie. No, such an extreme event wouldn’t even have appeared in a film, but I supposed that was the closest comparison I could come up with.

When we had escaped the stage, everyone in the team should’ve been healed and happy, but they still looked as though they were having a midlife crisis. Ever since John had taken off his mask, he’d been in a trance-like state. Lee Hyung Jin’s expression was even worse. He was deathly pale and still held a despaired expression, although the impending death-threat had disappeared.

Chapter 230.2

The Tournament (31)

[Let me go back.] said Ahbooboo.

I wasn't expecting Ahbooboo to ask to be put back in the inventory, but I guessed it was reasonable since his blade had melted.

Instead of putting him back, I told him, "Wait a little while longer. We'll be done soon."

Ahbooboo's melted parts wouldn't get repaired even if he was kept inside the inventory. Now that I had full control over my power, he wouldn't melt any further.

[Can you fix me?]

"I can."

Ahbooboo settled down after hearing me reassure him. I planned on consulting Kim Min Hyuk as soon as I returned. Maybe he would know how to repair Ahbooboo.

If not, I'd have to ask the administrators. Maybe I could find out how after the tournament finished up. I was confident I could fix him.

After reassuring Ahbooboo, I scanned my surroundings. The region we were in looked terrible. Was this planet created to be a stage? I wondered if it would survive after exploding.

The heatwaves around me disrupted the air and made the air currents run wild. Even though everything was burnt to a crisp, black and sooty smoke was still rising from the ground. I was right to circulate the explosions around my sword since the explosions protected me.

The problem was that the other five illusions had adopted the same tactic. I hadn't expected our Light Sword explosion rings to merge, though. The illusions shouldn't have failed like this.

We increased the distance between us, escaping before the huge energy rings collided, avoiding its impact. We could only add more power to our energy rings.

At that moment, the six energy rings collided with each other and exploded, and the shockwaves greatly overpowered me. Even if I had my current strength six times, my power would still pale in comparison to the explosion.

Witnessing this enormous strength was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The heat from the attack still hasn't subsided. If it had been me from before, just being here would be enough to kill me. If it had been the me from before.

I moved the heat aside using my mana.

The tall columns of flames that had been ascending upwards were swept aside by mana, creating an awe-inducing sight. I was more awed by the fact that I could create such a situation.

Generating heat with power was the foundation of magic, but dealing with heat generated by other people was an entirely different story. It was a matter of dominance.

All beings in the world could exercise control within a particular zone. This wasn't just the case for humans but also beasts and tiny insects.

Magicians could shoot fireballs, but they couldn't burn their opponents' bodies or boil the water in their bodies. To do so, they would have to intrude on their opponent's domain and exert influence on it.

The scope of one's domain was not limited to their body. Domains could be extended depending upon whether mana can be used in a long-distance range. That's the reason why magicians blocked fireballs

thrown at them rather than cooling the fireball down.

The ring of energy I made to protect myself against the heatwave and oppose enemy attacks was made of my mana, so it was under my domain.

However, the illusions protected themselves and attacked others in the same way. It forced me to control the energies released by them as well.

Had I not been able to control their energies, I would've died from the explosion.

Maybe it was because they were my illusions that I attempted a move like this and successfully pulled it off.

“Impossible.” A voice rang out from below. It was my voice. One of the illusions was speaking.

[How come he's so far from us?] Ahbooboo asked.

I couldn't determine his position accurately, so I used my mana to help me clear the smoke and see the illusion better. Finally, I could see him.

He was inside the ground. The magma had engulfed half of his body.

“Absurd. This is impossible,” the illusion growled.

“What's impossible?” I smirked.

“We're perfect replicas to the point where we even have the same power and strength as you. You shouldn't have the ability to control this explosion, let alone save your life.”

“And you do?” I asked with a smile.

He remained quiet for a few moments before he muttered again. “This is impossible...”

I was a little amused after hearing him.

“There’s no difference between you and us,” the illusion said.

Was that really the case? They were mere duplicates of me, which was why they couldn’t feel the fear or dread of impending death.

There was a vast difference between us.

Their actual abilities were incompatible with the bodies they were using, which changed the mana and strength they could use. Well, that was something they couldn’t change.

“Why is it that you’re still alive?” I asked. Although he was stuck in the magma, he still had enough energy to talk to me.

“I drew up energy from my own powers,” he answered. It was too short of an answer, but it implied that he wouldn’t have suffered like this if he was in his original body.

It didn’t matter to me what he was. The most important thing was that I won today’s fight, and I’d win against them next time, even if they were in their original bodies. I was confident.

The last apostle was still talking to himself, but his words all sounded like nonsense. He’d soon be dragged into the magma.

As he died, I chuckled in satisfaction. I attempted to stifle my laughs, but I couldn’t hold back.

Yes, it was rude to laugh at someone dying, but so what? They were just illusions. It wasn’t like they were actually dying.

[Are you enjoying it?] Ahbooboo asked.

I responded to Ahbooboo affirmatively. I was elated. It had been a long time since I’d fought like this. It had been a long time since I’d experienced such a win, too. I was delighted with my success in this fight.

Wasn't it great? I was cheerful while the world was being consumed by flame.

[You have successfully cleared the stage.]

[Your mana and body are fully restored.]

[Calculating results.]

[Points earned: 6,900,390]

[Current rank: 1st]

[Please wait for the next stage]

How many points was that?

It would've been great to have been awarded a gift along with the scores, but according to Lee Joon Suk, the score only showed your rank.

[Your team members have left the stage.]

[Remaining team members (1/6)]

[Do you want to continue to the next stage?]

It looked like everyone escaped, which was fortunate. They could have died inside this stage.

I was glad they were alive. Maybe the system had let them leave beforehand? Maybe there was a way to let team members leave the stage first and wait.

I'd ask later.

I pressed on 'No' and tried to leave.

[The God of Adventure offers to let you become their apostle.]

[The God of Slow offers to let you become their apostle.]

[The God of Duel offers to let you become their apostle.]

[The God of Death offers to let you become their apostle. The God of Death deems the apostle trials as being of no use to you. If you accept, you'll become the God of Death's apostle without having to complete any trials.]

[The God of Light offers to let you become their apostle. The God of Light deems the apostle trials as being of no use to you. If you accept, you'll become the God of Light's apostle without having to complete any trials.]

[The God of the Sky offers to let you become their apostle. The God of the Sky deems the apostle trials as being of no use for you. If you accept, you'll become the God of the Sky's apostle without having to complete any trials.]

Some of the gods listed often interacted with me, and some, I had rarely been. All of them asked me to become their apostles. The God of Harvest, who I often saw within the stages, and even the God of Nature, who I was not friendly with, also offered me positions.

What a surprise.

My struggles for survival forced me to control my powers on a level higher than anyone else. I didn't expect that my increase in skill would make the gods send me endless offers. Perhaps my leap in power had shot beyond the standard power level the gods expected from challengers. Or perhaps the speculations regarding my true limits had finally been revealed, so they finally made the offer they initially put aside.

It made sense that after several gods gave their offers simultaneously, others simply followed their lead. Either way, I could never know for sure.

I decided just to let it go. It was surprising to see gods I'd never interacted with. Gods who disliked me, and even the God of Slow, who knows that I'll refuse to become an apostle, all gave me their offers.

What were they thinking? I was about to ignore it, but then I remembered something.

Kirikiri told me that no stages after the 49th floor allowed me to meet the gods. If I had known this, I would've challenged the 49th floor after the tournament.

"Tsk-tsk." I clicked my tongue and approached the floating portal.

Before I left, I took out my clothes from my inventory. The armour I'd been wearing was burnt to a crisp. I changed my clothes and checked my body's condition. The system ensured full recovery.

The surrounding heat was enough to ignite my clothes, but now, I had full control over my powers.

I entered the portal only after confirming there was nothing abnormal happening. I didn't forget to reject all apostleship offers before I left.

After a moment, the portal took me to the residence square. I was standing amid a crowd and could feel the world narrowing again.

I could identify anyone's domain the moment I saw them. I had some ideas regarding the invasion of domains, so I wanted to test them out.

Could I lift people up? I wanted to lift the person themselves without wrapping their body in mana or using physical force. If I could, I'd be able to wield my sword in its pure form.

I could burn it, freeze it, or even make it glow. I only knew a few kinds of magic, but I was curious about what kind of effects would be produced when magic invaded someone else's domain.

"Keek!" The frog welcomed me warmly.

"Yes, I'm happy to see you alive."

Was the frog the only one waiting for me? The others weren't here.

"Keek!"

"Yes, thank you."

The frog's best wishes made me feel much better.

I looked at the crowd once more. The people were enjoying themselves like today was the last day they had to live. It was a rare sight, and I was reminded of my time on the 18th floor.

Every time I saw people celebrating, the scene came back to mind, even though it was something I desperately wanted to forget.

What did I do back then? Memories of that time filled my mind.

"Keek!"

"It's loud, right? Let's head back to our room." The frog didn't like noise. He must have gotten tired, waiting for me all alone. We walked through the boisterous road, and as I walked, I recalled the words I said.

'Let's go back.' That was the wrong choice of words. I shouldn't have been heading back.

I was happy, and a sense of calm overtook my mind, but it wasn't a pleasant feeling.

Chapter 231.1

The Tournament (32)

[Lee Hyung-Jin]

As I laid on the bed, I repeatedly threw the monster ball up and down. I was dazed, frustrated, and lethargic. A strong sense of exhaustion and fatigue eroded my whole body.

It had been like this ever since I came to the competition stage. Was it because I was feeling helpless? I didn't think I could or should do anything.

It wasn't like this when I had taken part in the stage with Ho-Jae. With him, I was motivated after the struggle. After I suffered so much, I became so motivated and decided to survive by myself, thinking about my future plans.

That was until the gods became involved in the competition stage. After that, I had to run as far away as possible. I couldn't remember the exact situation at that time; I just knew I had to run. I did everything that I could to escape the endless explosions and the heat scorching the planet's land. Nevertheless, I almost died several times. If I had reacted just a moment too late, my party and I would have died in an explosion.

At the last moment, when I was buried deep on the other side of the planet, I felt a stable vibration underground. If the gods hadn't sent the party out in time, could they have survived? Probably not.

That's how I had judged it back then. The moment the tremor reached where I was, it would kill me. So I took out the monster ball, which had saved the female challenger named Lee Jin. I knew that if I stayed out there, I couldn't protect myself. But if I was in a monster ball, maybe I could live.

The monster ball could only fit one person, and at the time, I wasn't worried about Lee Jin. I was wondering whether I should kill the other members first or just go in. After I went into the monster ball, the others could take me out. After the explosion, if they still survived, they would have blamed me. Then, I thought it would be the right decision to kill everyone and then go in.

When I came back to the hotel after all the fuss, I had a lot of thoughts. I felt strange. Of course, I knew I was different. Trapped in this crazy hell, I couldn't help but change.

But I couldn't believe I thought of killing others so quickly. If the situation hadn't ended there, I was sure I would have executed my thoughts. Even if I regretted it in the future, that moment would still have taken lives.

I felt that I was acting strange. As if I wasn't being myself.

I felt a sense of scepticism and futility. Why was I struggling to survive like this? Was it right to live by hurting others?

I had never thought about it in the tutorial stage. No one had ever appeared on the 12th floor, where I was. It was dangerous, but at least I didn't have to kill the monster and feel guilty. I would gladly kill my party and then rejoice in the pleasure of my survival.

But was it okay for me to try to kill a person and treat them like a monster? Even if I was in danger of dying? The most painful thing was that if I were to be in the same situation again, I would likely try to kill another person. It was clear that I would make the irreversible decision faster than anyone else.

It wasn't just scepticism about myself that was bothering me. I was not confident in going through the stages of Hell's Difficulty. It was scary.

The fear I felt on the run seemed to be the same on the stage. It was not a question of whether I could clear the upper stages, but a fear that I would die if I went in.

[Lee Ho-Jae, 49th floor: Sorry.]

The message came at dawn, and we had quite a long conversation, but there were no feelings of resentment or disappointment.

I didn't hate him or feel bad about him. I was too scared to bear such a trivial feeling. I just repeated that it was okay, like a broken record.

"It's alright..." I breathed in deeply.

My chest felt hot and stuffy as if I had swallowed a lump of iron, and then, it suddenly became cold. I grabbed the monster ball, which had been repeatedly thrown and caught. The monster ball had done its part that day. It was the first time I had ever used this monster ball.

The monster ball wasn't bought in the store window; it was obtained after I cleared a stage as an additional reward. At first, I sneered, criticising the trash item they had given me.

This monster ball was seemingly useless to me, who was confronting the stage alone. Just because you had a monster ball, didn't mean it'd clear the stage for you. Instead, things would only become more dangerous while staying inside the monster ball.

But that day, the monster ball proved its usefulness admirably. When I was about to pass out, the monster ball helped me, and thus, I was still alive.

Without it, I would have died on the competition stage. Maybe I could use it again. The most problematic floor in Hell's Difficulty was the 17th floor. If I put myself in this monster ball and give it to Ho-Jae, I could skip the 17th floor and move upstairs. Wouldn't my chances of survival be much higher?

The question was whether this is possible. Damn it. I had to ask Kirikiri about this. I wished I had come up with this idea earlier.

Anyway, I'd take this and ask Hyung. I was supposed to meet Hyung

and the vice president of the Order of Vigilance this afternoon.

Feeling a little more optimistic, my complexion improved. As I was leaving, I remembered the god who gave me this monster ball as a gift. I once resented them for giving me useless items, but now I was really grateful.

The God of Hope.

The God of Hope really smiled at me.

[Kim Min-hyuk]

The book keeping is strange.

One or two figures were missing.

I tried to re-calculate it myself by checking from the beginning, but the end figure turned out to be quite different from the books.

This is not a mistake that an accountant would usually make.

Mistakes like this would inevitably have resulted in an abomination of a book.

This is a book written by a man who can't even write his diary properly, let alone a book.

What on earth was the author thinking?

Was the book keeper a preschooler who had yet to learn private accounting?

It's highly likely that it was written as a development token because it was associated with the market.

He probably wasn't interested in writing books in the first place.

I don't know who it is, but I'll have to tell whoever's in charge of the person who wrote this book that they are not to be entrusted with paperwork in the future.

I let out a sigh and pinched the bridge of my nose.

My eyes are burning and feel like they are about to pop out any moment. Maybe because I've been overworking them.

I took out a couple of potion bottles from the inventory.

After drinking a strength recovery potion and a wound healing potion, the pain slowly lessened.

I stretch out while seated on my chair, trying to release the stress from my tense shoulders and stiff back. Stretching made my body feel heavy instead.

I need a break.

I would usually drink a bottle of elixir at this point, but now that the elixirs' owned by the Order of Vigilance are out of stock, they've become a commodity I can't get my hands on.

The Order of Vigilance was suffering from a shortage of manpower.

As the population grows, the work to be done increases, but the number of people handling it remains the same.

We need reinforcements.

In fact, many people want to join the Order of Vigilance as clerks.

But the required standard was far too high.

I asked Park Jung-ah several times to ease the qualifications required a bit, but she refused.

I even put it on the meeting agenda, but most of the members, like

Park Jung-ah, rejected my proposal.

All the members who opposed were unrelated to office work.

Damn it.

I let out a deep breath.

I thought I'd be able to sleep tonight, but I still haven't accounted for the overnight account for this bill.

I really want to quit everything.

It's an idea that comes to mind several times a day.

I wanted to give up everything and just enjoy the festival. I craved more time with my lover.

Just last night, I was scolded for not paying attention to myself.

Since I work in the Order of Vigilance, most of my time was spent there. It was clear that other people wouldn't even understand what we were doing.

I briefly check the time and lean back on the chair.

I examine the items I had in advance in the inventory, to see if they were still fine, and then change my clothes.

There was a place I have to visit before writing these badly-written books from scratch.

Lee Ho-jae.

A few days after the tournament began, he ended up getting stuck in a training stage. Now, I need to visit this guy who didn't come out till the tournament ended.

In the first few days, Jung-ah spent her time in her room and strolled

around the market. But a day after participating in the tournament stage, she entered the training stage and never came out.

At that time, I had to try persuade him to go to the tournament first, using the training stage as an excuse.

Since then, I had to visit him in person every time.

I had lost my appetite.

My body slackens as memories of the past fill my mind.

When I neglected other things and only focused on my growth.

Maybe I should have postponed entering the tournament stage.

I put on my new clothes and fix my appearance in front of the mirror.

I always care about my appearance when I set off to meet him.

Even when we meet for a short walk at night, I prepare for a few minutes before that.

I need this appearance whenever I meet him.

He's always cautious of people.

It wasn't because he was timid.

If you're timid, you don't look at people that way.

Those eyes were one of a predator's, who looked at his opponent without any qualms.

While confronting that gaze that could peer deeply into someone's mind, I wanted to look more relaxed.

I wanted to maintain the attitude I held towards friends, not the

attitude towards superiors.

I didn't want to be caught having a hard time dealing with him and getting nervous from time to time.

He wanted it, too.

Contrary to his behaviour, he is quite lonely.

It's a story that no one on the Korean server would believe, but it was true.

He was very, very far from normal, but he liked a relationship that would make him converse normally. One that made him comfortable.

I'm trying to create such a relationship.

It wasn't easy to talk to someone who could kill a person with a slight move of his hands if he wanted to, all the while cracking bad jokes.

I wasn't all that comfortable, but I had to pretend to be comfortable.

Sometimes I wish that he was the head of the Order of Vigilance so the hierarchy would be established more firmly.

Of course, if that were the case, the Order of Vigilance and the Korean server would become a mess. But at least it would have been easier to deal with him.

Knock, knock

Knock.

I step away from the mirror and head for the door.

The only person who would knock in my room was a guest.

The Order of Vigilance would rather just send me a message than knock on my door and waste time.

And there was only one guest scheduled for today.

When I open the door, I see Lee Hyung-jin standing in front of the dark ebony door.

“Shall we go right away?”

“Yes.”

I leave the room with Lee Hyung-jin.

Outside the room were members of the Order of Vigilance working on the desks.

There was also Park Jung-ah.

I tried to assign her a separate room because she was the leader, but she hated being left alone in a small room.

.

She did so even though she knew that such behavior was uncomfortable for her subordinates.

Park Jung-ah, who was reviewing something while reading, raised her head to look at me.

“I’m going out for a minute.”

Park Jung-ah nodded and turned her eyes back to her file.

I didn’t say exactly where I was going.

I came out of the Order of Vigilance headquarters, being greeted by people on the way.

Each and every one of them asked me where I was going, so it took quite a while to get out.

I wasn't even going out for any work-related issues.

Damn it. Is this really the place I work for?

They really are family friends.

I walked out of the headquarters and onto the quiet streets.

It was time for everyone to fall asleep, so no one was seen walking around.

Lee Hyung-jin only walked silently.

Was he always this quiet?

I remember him as a more chatty friend.

I don't even know if I'm worried about something.

Walking down the street reminded me of the old days.

When I first created the Order of Vigilance and started this job.

Looking back now, it was amazing.

The Order of Vigilance began with Park Jung-ah's determination to beat all criminals and give the death sentence to those who deserved it.

At that, I had said, "Uh. Yes," and thus, the Order of Vigilance formed.

Although I had played a part in forming the Order, objectively speaking at the time, it was highly likely that the Order would become another criminal group.

It had been like that for some time since its formation.

The fact that it was able to come all this way, meant that we tried our

best to prevent it somehow and managed to reach our goal.

I soon reached the front of the square.

Rather than being on my way to meet my friend, I felt like I was going to either worship at a temple or shrine, or to even meet someone high up.

The stress made my steps heavy.

“Are you okay?”

Damn it.

Was it that obvious?

“I’m fine.”

There’s no way I can be alright.

I’m working myself to death.

If there was a way to end this fucking tournament any faster, I wanted to sell my soul and find out.

“Do you remember John Overtone?”

“Do you remember John Overton?” I ask Lee Hyung-jin.

He nods his head.

It was a few days ago, so of course you’ll remember.

“Did he cause any trouble on the stage?”

“On the tournament stage?”

“Yes, I did get a report from Jun-seok, but I was wondering if there was anything missing.”

Lee Hyung-jin ran into the portal with a weird look on his face.

After a while, we were moved from the middle of the square to a burning forest.

“What is this?”

Why is it burning?

I was thinking about going out again and sending a message, but then I see a figure walking through the fire.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

Kim Min-hyuk frowns at me as soon as I come.

I wanted to ask whether he came after making up his mind to nag today.

“Why are you ripping off the arm of a healthy American challenger? He was maintaining a good relationship with us, and was the only American kid here, so did you have to ruin that atmosphere?”

...I was right again, but when he snaps at me like this, I feel annoyed.

“What is it? What’s the matter? I’m sure there’s a good reason? There is one, right? ”

“There is a reason.”

“It should be a good reason. Enough to help us at the negotiating table.”

I’m sorry, but this probably won’t be of any help.

Why did I pull out John Overton's left arm?

This forest-themed stage is the one I've been using as a training ground since the day I entered and left the tournament stage.

Since that day, I've been training to recall and use that amazing power of being able to control the flames, with my will.

I was so engrossed in training yesterday, that I completely ignored the burning trees and the poor squirrels.

Meanwhile, John Overton visited my training stage.

That lunatic came over to me, drunk as a fish.

Listening to his irritating drivels of "I'm going to die." made me angry before I knew it.

So I grabbed his arm and yanked it out.

"Ah, how crazy."

Kim Min-hyuk rubbed the bridge of his nose.

Now that it's like this, I feel a little sorry.

"Please explain why..."

"For him."

Kim Min-hyuk looked at me with an absurd look, but it's true.

That's all I could do for John, who was half-mad, crying like a baby.

Hell difficulty's challengers are the ones who are most exposed to danger and death than anyone else.

This is for sure.

There is a huge difference in risk compared to other difficulty levels.

But that didn't mean that Hell Difficulty challengers wouldn't be scared or nervous while facing death and suffering.

Rather, other Hell Difficulty challengers, except for me, focus on avoiding attacks and respond sensitively to pain.

All of the Hell's Difficulty Challengers who have survived so far have done it like this.

Of course, John Overton is one of these challengers.

In Hell Difficulty, when you can't evade an attack once, or when you make a wrong judgment in a battle, you face a death crisis.

You can't get through it without having a firm attitude.

As a result, Hell Difficulty Challengers tend to be extraordinarily self-conscious.

In addition, their long-time escape from danger and death makes them even more cowardly.

The longer they're exposed to death, the more the fear of death accumulates in them.

In fact, there is no one who is not afraid of death, but Hell Difficulty Challengers should be able to overcome this fear.

It is impossible to clear the stage easily, avoiding all risks.

In the end, there will be a moment when you face danger and have to fight it head-on.

"...Why did you pull out his arm?"

"You've never had your arm pulled out, have you?"

Kim Min-hyuk nodded awkwardly at my words.

I knew it.

The sense of the arm being pulled out, especially the feeling of having the left arm being pulled out, is quite special.

When I lie in bed trying to force myself to sleep, I can't help but think of this feeling.

“When my left arm was pulled out, the cross section got filled up with blood. When you feel the blood spewing out of your blood vessels, your senses awaken.”

“...Awaken?”

“I could feel my heart thumping against my chest, as my left arm throbbed, blood pouring out. It feels like...”

When was it that my left arm first got cut off?

It was probably on the sixth floor.

A skeleton knight had cut off my shoulder.

Unlike a regular skeleton soldier holding a rusty sword, this one had quite a sharp sword.

My shoulder was sliced off in one stroke.

I felt the sensation for the first time then.

“You can feel death most cleanly and calmly.”

“...That's why you pulled John Overton's arm out.”

“You'll understand once you feel death.”

“What?”

“There’s nothing more I could do. Nothing would work better, other than fixing his rotten state of mind.”

Kim Min-hyuk continued to say something with a tired look, but I was able to get his approval by saying that I would solve the problem myself if I took it to the U.S.

Kim Min-hyuk may have nagged me in the first place in the hope that I would clean up my own shit.

“What’s that?”

For some reason, Lee Hyung-jin, who came with Kim Min-hyuk, had a ball in his hand. It’s something I have never seen before.

Lee Hyung-jin hid the ball behind him, jumping in surprise.

“Oh, nothing.”

Lee Hyung-jin put the ball back in his inventory, saying so.

I think he was going to give it to me.

I shouldn’t have asked.

* * *

While I and Kim Min-hyuk were talking, Lee Hyung-jin asked if it was okay to look around for a while.

I have no problems, so I say yes.

He’ll see nothing but cut, broken and burned trees anyway.

Ah. If he goes deeper, he may find many animal carcasses.

“Here. Taming scroll and ring. You can write your name on the contract and agree with each other.”

Kim Min-hyuk hands over a scroll and a ring.

Certainly, the scroll contains the detailed provisions of the necessary orders and contracts.

Kim Min-hyuk didn't tell, but I could read as much.

Is it over if I wear the ring after finishing the contract?

It seems simple.

“Kea-ek!”

The frog, who's quiet next to me, cries out.

The frog must want to sign a contract too, after seeing me.

“You follow very well, frog. I've heard about it, but it's amazing to see it in person.”

“Yes, it's a female.”

I answer lightly, but Kim Min-hyuk's response is strange.

As if embarrassed, he holds his breath quickly and stammers.

“What, what, what does that mean?”

What do I mean?

I decide to explain before there's a bigger misunderstanding.

“My face is usually favoured by amphibians and reptiles.”

It's a face that could easily be liked by similar humans with frog or

lizard heads.

If you ask me what kind of face it is, I can't explain.

I don't know why they like it either because I'm neither a reptile or an amphibian.

"Oh, my God. I see now. You have a wide defense range."

I chat with Kim Min-hyuk for a moment.

"Oh, and I think we need to look out more for repairing the holy sword. It's not hard to fix the weapon itself, but since it's a holy sword, the task's a bit tricky."

Kim Min-hyuk explains.

"But it's not like there's no way out. If it doesn't work, you can ask the managers later."

I'm relieved by Kim Min-hyuk's words.

It seems that the same is true for Ahbooboo.

Ahbooboo flew around frantically.

I want to get him to quit because his constant flying is annoying, but I couldn't say anything since I, too am excited.

"The sword is so cute."

"Hah, cute. If you hear him fucking talk, you'll never say that again."

"What's he saying?"

Kim Min-hyuk asks curiously.

I thought I'd explain, but I shut up.

I didn't want to harm my mental health by telling him.

"Lastly, the gods I spoke to you about. You said it isn't good to be too involved with the gods." Kim Min-hyuk says, scratching the back of his head.

"Yes."

"I'd like to ask which god would be best associated with."

Kim Min-hyuk says, "It's a question that I've heard a lot from hard-difficulty challengers."

Certainly, the degree of the apostle, the attention, and the skill reward is a positive factor.

Which god would be the most beneficial?

I can't tell him about a god I don't know of, so I answer only from the gods I've had experiences with.

"God of Duel and God of Nature."

I further explain in detail to Kim Min-hyuk, who asks why.

"There's a clear desire for the challenger, and the god he follows, needs to help him fulfil his desire. It's not particularly bad to hope, and above all, the skills and power involved will be beneficial to the challenger."

The gods that could be of help are the gods of duel and the gods of nature.

"God of adventure? I had the most opinions about him."

I'm sure you have a lot of opinions.

He looks the most generous.

But he was the most formidable.

“You’d better rule him out as much as possible. The god of adventure loves to achieve something against adversity, so you may think it will help, but the process of enduring adversity will be a problem.”

[The God of Adventure is disappointed.]

“The interrelationship with others will also be a problem. The most unusual thing about the god of adventure is that he has deep relationships with humans and understands them. It’s quite unique considering the way the gods usually treat humans.”

“Isn’t that a good thing?”

“Not necessarily. God of adventure values the process, not the results. He isn’t a god who tolerates a relatively wrong process for the right result. He doesn’t ignore the people victimized, but rather wants to get closer to them and feel the anguish, all for the sake of understanding them.”

“Hmm...”

It seemed like the explanation didn’t really satisfy Kim Min-hyuk.

“To explain it in a bad way, he’s a god who wants to walk on thorns both physically and mentally. Don’t be fooled by him. It’s better to just skip the god of adventure.”

[The God of Adventure is disappointed.]

Why do you feel disappointed?

For other challengers, the god of adventure is the worst.

[The God of Adventure is perplexed.]

“Oh, and if there’s a challenger associated with the God of Hope, tell him to stop interacting right away. It’s a terrible thing.”

Chapter 232

Tutorial 55th Floor (1)

“What? Is it over already?”

I think it ended too soon.

I felt empty because it ended more easily than I expected.

The theme of the 55th floor stage was simple.

To save Young-ae from the curse, I have to challenge the worst sealed dungeon to retrieve the jewels hidden at the heart of the dungeon.

I was counting on this stage not because of the concept behind it, but because of what Kirikiri told me before entering the stage.

When I told Kirikiri that I would be back soon, she had said that I might not be able to meet her soon.

She sounded very confident, so I guessed that the difficulty of the 55th floor stage was quite high.

But it was too easy.

Dungeons, which were filled constantly, crawling creatures that kept trying to hide in corners, were obviously tricky.

It would have been a pretty tough dungeon for someone else, but not for me.

The fact that Kirikiri said it would take a long time to clear was strange.

I check the time, and it has been less than a day since I entered the stage.

“Ahbooboo, look around for any hidden thing around you.”

[It looks normal.]

“Are you sure?”

[I'm sure]

Hearing Ahbooboo say this, I am pretty sure.

Still, just in case, I had him look for a hidden space beyond the walls, ceilings and floors.

Ahbooboo mumbled in complaint, but still looked around and searched the area.

He was no longer in the form of a sword.

Ever since he got badly damaged on the tournament stage, his blade had yet to be repaired.

Now, Ahbooboo is floating around, leaving behind some glowing crystals that were his blade's core.

Although his function as a sword has been completely lost, it was not too big of a loss.

He has high intelligence and magical powers and can even carry out divine magic in case of emergency.

In fact, ever since I got Ahbooboo, I've been using him more like a magic aid than a sword, so there's not much difference.

Rather, he was small and quite easy to carry around.

Of course, he himself was very distressed.

His dignity had disappeared.

He grumbles so much when he was tied with a purple silk handkerchief to a core the size of a child's fist.

At first, he hated it because it was strange, but now he was flying around well, silk handkerchief appearing like a cape.

After receiving a message from Kim Min-hyuk that he could not find a way to repair him, I asked Kirikiri. But she replied there was no immediate way.

I was a little shocked because I thought it would be possible to repair him.

Ahbooboo is disappointed.

Kirikiri advised to go up to the 60th floor and find a way again, just as the store window had been updated once after crossing the 30th floor.

I was waiting to see if there was no other way of fixing him.

Perhaps Ahbooboo was relieved to hear it from me, and his grumbling greatly reduced.

He was wandering in every corner of the dungeon, with a purple handkerchief flapping behind him.

I can see that the handkerchief is getting dirty.

I'll have to buy him a new handkerchief or wash that handkerchief.

[No.]

“Then is this dungeon really normal?”

[I told you so.]

Ahbooboo was sure, but I was still suspicious.

Tutorial stages sometimes fuck people with different elements of difficulty.

I thought this might be the case.

The fake goods turn into genuine articles, or in fact, leave not even one gem to collect.

“Well... I doubt it, but let's go for now.”

It could be the kind of stage where you have to make a fool of yourself to open the next stage.

Oh, that's right.]

Chapter 233.1

Tutorial 55th Floor (2)

[You have cleared the 55th floor.]

I had cleared the 55th floor in the Hell's Difficulty level.

[All abnormalities and injuries have been recovered]

[You have earned 10000 points as a clear reward]

[You have earned 10000 points as the first clear reward]

[There are many gods who responded positively towards you. You have earned 84,000 points]

[There are many gods who responded negatively towards you. 11,000 points will be deducted.]

[You have earned 3,300 points as compensation.]

“Hmm...”

[See, it's real.]

The jewels were genuine, and as soon as I returned to the castle with them, Sung-Joo accepted them. It was an incredibly easy ending.

“If you don't have any other plans, why don't you take a few days off and stay at the castle?” said Sung-Joo.

As soon as Sung-Joo accepted the blue jewel, his face twisted with tears that wouldn't stop pouring out.

The 55th floor's mission was to find jewelry materials for treating the cursed spirit. And the old man, Sung-Joo, who repeatedly blew his nose in front of me, was the father of said spirit, the lord of this region.

Sung-Joo, who had begun to act unnecessarily clingy, kept saying that it was too late to go anywhere and that he wished to repay me in any way possible.

His attitude was abnormal and made me increasingly exasperated. His eagerness to keep me at the castle was certainly questionable.

"Fine, I won't go anywhere." I'd given up.

With my compliance, Sung-Joo was thrilled enough to do a somersault.

He really was a burden.

It was late today, and I was tired of getting jewelry, so I told Sung-Joo that we'd talk again tomorrow.

I was led to the room by a servant of the lord.

It was only after the servant left that I escaped, to explore the castle.

In the past, I'd always went straight to the dungeon, so I never had time to look around the castle properly.

Along the spacious corridor were various artworks including paintings and sculptures.

Even in the evening, bright lights shone throughout the hall, so there was no shortage of exhibits.

One could easily tell how luxurious the castle was just by looking at the exotic, textured carpet and high ceilings.

But what caught my eye more than that was the night view.

The castle was home to countless buildings reminiscent of skyscrapers on Earth, each of which was decorated with bright lights and decorations.

The scenery from the top of such tall buildings was gorgeous. Standing atop the tallest tower in Seongju, one could see the entirety of downtown.

I opened the window, stuck my head out, and looked down. I could see that this building was only about 20 stories high.

If we can develop science and magic together, the result could be similar to modern cities like this.

I've seen many wonderful panoramas while clearing stages, but the problem was that I was never able to appreciate it properly.

I'm a little disappointed to think that I've been too focused on clearing floors and ignored these wonderful sights.

* * *

"Where is the bathroom?" I asked.

"Do you need guidance?" a servant gently responded.

"No... Never mind."

I refused the servant and began to look around the room once more. The room was so humongous that just calling it a room didn't do it justice. It would take some time to look around the room.

I walked around, confirming the location of the bathroom and the kitchen, and went to lie down on the huge, soft bed.

When I did so, the strength in my body drained away.

Soon after, I felt a sense of refreshment, and it was as if my head suddenly cleared up.

“Ahbooboo. It’s magic, isn’t it?”

[Yes, it’s all on the bed. They’re too clever, actually managing to fit magic in a bed. It’s great.]

I can’t believe they have a magic bed to relieve a user. It was quite an unexpected luxury. I don’t think they’d sell this kind of bed in the in-game store, so couldn’t I just steal one of these?

As I was thinking, Seregia, who had been quiet, called out to me.

[Warrior.]

“Yes?”

I often talked to Ahbooboo or KiriKiri, but Seregia never spoke to me first, so I answered immediately.

[Won’t you go to the next location? The portal has already been created.] Seregia nagged.

I put the armor I was wearing in my inventory and changed into more comfortable clothes.

The spirit sword, which is usually at my waist, was also pushed to the edge of the bed.

“I’m going to get some rest.”

[What?]

I’ve already cleared the 55th-floor, and I’m thinking of taking a few days off here. I really needed a break, but I’m still concerned about Kirikiri’s words.

And if I’m going to rest, I want to rest in a lively place like this, not in a solitary waiting room.

I heard that there would be some servants who would come to take

care of me tomorrow morning.

I want to learn a little more about this place, which has high standards of living and uses technical skills, like magic.

Challengers who have cleared the tutorial are moving to Earth one by one. It was inevitable that magic would spread to Earth through challengers.

That's what I explained to Seregia.

[Okay.] Seregia replied in a stiff tone.

After Ahbooboo's blade repair plan failed, it became harder to see him as the person who once monopolized the main position in his party.

I laid in bed, rubbing my chin while thinking.

Come to think of it, I'd often told myself I wanted to know more about cultures on different floors. I'd often thought I should spend more time at each level, appreciating their unique culture. But I'd never actually been interested in their culture. It was just an excuse to take a break, as I was obsessively pushing myself.

For the first time, I felt a genuine interest in the culture of this floor. I was curious and asked Kim Min-hyuk to collect more information if he could. Above all, I felt that I really needed a break.

Heading on to the next floor immediately didn't seem like the right step in this case.

Chapter 233.2

Tutorial 55th Floor (3)

“Yes, thanks to you, I’m resting well.”

The old butler’s face glowed when he heard my answer.

“Thank God. If you have time in the evening, the lord has requested to have a meal together.”

“Oh, that’s a bit tough. I’m still tired, so I want to rest more.”

“Yes, then I will tell him,” The old butler said, trying his best to mask his disappointment.

“Then tomorrow...” The butler attempted again.

“No.”

“Oh, alright...”

There was no sign of disappointment, but I could sense his tenacity.

“Well, I’ll see you again at lunchtime.”

“Are you going?”

The butler and other servants had prepared a rather sumptuous breakfast, so it was a shame and a bit embarrassing to eat the food alone.

After staring at other people who were eating, I gently suggested that we all eat together, and they gladly agreed.

During mealtime, I became increasingly familiar with the butler's mentality. He was a gentle, calm man, possibly because his task was to serve other people. Above all, he provided detailed explanations of the culture and knowledge of the surrounding area.

If possible, I'd like the old butler in my room all day.

"Yes, there are things we need to prepare. If you have urgent business, please call us."

When he sensed my hesitation, the butler handed me a small cube-shaped object from his pocket.

"It's a calling machine. When you press the red button here, you'll be able to get in touch with me, and I'll respond as soon as I can."

The surprisingness of the object didn't result from its performance, but its unusually compact size and small weight.

It was so light that it seemed as though there was nothing in it; it was no bigger than a finger, and it seemed like it would be easily lost.

"Can I press it once?"

The butler nodded in response.

When I pressed the red button, a similar button within the butler's clothes began to vibrate; it was like a pager. The only difference was that numbers could not be sent.

"Are there other buttons connected to this pager?"

"Yes, and you'll know who called you by the positioning of the button. The button that's vibrating right now is the second one from above. We all have a fixed location."

"Who does the first button belong to?"

"Sung-Joo."

This was fun. The staff who cleaned the castle and the soldiers around Seongju all wore buttons, so I'd thought it was merely a fashion statement here, but it served for practical reasons.

"Do you need anything else?" the butler asked before leaving the room.

There was one thing I needed. "I want to learn magic here. Is that possible?"

Magic was a closed practice in any world, and in some cases, sharing knowledge and trying to purchase magical artifacts were considered taboo.

"Are you interested in Mado Engineering?"

"Yes, will it be okay?"

Was it not magic, but engineering? I became curious.

"Yes, of course. We have a variety of curriculums. Do you want a detailed guide on each curriculum?"

"Just give me one that's beginner-oriented."

I didn't know the content or organization of the curriculum, and it was likely that I wouldn't understand it.

If possible, it'd be best to learn the basics first.

During the break, I wanted to learn as much as possible, but there was a possibility that I wouldn't be able to get anything from being greedy.

"Then I'll see you again at lunchtime." Before the butler left the room, he said his farewells once more, and in response, I returned the gesture.

"Kee-ek!"

When I said bye, the frog, who had been sitting quietly in the corner, began to follow me. The butler politely said farewell to not only me but also the frog before he left the room. After his departure, the room became eerily quiet.

Although several servants remained in the room, they worked quietly, not daring to make a sound. It seemed that even though we shared a meal, our relationship didn't become any more intimate.

"Frog."

"Kee-ek!"

"Would you like to come in?" I asked while raising my hand, showing the taming ring I'd received from Kim Min-hyuk.

The best aspect of the ring was that it was able to form subpoenas with others, allowing me to summon them whenever I wished.

It created a sub-dimensional space of the summoned's most desired environment. For a frog, it'd be more comfortable to rest in the sub-dimensional space rather than this room.

"Kea-ek!"

"Okay. Just stay here, then," I exasperatedly told the frog, and laid back in bed.

As the bed applied magical effects to my body, I quickly slipped into a deep slumber. It wasn't long before I had to wake up, but the exhaustion that weighed down my body made me want to continue to sleep.

Getting out of the bed proved to be a more difficult challenge than I'd expected.

[What are you going to do?] asked Seregia.

"I told you I'm taking a break."

Seregia didn't respond to my answer, but its silence didn't mean approval; it meant that it expected a more detailed explanation.

"I'll be learning magic when the time comes. Oh, let's go outside and look around from tomorrow. This is a pretty unique place."

The characteristics of the area that I saw when I first entered the stage were unusual.

I wanted to see how it truly was with my own eyes.

Chapter 234

Tutorial 55th Floor (4)

“Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

After lunch, a teacher called by the butler came by. Supposedly, he was a teacher who instructed the basics of Mado engineering, a rather arduous subject.

“Ahbooboo, do you understand this?”

[Yes.] Ahbooboo, who was in class with me, dressed in a flapping handkerchief in the air, replied.

Damn it.

[It's normal that you don't understand at your level.]

“What do you mean?”

I'm at a level where primitive people who work with stone tools are forced to memorize the equation of ballistics. How big of a difference is that?

The 26th floor, where Ahbooboo was located, was a world where the war between humans and tribes was fierce, so they actively used magic shells and weapons.

If you look at it, it's Mado engineering in a way, so it wouldn't be that hard for Ahbooboo to understand, since he's familiar with the magic of this world.

That's how I got Ahbooboo to attend the class, but I became

uninterested after being unable to understand a single word. I never thought that I wouldn't be able to even understand the basics.

[What did you expect from someone who doesn't even know the basics of magic? You're a primitive man here.]

"I'm not a primitive man at all. I know how to use the elemental series of attack magic."

[That's like a primitive stone axe.] Ahbooboo mercilessly commented.

I think he wanted to brag about himself rather than make fun of me.

I asked the teacher, who was watching me and Ahbooboo talk, if he could proceed with class without me.

"Yes, of course." He gladly accepted, saying it would be fine.

The teacher, who had been openly showing interest in Ahbooboo the first time he saw him, didn't miss this one-on-one opportunity.

I don't think I can do well in the Mado engineering class, even if I learn it.

It's not like I can study it for months or years; I was just here for a few days.

Judging from the pacing of the class, it seemed impossible to learn something in depth in just a few days.

I thought it would be better to let Ahbooboo, who could understand the class, remember the concepts here, and then teach me later.

[No.] Of course, Ahbooboo didn't want to teach me magic because his presence was fading.

"I won't fix you."

[Of course I will! Hmph... Your true self is showing.]

“There’s nothing free in the world. Everything comes at a price.”

After a brief scuffle, I was able to get Ahbooboo’s consent. In hopes of getting his blade fixed, Ahbooboo had no choice but to obey me.

[In spite of your wickedness.]

“What?”

[Keeek!]

“What the fuck?!”

[Keeek!]

“Kee-ek!”

When Ahbooboo mimicked the frog, the frog couldn’t stay still, telling him not to copy what he says.

* * *

After dinner, I came out of the room and headed outside the castle.

Ah, of course, I left Ahbooboo back in the room. He was still in the room with my teacher.

When I climbed onto the walls and looked out, I found the ground covered with red spirit stones.

There’s always a certain amount of power coming out of them. Naturally, it was very harmful if a person was directly exposed to such power.

People laid huge floors on the ground covered with pebbles, and the city was built on top of it. Here, the city was regarded as a single building.

I’d heard the backstory of the castle, something that was quite pitiful.

Outside the castle was a huge minefield; spirit stones covered the ground, stretching beyond the horizon. Workers, who looked as small as ants, labored throughout the day, transporting spirit stones to the city by railroad. The workers were all dressed in white, protective clothing.

I'd have to check out that protective suit later, and I'll take one if possible.

“Kee-ek!”

“Yes. It really looks like an island.”

It was as the frog said. The castle looked like a small island isolated in a sea of spirit stones.

Of course, no other cities or villages existed around here. Ordinary people couldn't live in such a harsh environment.

The dimension gate managed by Sung-Joo was the only thing that connected this solitary place to the outside world.

It was a sort of mining city. Through the dimension gate, people mined products, sold spirit stones, and imported other daily necessities.

It was a dangerous, lonely environment, but as rumor had it, people who dug up spirit stones could bring home quite a bit of money. As time passed, those who mined together formed their own society.

That was the history of this castle.

[What's wrong?] Seregia asked.

Seeing this, I'm worried.

Perhaps the most valuable thing that we have gained from the tutorial was information about Earth. In Korea, the occurrence rate of monsters is low, so the damage caused wasn't significant. Perhaps, because of that, there's relatively little information about monsters.

There are two main threats that are now threatening Earth, gates that appeared unexpectedly, and monsters that were either leaked or naturally occurring.

When a gate appeared, nearby animals and plants would morph into aggressive monsters. Therefore, it was said that gates are most dangerous when formed in ranches or forests where livestock are abundant.

Maybe humans could be affected by the gate. This possibility was still being researched.

One more important piece of information was that small stones came out of the bodies of such monsters; the stones could be used as fuel.

When monsters began to appear around the world, the most dangerous spawning locations were power plants. The appearance of monsters in such areas caused unimaginable terror.

Supply of crude oil had been cut off. Mining, distillation, and distribution of crude oil all became difficult. In places like Korea, the main issue wasn't aggressive monsters, but the inability to secure fuel and natural resources.

Against this backdrop, stone fragments from the monster's body have become major sources of energy that can be procured anytime, anywhere. Even if I were to go back to Earth, kill all the monsters, and destroy the gates, not all the problems would be solved.

If they can't find new energy sources, Earth would have to continue to rely on monsters. I imagined that Earth would look similar to this isolated castle. The people there were like the miners here, only able to secure a certain amount of safety with protective walls, while risking their lives to take spirit stones.

Of course, I wished that all the problems would be easily solved, but I've never seen things end well when I want them to.

Chapter 235

Tutorial 55th Floor (5)

“A banquet?”

“Yes, it’s this evening.”

Why are you telling me this now? I guess it’s because you’ve started to understand me.

Ever since I’d decided to take a few days off from the 55th floor, Sung-Joo had been relentlessly inviting me for meals. Of course, I refused many times.

After those repeated rejections came an invite for a banquet hosted by Sung-Joo.

The guilty feeling of continuously turning down Sung-Joo’s invitations had been nagging at me, so I was about to suggest having a meal together, but it seemed like attending the banquet would also serve to ease my guilt.

When I asked the butler, he’d said he’d already planned for the impromptu banquet a few days in advance.

The butler assumed that I was interested in the banquet, and he explained the event logistics in significant detail. He chattered on for minutes about the status of the preparations, how many people had been invited, and how many days the banquet would last.

After listening to the butler’s droning, I felt an inexplicable urge to simply stand and run away from all his babbling, but I resisted the urge and listened to him some more.

“And this banquet will be attended by Young-ae.”

“Is she well? After suffering from that curse and what not.”

The clear mission of the 55th floor-stage was to get jewelry from the Dungeon to save Young-ae from the curse.

“Yes, thanks to the apostle. You’ve recovered much faster than expected.”

(T/N: apostle here refers to Lee Ho-jae, in case you didn’t know.)

Continuing his rambling, the butler began to narrate Young-ae’s features in detail from how beautiful she was to the nature of her mannerisms.

The sight of an old man portraying a girl in her late teens as a goddess sent shivers down my spine. I’d seen him numerous times in the past few days, but I still couldn’t get used to him.

Next, the butler also told me about Young-ae’s role in the banquet.

“Letter?”

“Yes, this is a letter from Young-ae to the apostle.”

“...Will that be recited in the banquet hall? In public?”

“Yes, it’s one of the main events of this banquet.”

That was weird.

Going to a crowded banquet hall was already intolerable enough, but I could force myself to endure.

Honestly, I was curious about the banquet. But damn, that letter reading was going to be disturbing.

First of all, I replied to the butler that I understood and quickly sent him out. The sooner he left, the better.

The butler exited with great joy once I agreed to join the banquet.

[Are you really going?]

“Are you crazy?”

As long as there was an event of Young-ae reciting the letter, I wouldn't go to the banquet. You wanted me to listen to a letter in front of people? At the banquet's main event? I couldn't care less about the content of the letter and just knew that there was no way in hell I'd be going there.

Of course, I could just be overreacting. Young-ae's letter could be a thank you note for my services. But then, isn't it more natural for Sung-joo to be the one giving his thanks?

I remembered the recent actions of the butler, such as praising Young-ae excessively, trying to keep me informed of Young-ae, asking if I could meet Young-ae, who was lying in bed, and tell her about me, and on and on.

I recalled confessing to my crush in front of the whole school when I'd been a student. It was an old memory, but it amazed me that I was able to recall the event with such detail. No matter how I thought about it, the banquet reminded me too much about that dark memory.

“Let's make a run for it.”

[I knew it! Hu Hu Hu Hu. Seregia, I'll grant you a wish later.]
Ahbooboo chuckled.

[If it's a strange wish, I'll say no.]

I guess the two of them even made a bet.

Ahbooboo, who'd already lost his chance to get fixed, often flew around, but usually hung on a handkerchief tied to a soul sword possessed by Seregia. Perhaps because of that, I felt like the two were getting close recently.

Are they dating?

When I was awake, I could hear what they were talking about, but I had no idea what they were talking about while I was asleep. Just like how I didn't know about the bet they made.

I'll ask them later about their relationship. If the relationship they have now is still in the stage where they maintain a subtle distance from each other, then my question could unintentionally strike a sore spot.

"Ahbooboo. You remember Mado Engineering right?"

[Yes, yes. I remember everything I learned. I also remember what parts I didn't understand.]

"Don't forget or get confused later."

After confirming that Ahbooboo knew about Mado engineering, I called the frog.

"Hey frog, we're going to use the ring."

"Kee-ek!"

The frog disapproved, but the ring activated to bring us back to the sub-dimensional world.

Ever since I'd cleared the 55th floor, there'd been a portal hovering around me.

"Move."

* * *

[Welcome to the waiting room on the 56th floor]

"What is this?"

After using the portal, I thought I'd naturally be moved over to Kirikiri's fields, but the place where I'd gotten transported to was near a waterfall.

Before I entered the 55th floor, I remembered that Kirikiri said I wouldn't be able to see her soon. I assumed that she meant I'd have to stay longer on the 55th floor. But now that I see it, she didn't mention the process of clearing the 55th floor.

"This is awkward."

[What's wrong?] Ahbooboo asked, but for now, I remained silent.

Was it because I had to learn something from the 55th floor or did Kirikiri think I needed a break? Even though I was grateful, I had questions.

If after clearing the stage, the process of being transported to Kirikiri's field had been omitted, then when would I be able to see Kirikiri again? What kind of place is this?

The notification indicated that this was the waiting room, but there was no sign of a portal for the next stage. In the waiting room, there was no furniture, such as beds, that would've usually been there.

There was just a massive waterfall. Releasing my mana, I looked around, and found out that a huge cave lied behind the waterfall.

I went into the cave, but it ended up being eerily empty. Even small creatures such as bugs and bats couldn't be seen. The only thing in the cave was a crystal ball that layed, discarded, near the bottom of the cave.

[Hello.] A resonating voice came out of the crystal ball and greeted me.

"Who are you?"

[Challenger, I'm Karin, who will guide you till the 59th floor.]

The voice from the crystal ball had taken the name ‘Karin’. The most important thing was that the voice referred to me as a challenger.

“Are you part of the Tutorial System?”

The voice didn’t answer my question immediately. After a brief pause, it spoke.

[You may see it that way, but it’s more of a vaccine than a tutorial.]

What? I’ve been hearing a lot of strange stories today.

“Then, are you like a manager?”

There was a manager for each difficulty level in the tutorial. In the case of Hell’s difficulty, Kirikiri filled that role.

[From your point of view, it’s similar, but the reality is quite different.]

It was similar. But the reality was different. But from my point of view, it was similar. Are you saying that you belonged to the same system? That you’re an equal? Firstly, I don’t think this thing can ever replace Kirikiri.

I asked for a detailed explanation from the voice. Fortunately, the voice began to explain as I’d requested.

[My role here is to decide which stage is right for you.]

“Stage?”

[Yes, I will decide which stage you will go to, from the 56th floor to the 59th floor.]

It meant that the content of the stage could change depending on the voice’s intention. I decided to ask more about this later, and

appreciated the fact that there was an end to the 59th floor.

“After clearing the 59th floor, can I meet Kirikiri again?”

This was the most important question. A new store window would open as soon as I entered the 60th floor. I yearned to listen to Kirikiri’s advice, preferably before entering the 60th floor.

[KiriKiri?]

“Hell’s Difficulty Manager.”

[Oh. Yeah, as you said, once we clear the 59th floor, we’ll see her again.]

Kirikiri’s position in the tutorial, no, in the vaccine, seemed to be quite high. It was a predictable statement, but quite puzzling to learn it this way.

“Then are you an apostle?”

I didn’t think it was God. Apostle came to my mind first when she said she belonged to a vaccine war.

[No.]

No, she’s not. There’s nothing that fits today.

[I don’t belong to one God. I’m just working for a vaccine war. To put it bluntly, it’s a slightly higher position than a typical apostle.]

You needn’t explain something that I didn’t ask... I continued to ask more questions.

“Why are you talking through the crystal ball? And also, why was this important crystal ball discarded on the bottom of the cave?”

[The gods said it would be better to talk through the crystal ball. I don’t know.]

It's better to not question a God's advice.]

It's better to not question a God's advice? What a funny remark. Maybe it was because people usually get disappointed or embarrassed when they hear the reason.

I became even more interested in the reason. The voice, "Karin," was seen as a member of the vaccine war and interacted comfortably with the gods.

I was curious about the identity of the voice. "What exactly are you? What do you usually do other than the role of giving a stage?"

Listening to me, Karin gladly introduced itself again.

"Dragon?"

[Yes.]

Karin's voice showed pride in its race. It wasn't a sin to be proud.

I remembered the people on the 20th floor worshipping dead dragons like gods. For them, dragons were divine beings. After hearing the word dragon, it felt strange to think it was related to the vaccine war.

On the other hand, I was happy. Dragon.

Oh. My. God.

"Hey."

[Huh?]

"Come out for a second. Let me see your face for a moment."

[...Can I hear why you want to meet me and why?]

"Why? Because I want to see a dragon in person. It's been a dream since I was a kid."

[Don't lie to me.]

Damn it. Was it that obvious? Suddenly, it became alert.

“You have to decide which stage is right for me. Wouldn't it be better to meet me in person? You know, to measure my combat capabilities.”

[But the gods advise...]

“Scared?”

At my words, Karin sounded embarrassed and shouted, [What coward! I am a dragon! Even though you're a challenger, do you think I'm going to be scared of you?]

“Then come out for a moment, yea?”

[...]

“Scared?”

Chapter 236

Tutorial 56th Floor (1)

[No, I will heed the advice of the gods.]

Despite my continuous provoking, Karin remained firm in her stance. That was too bad, but I'd thought that provoking Karin would've been an effective method.

If Karin kept trying to refuse me so stubbornly, I'd have no choice but to use force.

“Alright, alright. I won't ask you to fight, so come out.”

[No.]

I wondered if I should, once again, try to taunt Karin with an “Are you scared?”, but I refrained from doing so in fear of pissing off the dragon. It'd be disadvantageous if I did something stupid in this circumstance. I was already told that my actions here would determine my next stage, so I'd have to watch my mouth.

“But we have to talk face-to-face. Come out. I promise I won't come at you.”

[You're a terrible liar.]

Damn it. It must have been obvious again. I'd never thought that my lying skills were this horrendous, but I guess my excitement about meeting a dragon was hard to mask.

For now, I'd have to give up on my dream of fighting a dragon; after all, you can't fight someone who refuses to meet you.

Gripping the crystal ball in my hand, I maneuver my way out of the

cave.

[Where are you going?] Karin asked through the crystal ball.

Was it possible that the crystal ball could transmit not only voices but also visibility of the surrounding environment?

“It’s better to talk in front of a waterfall than a smelly, dreary cave full of year-old bat shit.”

Karin remained silent as I plopped down in front of the waterfall. I rummaged through my inventory to pull out a simple chair and tent as space for me to think.

Currently, Karin seemed upset. One of my friends used to sulk in silence, and it seemed as though Karin was doing the same.

By the time I finished propping up the cave, Karin hadn’t said a single word to me.

Settling myself down into a comfortable position on the chair, I picked up the crystal ball and asked, “Is the cave your home?”

From rumors, dragons were supposed to live in obscure places, and this waterfall cave fit that very definition. It was massive and had a high ceiling with no stalactites that could interfere with movement. In addition, it had a familiar stank, a dragon’s unique, subtle smell.

It was similar to Idy’s smell that I’ve become able to recognize after living with her for a long time. The smell emanating from the cave was slightly different, though. It had a much stronger fishy smell that Idy’s body odor, and at first, I’d thought it was merely the cave’s natural odor, but now that I think about it, it might’ve been the smell of a dragon.

[...] Karin mumbled something incomprehensible, and then, once more, reverted to being dead silent.

Shortly after the question left my mouth, I realized I’d made a mistake. The question could’ve been taken in two possible ways. Was

the cave her home? Or could the cave be even considered a house?

I thought of ways to relieve the dragon's bad mood, but gave up and just decided to have a meal. I made a bonfire and took out a package of food from my inventory.

* * *

After eating my fill, I went inside the tent to lie down and peacefully watch the hypnotizing waterfall.

It was a bad habit to lie down right after eating, but I was too tired to care that much.

Suddenly, Ahbooboo whispered into my ear, [Warrior.]

Come to think of it, I'd completely forgotten that Ahbooboo existed. Once the stage was cleared, Ahbooboo and Seregia were automatically moved into my inventory. Perhaps that was why Ahbooboo had remained quiet.

[Warrior, is it really a dragon beyond that crystal ball?] Ahbooboo asked.

[That's what it says, yes.] replied Seregia.

Ahbooboo's whispering made me feel anxious, and I hummed in response to his question.

[Couldn't it be a lie?]

[No, I don't think so.]

I didn't think it was a lie either. Ahbooboo hesitated for a moment before saying to me, [If it's really a dragon, then it's best to make him feel better.]

[Why?] Seregia questioned.

[Dragons are very stingy creatures.] Ahbooboo complained and elaborated on various stories about stingy dragons.

One of the slanderous stories that Ahbooboo mentioned was about a founding emperor who called himself a dragon. When a dragon came to visit the emperor's funeral, it had endlessly spouted sarcastic and unflattering comments on the emperor. The stories portrayed dragons as cheap and shameful.

I decided to take Ahbooboo's advice to lighten up Karin's mood that had been damaged in the cave incident. But it was slightly too late to apologize for my slip of the tongue.

"Hey," I spoke to the crystal ball.

[What?] Karin answered, and a wave of relief washed over me.

"You're not upset, are you?"

[...No.]

"Right? You didn't get offended when I asked if that cave was your home, did you?"

Somehow, the things I said to the dragon ended up being pretty similar to the things I'd said to my silently sulking friend back in middle school.

"I knew it. Is there any person who would get upset about that?"

Oh wait, Karin's not a person. Damn, I ended up talking too much again. Fortunately for me, Karin didn't point out my mistake.

[Of course not! That cave is not my home!] Karin exclaimed indignantly.

This was unexpected. I hadn't thought Karin would deny the assumption that the cave was her home since it harbored the scent of a dragon. Even a couple hundred cave salamanders wouldn't have been able to make the cave smell that bad.

“Yes, I see. I thought you were offended since you didn’t talk all of a sudden.”

[There was just a lot of work to do!]

Karin had previously mentioned I was a lousy liar, but it seemed that she, too, was also pretty awful at lying. Unlike her usual meek manner of speaking, she had angrily shouted when she lied.

“You must have a lot of responsibilities to work for the Vaccine as someone who has a higher position than a regular apostle. That’s amazing”

Although my praise for Karin was insincere, the dragon seemed to enjoy it thoroughly. Through my nonsensical talking and not-so-subtle compliments, I was able to change the atmosphere into a more friendly one.

However, I was curious about one thing. In comparison to other apostles, Karin was rather kind. Other apostles didn’t even attempt to hide their feelings of contempt when they saw me. They treated me, fought me, and saw me as a mere stepping stool. I would’ve thought that Karin, being a prideful dragon, would’ve also been more inclined to have this attitude. Maybe the preconceived notion that dragons were all arrogant wasn’t all that accurate.

I decided to ask Karin about it.

[The world is changing. You can’t be obsessed with that outdated idea forever. There are dragons that are sticking with the attitude you mentioned, but I am not one of them.]

The world was changing?

[The world is beginning to judge people by their abilities rather than their species. Take a lower-class tribe, for example. Can you say with 100 percent certainty that every member has descended from that ethnic group? The time has come for us to evaluate individuals based on their skills.] Karin said, and I listened to her quietly.

[Of course, your species does have an impact on your behavior and

abilities, which makes it difficult to avoid the resulting stigma. Typically, the rumors aren't too far off from the truth, so it's easier to judge people based on species. I also have prejudices, and you've reminded me of the preconceptions I've had about the human race. But the world is evolving rapidly, and I'll try my best to keep up with it, too.]

Karin's voice took on a serious edge, and listening to the story, Karin finally began to seem more like a dragon.

Looking back at it, it seemed that I also had strong prejudices based on race. It was something Idy had pointed out several times, but I paid her opinion no attention.

Most of the people I met while clearing stages had strong tribal characteristics. But, there was very little difference in the behaviors of various species. For me, who'd have to face various types of people in the future, it was an opportunity to rethink my preconceptions.

There was still one more thing that Karin mentioned that had bothered me. "The world is changing."

"What do you mean by the world is changing?"

Of course, the Earth was facing a cataclysmic upheaval, but it wasn't likely that the dragon, who belonged to the influential vaccine war, would say the world was changing because of it.

[I've heard you're one of the first challengers to enter the planet's source and generate tutorials.]

"No, I'm not asking about the change of the Earth, I'm asking about the change of the world you're talking about."

[It's not that different. I'm changing, just like your hometown is changing. The wind of change is beginning to blow. Think about it like that.]

Karin's words made it seem like the monster of the source, the vaccine war, and the tutorial system had just appeared. Was it only that monsters were spawning and tutorials were being carried out, or were

the gods and systems changing, too?

I asked for more details, but Karin drew the line there. The dragon told me that changes were taking place, but didn't care to elaborate on them.

[You should take into consideration that the concept of change I mentioned is slightly different from how humans understand it.]

I supposed that was inevitable; our lives and experiences were different. It was natural to view things in a slightly different manner.

I thought for a moment about what Karin said, and how the information would affect me.

In some ways, a change was beneficial. For my goal, it'd be better to have a chaotic situation where the conditions were continuously changing than to have everything already solidified.

* * *

After a good night's rest, it was time to start working again! Following breakfast, the sleeping bags were put back into my inventory.

[Want to go to the next stage?] Karin asked.

I folded up my tent and nodded my head in response to her question.

[Then, I'll decide which stage is right for you. Is there a kind of stage that you want to avoid? If there is, I 'll make sure you won't encounter it.]

I was amazed; what a nice thing to say. Maybe it's because we'd gotten closer after spending a night together.

"Remove a stage where I need to lead and motivate a lot of people or where I need to maintain good relationships. Oh, and religious ones, too."

Hearing my answer, Karin asked why.

“Why? It’s just awkward and uncomfortable.”

I wasn’t confident in those situations. Leading people had never been my strong suit. It was a stage theme that had appeared several times on the 40th floor, but I cleared it by using brute force at every critical moment.

[Okay, I’ll consider it.]

I thanked Karin and climbed into the portal that had appeared on the floor.

“Move.”

* * *

The 56th floor was a place with stunning scenery. Under the brightly coloured sky was a vast field that stretched far into the horizon. And, there was a crowd? People had gathered beneath the tower I stood on.

“Apostle!”

“Apostle! Please take us away!”

“God’s apostle!”

Below, the crowd had been shouting at me. When I saw a mass of over a thousand people screaming at me, I felt motion sick,

[The 56th floor stage has begun]

[Stage Mission: Understanding the sect]

“You... That smelly, oversized, lizard bastard actually dared to trick me?!”

[I told you to be careful.]

Chapter 237

Tutorial 56th Floor (2)

I sighed while watching the people gathered beneath the tower give me their enthusiastic support. Unconsciously, I raised my hand to hide my face. If possible, I'd like to go back.

"You fucking lizard..." I muttered grimly. I told it about the situation I wanted to avoid, and yet, it chose the stage that had everything I didn't want. I was devastated but decided to focus on the stage rather than sulk. The only way to get out of this place was to clear the stage.

I checked my current situation. I was standing atop a high tower with crowds of people swarming the open fields beneath. People fascinatedly looked up at me as if they were watching a fireworks display.

Damn it.

"Apostle!"

It didn't seem necessary to answer their desperate shouts, so I decided to ignore their screams for a moment. Just by my presence, people seemed to be moved to tears. I decided to check my notification window rather than deal with the situation at hand.

[Stage Mission: Understanding the sect]

Description: There are five-story stone pagodas hosting more than 900 humans. Challenger should open a basic sect and raise its religious level. Stone pagodas are located in open plains, making them very vulnerable to attacks. Every night, monsters will attack, and over time, increasingly powerful assailants will come.

If you are a challenger who is not familiar with faith, buy a notation of faith from the store.

[Clear Condition]

1. Raising sects

1. Securing Faith: 500

The explanation window slightly differed from the usual. Typically, it wouldn't give any relevant information, but now, it was filled with essential details. As the notification advised, I went to the shop window and looked for notations of faith.

[Confidence notation]

Description: Measures and indicates the level of faith in your religion or sect.

It had a rather basic task, but the prize was beyond imagination. I estimated that with the same amount of money, I could buy a few bottles of Elixir.

[Life force notation]

Description: Measures and marks the buyer's current life force.

[Mana notation]

Description: Measures and marks the current mana of the buyer.

These were notations that functioned similarly to RPG game windows that showed stamina and mana. However, among the windows, the life force notation was generally considered useless. During combat, having a vital point usually resulted in instant death or damage equivalent to immediate death, so the life force notation wasn't able to accurately describe your sustainability. Still, several challengers felt reassured by being able to see their amount of health, so they still purchased the life notation.

On the other hand, the mana notation window was incredibly useful. When using skills, challengers always consumed a certain amount of mana. The presence of mana notation helped challengers preserve and

allocate mana.

The Order of Vigilante recommended buying and using only the mana notification window, especially for challengers who frequently used mana. They were expensive but worth it.

When I was clearing the lower floors, I thought it would have been convenient to have such windows, but they were only available for purchase once the challenger entered the 30th floor. People typically bought it right as they hit the 30th floor, but by the time I'd realized such windows existed, I didn't have a purpose for them. I was familiar with my strength and mana without having to measure it, so I didn't bother to invest money in the windows.

However, whenever I look at the windows, I wondered what it would've been like if I'd joined the tutorial later; I would've started with a notation window or basic items from the top challengers. It would've been convenient if information about the Hell's Difficulty Stage was already known by the time I joined. Maybe, I wouldn't be in such risky situations as often. It's certainly dangerous to challenge Hell's difficulty without any information, but the rewards of the task were always proportional to the difficulty.

I went back to thinking about the religious portion of the task. Lately, my thoughts have become mixed. Perhaps it's because I've had too much spare time that I often recalled what happened in the past.

I rechecked the faith notation and bought it. Immediately, I opened a window to see my faith.

[Faith: 0]

It was empty. Perhaps the reason for the indictment of zero was because I hadn't started a sect. But first of all, how would you begin a cult?

[Warrior?] Ahbooboo called.

"Yeah?" I stopped thinking for a moment to look back at him. He pointed at the people under the tower by moving the handkerchief tied to his core. All the people were staring at me. For a moment, I

was unresponsive and then got embarrassed. Was something wrong?

“Let’s go down for now.”

For now, we’d start with crowd control.

* * *

I’d spent a large portion of my time laughing with people, shaking hands, and hugging. Before I knew it, the sun was about to set, and the sky was a deep red. As soon as they saw the setting sun, people panicked and rushed into the tower.

As the stage description stated, monsters would appear at night. Fortunately, the tower had a narrow entrance and a long passageway, which served as a natural barrier to monsters. Above all, the main gate was broad and durable, so if supported well, it could prevent the monsters from entering.

The first floor of the tower exuded a shrine-like atmosphere. There were also spaces and other symbols that could be used to pray or perform ancestral rites. Some people took seats on the first floor, came down to rest, or began to guard the entrance. The guard post rotated amongst different individuals, and in case the gatekeepers were pushed back, others would also come to push against the door to stop the imposing monsters.

Until now, it seemed as though they’d been able to keep the monsters in check. But, the monsters were going to become more powerful by the day, and it would become harder for these people to stop the monsters alone.

I told everyone to go up to the second and third floors to rest or sleep while I’d protect the entrance. People were delighted by the news. Some wanted to stay on the first floor to aid me, but I refused their offers. I wanted to be alone for a moment.

[The first floor is nicely decorated. We can use this place as a new gathering spot. From now on, come down to the first floor in case of troubles.] Ahbooboo said.

“Okay.”

It was fortunate that I had Ahbooboo by my side since he was well-versed on religion. I asked Abu about the making of a sect, which was currently my biggest obstacle.

[How to create a sect?]

“En. They want us to open a sect. Do we have to catch some beasts and hold a memorial service?”

[Well, I’m not sure about that either. Don’t you know how to create it?]

“I don’t. It’s not like shouting, ‘Create a sect!’ will be able to get me anywhere.”

[Created a new sect.]

What the fuck? It worked?

[Measuring target entitlement requirements. The stage mission has met all conditions for creating a sect.]

[You can choose the religion that will be the focus of the sect.]

After reading the explanation, a list of selectable religions, some of which worshiped pre-vaccine deities, appeared. Before I chose one, I asked Ahbooboo for advice.

[If that’s the case, you’d better choose one that can bring about the established doctrines of other religions. It would be easier to expand a religion that already has a reputation.]

As Ahbooboo said, a popular religion would be easier to work with. If so, which religion should I choose?

[I recommend the God of the Sky.]

“God of the Sky?”

[Yes, I’m not saying this because I’m biased.]

Is that so?

[Really not!]

“Sure. Explain first.”

[First of all, the God of the Sky values relationships, so he’ll be thrilled to open a lower sect. This alone is a considerable advantage.]

That was true. Some gods didn’t care whether you made a lower sect or not, and some, such as the God of Adventure or the God of Light, didn’t even authorize one to establish an inferior sect.

[The God of Adventure is disappointed.] The God of Adventure expressed his disappointment.

The God of Chaos, the God of Death, the God of Sowing, and the other evil deities wouldn’t be good choices. But, that only left one god, the God of Hope, but I refused to choose him.

[In addition, the teaching of the God of the Sky is suitable for governance. Many countries on the continent, including the empire, believe in the God of Sky, and worship their lower sect.]

[Lastly, I know the doctrines of the Sky.]

“Okay. Let’s go with that one,” I said and chose the God of the Sky.

[Faith Window]

Species name: Unknown

The founder of the sect: Unknown

Sect symbol : –

Sectarian tendencies : –

Sect doctrine existence: –

Number of believers: 890

Headquarter Position: Unknown

Degree of faith: 3

Mainstream Religion: God of the Sky

Description: It is a newly established sect, and the indigenous people know little about it. The 890 believers are forced to follow the words of the sect's founder to live, but have no sincerity about the sect. Believers are very distrustful of the founder of the sect, who hasn't even disclosed his name yet. They're fearful that he will suddenly disappear, which will increase the danger of the night.

The religious faith of the sect is so weak that it is impossible to use divine orders. Due to the poor finances of the sect, they cannot provide any support to the believers. Only with a sect's outstanding strength can the founder be able to keep his promise to ensure the safety of his followers without difficulty.

As soon as the sect had been created, I read the long passage of text. There were still many shortcomings, but I liked that the details were explained in great detail. Looking at the status window, I thought I could clear the stage without difficulty if I fill in each of the deficiencies.

First, I decided to fill in what was marked as deficient at the top of the status window. The doctrines of the sect are something I can deal with right away.

“Ahbooboo, first of all, I think we need to write down some of the doctrines.”

[Yes. Can I write it on the poster over there?]

“Go ahead.” I took out a pen from my inventory and handed it over to Ahbooboo. Although he lacked limbs to hold it correctly, he could still use magic to write.

The next step was to find a symbol. I decided to put down Ahbooboo without much thought. He’s the Holy Sword; he’s colorful, magical, divine, and likes to be noticed. He would’ve been the perfect symbol if it wasn’t for the fact he was currently tied with a handkerchief and not a sword.

I looked at what I had, wondering if there was anything suitable.

“Call.”

“Kea-ek!”

“Yes. Nice to see you, frog.”

For now, we needed a god who would be the symbol of the sect. I didn’t know whether a frog would be able to fill the role, but why not?

Chapter 238

Tutorial 56th Floor (3)

[Faith Window]

Species name: Unknown

The founder of the sect: Unknown

Sect symbol : –

Sectarian tendencies : –

Sect doctrine existence:

Number of believers: 890

Headquarter Position: Unknown

Degree of faith: 3

Mainstream Religion: God of the Sky

The current degree of faith was 3. It was a huge relief to have it above 0. However, considering that I hugged, shook hands, and spoke comforting words to people all day long... I felt that it was a little low. Had I come off too pretentious?

First of all, I decided to fill in the shortcomings one by one. The first thing I chose was the symbol of the sect.

“I choose you.” Since I didn’t know how to get the system to recognize my choice, I just decided to imitate Pok*mon lines.

“Kea-ek!”

[The sect symbol has been added.]

[Faith Window]

Species Name: Unknown

The Founder of the Sect: Unknown

Sect Symbols- Gaguri [1]

Sectarian Tendencies : –

Sect Doctrine Existence:

Number of Believers: 890

Headquarter Position: Unknown

Degree of Faith: 3

Mainstream Religion: God of the Sky

(T/N: [1] half frog, half dog supposedly means Gaguri)

[A new item has been added to the sect’s symbol.]

The frog’s name was Gaguri? Since it had a dog’s body and a frog’s head, I supposed the name suited it quite well, albeit a little unoriginal.

Gaguri (1) –

Description: A newcomer to a sect whose name has not yet been determined. Believers have yet to recognize the presence of this deity. It has nothing to do with the God of the Sky or the origin of the sect. It has no divine power at all, and only possesses a small amount of

mana. With its innate high vitality, it has no problem protecting its believers, although the lack of appeal may scare off young followers.

Believers may not feel awed because it lacks a mysterious aura. It's advised to grant new abilities and accessories to new members.

Luckily, a detailed explanation was also provided. I found it to be a possibility that the explanations were provided by the apostles of the God of the Sky. As far as I knew, detailed reports didn't typically appear in windows.

"Kea-ek!"

"Hold on." I held the frog and viewed it from various angles like a photographer.

What was lacking at the moment was the shortage of recognition from the frog's believers, connection with God, divine power, magic charm, and mystique. To summarize it all, the frog simply lacked in everything.

It would be useful to make it look a little cooler. How should I dress it up?

I quickly bought a pair of magic wings from the store window. The pair of angelic, white wings then automatically attached itself to the frog's body.

"Kea-ek!" Surprisingly enough, the wings had somehow fit on the frog's back.

"You look... quite mysterious."

It had the head of a frog, the body of a dog, and now, also had wings attached on its back. Tell me, where else could you find such a mysterious creature?

"Aren't I right??"

[How mysterious, it looks as if it escaped from a lab somewhere.]

What laboratory? You're too harsh on our poor frog! You're just jealous because he looks better than you.

"Kea-ek!"

Now, the other lacking details of our sect needed to be filled in. I suppose attractiveness and mystique could be solved with the frog, but how was I supposed to cover knowledge and magic? Above all, the required connection with God seemed impossible.

[Please make me a symbol too.]

"You're planning to use a flying handkerchief as a symbol?"

[Why not? You can make your handkerchief something more valuable.]

A handkerchief as a religious symbol?

[It's not just a handkerchief, it can fly, has magic, can talk, and it's cute!]

The last two stated were not advantages but disadvantages.

[C'mon. Do it for me.]

I considered the possibility of shoving Ahbooboo back in my inventory since he kept complaining. However, he could still be useful at this stage.

"Oh. I got an idea."

[What?]

I purchased a small, luxurious cloth from the shop window and untied the handkerchief from Abu's core bead. I then attached his bead to the newly bought fabric and knotted it around the frog's neck.

"Done."

[What's this?]

[Faith Window]

Species name: Unknown

The Founder of the Sect: Unknown

Sect Symbols: Gaguri(1), new (1) – Gaguri's Necklace of Aubutz

Sectarian Tendencies : –

Sect Doctrine Existence:

Number of Believers: 890

Headquarter Position: Unknown

Degree of Faith: 3

Mainstream Religion: Church of the Sky

Gaguri(1) –

Description: A newcomer to a sect whose name has not yet been determined. Believers have yet to recognize the presence of this deity. It holds the core of the Aubutz, the sacred sword of the God of the Sky. It also harbors powerful divine power and possesses a great deal of mana. Its combat power is so strong that it has no problems in defending its followers. Although its attractiveness is mediocre, it has a mysterious element, and young believers may find it funny.

The frog greatly satisfied the required conditions, it fulfilled the requirements to be a new member of the sect.

“Perfect.” Ah, what am I saying? I feel like a fool!

[Perfect]

“Seregia thinks it’s perfect too.”

Well, it turned out better than I thought. The wings fluttered behind the cute frog, and a colorful cloth hung on its neck like a muffler. Since the frog was unable to communicate with people, Ahbooboo would easily fill that role.

[If it looks this funny, it would become counterproductive instead.]

Ahbooboo’s words made sense. However, since the main sect symbol was a frog, then a dignified and oppressive frog deity would be more counterintuitive. This was the best I could do for now.

* * *

I called everyone back to the first floor and instructed them of the doctrines I’d set with Ahbooboo. The doctrines were a combination of doctrines from other lower sects. And surprisingly, the core belief of the religion was universal equality. The use of such principles in a feudal society such as the Empire seemed quite contradictory.

[It’s mixed with the doctrines of other lower sects. The empire interpreted it a little differently. Under the God of the Sky, there’s an emperor, the guardian, the first believer of the sect, and finally, the rest of the believers. Of course, the God of the Sky wasn’t very pleased with this interpretation.]

Ahbooboo’s explanation hinted that the God of the Sky disapproved of the emperor.

Next, we narrated the basic rules of the sect; there was nothing special about them. Most of the rules stated were pretty standard rules that would be normally followed by religious and good people.

Ahbooboo insisted on putting in some tricky, hard-to-follow rule, but I turned him down. I didn’t want to create a law that would force me to eat vegetables, pray until my muscles were aching all over, or walk on my hands.

Some sect-specific rules included the designation of the first floor of the pagoda as a cathedral, the second and third floors were designated

as a shrine for believers, the fourth floor was the lodging for senior believers, and the fifth was for exclusive accommodation. The senior believers had yet to be selected, and Ahbooboo decided that they would pick some at a later time.

“Who is that frog, apostle?” a little boy asked with his hand raised up. The child, whose eyes fell on the comical figure, couldn’t hold his curiosity back.

“It’s our sect’s symbol.”

The children looked at the frog with sparkling eyes while the adults gave it a curious glance.

“Kea-ek!”

“It is my spokesman and our sect’s symbol. If you have any trouble in the future, tell the frog and ask for its advice. The frog will solve the problem.”

In other words, Ahbooboo would step forward and resolve the problem.

* * *

After leaving the frog and Ahbooboo on the first floor, I came up to the fifth floor. It was still an empty floor for now, so I took out a tent and some camping materials from my inventory again.

I quietly ate and laid down in my sleeping bag, lamenting. Ah... my faith wasn’t increasing at all. How annoying.

[Faith Window]

Species Name: Unknown

The Founder of the Sect: Lee Ho-jae

Sect Symbols: Gaguri(1), New (1) – Gaguri’s Necklace of Aubutz

Sectarian Tendencies: Faithfulness is unstable; has ups and downs.

Sect Doctrine Existence:

Number of Believers: 890

Headquarter Position: Ierai Planetary 3rd Fault Tower.

Degree of Faith: 17

Mainstream Religion: God of the Sky

Although the doctrines and symbols had been set, there were only 14 people, excluding Ahbooboo, the frog, and I, who had actually believed in the religion. It was hard to predict when the faith count would be able to reach 500. Maybe it was because we hadn't decided on a sect name yet? I already asked Ahbooboo to think about the sect name.

[The Faithfulness window has been updated.]

[Name of Sect: Aubutz]

I couldn't believe it. This guy... he actually named the sect Aubutz. Oh well, since I couldn't think of another name, I decided to leave it as it was.

I rechecked my faith.

[Faith]

[Degree of Faith: 19]

2... it only increased by 2.

Even if I assume that I can raise my faith by about 10 points every day, it'll still take about 50 days to clear this stage. And there was no guarantee that the faith would continue to rise like I predicted, so it may take even longer. Should I have to increase the number of

believers? 900 is already quite a large number, however, when compared to other sects, it's still quite small.

Too bad you can't kidnap believers... It wasn't like I could wait for the believers to get married, have children, and then grow up to add to the believer count. That'd take too long.

I wished something significant would happen! As expected, the most effective solution was to use monsters to impress people.

The people on the lower floor of the tower are certainly well-composed. Despite having monster attacks every night, they would still dutifully drive them off. Now that I appeared to protect them, that problem has been solved. Maybe that's the only role the believers want me to play; to be just a guard, or a gatekeeper.

However, I can't run away from my responsibilities. If I do, faith will only fall. I could simply protect only the people I liked, and push others into danger, force people to believe me, and turn them into crazy fanatics. However, I didn't want to do that. It would simply be blackmail, it wouldn't be a religion anymore.

[God of Hope watches you.]

Yeah, my thoughts were right.

[Warrior, the messenger has jumped in.] Ahbooboo alerted me.

[Really? You saw it?]

[Yes, it looks like a tower was built on a hill a little bit away from here, a messenger was placed there.]

As expected, people could still thrive even without sects. Therefore, it was inevitable that their dependence on them would decrease.

[Monsters are flocking to the tower. It happens every evening. We just have to keep the door shut, what should we do?]

"I'm going down."

What do you mean “Just keep the door shut?”, this was my only opportunity to impress my believers and collect some faith! Of course I have to make good use of this opportunity.

Chapter 239

Tutorial 56th Floor (4)

[You know that you shouldn't use explosions here right?]

“Kea-ek!”

Before I knew it, Ahbooboo and the frog approached me to question my decision. Well, I didn't really mean to use an explosion here either.

[I know.]

Who do you think I am? I already knew that the enemy should be obliterated with no collateral damage to spectators.

Huge, scaled monsters rushed towards the tower, their drool splattering all over. From a distance, it looked like a fast-paced herd of moving cattle. Very fast-paced. I would be able to block the door, but I didn't have enough time to climb the tower and attack.

Thinking about how to get rid of them, I condensed a ball of mana over the head of the first monster.

Bang!

The monster roared as its body got flattened into a sheet. Hm, this was nice. Let's just use this method.

I condensed multiple balls of mana over the heads of monsters running toward the tower. The more monsters I flattened, the lower my mana got.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Agonizing roars repeatedly rang out, until not one monster had been

left unscathed. It was like having a glass of liquor, while effortlessly completing my part time work.

I finished my work and glanced down; not a single drop of blood had reached my clothes. The surrounding people looked bewildered and confused.

“What’s wrong with them?”

[I cast a blinding spell.]

“Why?”

Ahbooboo sighed.

[Why? I was trying to keep them from seeing you like this. Think about it. If they see you like this, they’ll think you’re a devil who crawled up from hell, not an apostle of a god.]

Is that so? I thought I handled the situation pretty well, though.

[As soon as you condensed mana on the monsters’ heads and crushed them, I immediately blinded them.]

Ugh, then they didn’t get to see any of my amazing power...

[It’s definitely helpful to show a strong and scary side, but too much will only backfire on you. Take it easy.]

After mercilessly killing so frequently, I’d grown accustomed to blood and corpses. Hence, I’d completely overlooked the fact that this scene might’ve been overly gruesome and abhorrent to other people. If Ahbooboo hadn’t quickly blinded them, then my reputation with my believers might have been damaged, even if the faith count didn’t decrease.

But now, my plan to show myself defeating monsters was foiled. I pointed this out to Ahbooboo.

[I don't care. They couldn't see it, but they can imagine it. The sound of monsters roaring and exploding is quite loud, you know? It doesn't take a genius to figure out what happened. It's far better than making them see blood everywhere and ruptured intestines]

Following up, Ahbooboo set fire to the field. Unlike an ordinary fire, it was a bright, blazing white fire. Strangely enough, I was unable to smell the nauseating, putrid odour of burning flesh...

[This flame is used for sacrifices. Normally, Gods hate these kinds of bodies, but I have no other option.]

Wow, how talented. I praised him for his hard work and looked back at the people again. They were rubbing their eyes, as the blinding magic slowly started losing its effect. They hadn't even been near the door when the monsters had attacked, and suddenly, they'd also gone blind. All they could hear were explosions and pained roars. Besides being unable to comprehend what just happened, they must've also felt anxious and scared.

"Ahbooboo."

[What am I supposed to say? In this case, it's better to be quiet than to say something witty. Please turn back to the field.]

I heeded his advice silently. As I stared at the burning corpses, the people began to start talking in hushed voices.

[Okay, that's enough. Now go up to the fifth floor without saying anything.]

"Right away?"

[Yes.]

"Without saying anything? But wouldn't it be a good idea to say something? 'Now you can rest assured, you can be safe, or you can take this opportunity to give me more faith.'"

[Belief is what you get when someone trusts you unconditionally.

Come on, move.]

For now, I heeded Ahbooboo's words and headed back to the steps of the towers. While climbing the stairs, I questioned Ahbooboo again about whether it was a good idea to leave the scene.

[Oh, it's fine. Warrior, do you remember the doctrine of our sect? It's universal equality. However, you're above the others as the founder and chief of the sect.]

Ahbooboo went on.

[You can afford to take your superiority for granted. You have similar features to humans, but you don't have to act like humans.]

After arriving on the fifth floor, I looked out the window. The people below looked flabbergasted.

If they'd seen me in combat, perhaps they would've looked at me with disgust rather than admiration.

[Degree of Faith: 47]

Luckily, the degree of faith soared. Before the monsters appeared, it was only 17 and I'd felt dumbfounded that all my hard work could only get me 17 followers.

[I'll be the one who comforts, motivates and inspires people, so you can stay on the fifth floor.]

"Okay." I agreed to Ahbooboo's plan. And that's how I got trapped on the fifth floor.

* * *

[Degree of Faith: 161]

I was bored to death. For the past few days, I'd been sitting idly on the fifth floor. Even though I played with magic, time still didn't pass any

faster. I was beginning to lose my sanity.

Looking at the faith count, I lamented over the long road to 500 followers and the fact that I'd be stuck here for a few more days. If it weren't for monsters coming every evening, I would've been stuck in this room for the whole day.

Ahbooboo had requested that I show my face as little as possible, so, when I was dealing with monsters, I was forced to defeat them as fast as possible before getting sent back to the fifth floor.

It definitely isn't easy to imitate God. Come to think of it, what god would meet their own sect to socialize with them? With nothing to do all day, I'd imagine that the daily lives of gods were unimaginably dull.

Rolling around on the floor, I realized that I wasn't bored because I couldn't meet people often, but rather because I had nothing to do. I mean, it wasn't like that I wasn't used to being isolated from the rest of society; the waiting room did just that.

In order to maintain my reputation with the people, Ahbooboo asked me to reduce my presence as much as possible. Thanks to this, I was stuck in a situation where I couldn't make any noise or appear in front of people.

Naturally, I wasn't allowed to train either; this was the reason for my boredom. I hated having nothing to do.

While the other people were living happily, I was miserably stuck in the fifth floor like Rapunzel. The hours where I was allowed to leave my lonely tower were far and few.

An opportunity to go out came when the food in the tower gradually began to decrease. A new forest had spawned outside the tower, so I went in with Ahbooboo and the frog to get meat and fruit. As we moved ahead, I became increasingly immersed in the doctrines Ahbooboo recited.

[Warrior.] Ahbooboo called out.

“Yeah?”

[I heard it from passers-by on the way here. There are some other towers a little ways from here.]

“Other towers?”

[Yes, similar to a pagoda. There are seven towers in total. The other towers have approximately the same number of people as us. Above all, they have one common belief.]

“What belief?”

[That an apostle will come down and take care of them.]

Ah, the method to clear this stage suddenly became obvious.

“I think we should preach our sect’s doctrines to other towers.”

If we were lucky, the degree of faith that was obtainable from each other tower ranged from 200 to 300. In order to get 500 believers, I would have to gain faith from people at other towers. I wasn’t sure if this was the right way to approach things, but it seemed better than doing nothing all day.

Fuck, this was going to be difficult, and it made me annoyed. We’d have to grapple with other sects over believers in other towers. Although we looked like a real sect with the help of Ahbooboo, our opponents were still real apostles. I wished this could’ve been a stage where I only had to defeat seven other apostles in combat.

[Let’s focus on our tower for now.]

Perhaps I was wrong. It might be better to avoid the wrath of apostles.

[Why don’t you try getting more believers from somewhere else? If there are more people, there will naturally be more religious people.]

“No,” I answered. While Ahbooboo’s plan was enticing, it wouldn’t

work.

[Why?]

“There’s no one else on this planet besides those who are inside these towers.”

The planet was strangely small. I was unsure if there were any reasons for this, or if there were only a limited number of people because it was a stage.

[You sound as if you’ve looked around the entire planet.]

“I haven’t, but I can feel it.”

[What?]

“I can feel it. There aren’t that many people.”

[Huh?]

“Nevermind. It’s nothing,” I said and ignored Ahbooboo’s onslaught of questions.

The feeling I was talking about was so faint that it was hard to be sure. Having been trapped in a narrow place for so long, I’d initially thought I had a problem with a sense, but now, I’m unsure. It was a strange mix of power and alertness.

As the degree of faith increased, the clearer this strange force felt. Did the rising religious faith of the sect affect me, the founder? Or was it because of the people’s faith in me that I gained this power to deal with monsters faster?

The force was a challenge to describe, and I wasn’t quite sure of how to use it. It made my chest feel stuffy and gave me the urge to go and hunt down a monster. I decided that I would catch a monster alive and try to use my power tomorrow. I thought it’d be a good idea to use sleeping pills to calm the monster.

[Degree of Faith: 340]

Fortunately, the degree of faith rose to 340. For now, it seemed like there wouldn't be any issue reaching 400.

“Grr...” a monster growled from the corner of the tower. Its mouth was muzzled with a rope preventing it from making too much sight.

I found it to be quite an amusing sight. Ah, was I possibly a sadist? I felt schadenfreude looking at the pitiful monster groaning in panic and struggling to escape.

I took a sleeping potion out of my inventory and poured it down the monster's throat. Well, I attempted to anyway. The monster put up quite the struggle and from the amount of potion that spilled onto the floor, I was unsure whether the sleeping potion would take effect.

Luckily, the monster's struggles gradually died down, and when it stopped moving, I picked it up and moved it to the center of the room.

I prayed that I would achieve significant results from my experiment. This divine power I felt was becoming clearer by the day. The more people looked up to me, the powerful it became. But, Ahbooboo and the frog didn't feel such power at all, even though they were also worshipped by the people. I didn't know if this was because I was the founder of the sect, and hence, gained strength, or for some other reason.

The greater this power gets, the more familiar it feels.

It's the power I felt at the last moment when I was fighting the apostles who had made replicas of me on the tournament stage.

I lifted the monster's arm.

<Infringement of control>

The power allowed me to manipulate other organism's bodies and

power. Thanks to that power, I'd be able to win in combat against apostles, but I couldn't figure out much more about my ability. I didn't know what kind of power it was, and I didn't know how to use it. It was just something I happened to find in a moment of crisis.

I tore off the monster's arm. The strong force makes a huge rip, but the sleeping monster remained unresponsive.

Even after repeated practice attempts of trying to use my newly found power, I wasn't able to make much progress, and in the end, gave up.

I defined the force as a power that I wasn't able to fully understand or use yet, but I was determined that there'd be a day when I could fully control this power.

The monster's muscles were visible through the torn skin. My eyes shifted to the spot where blood was spurting out from. I lit a fire inside the arm, and the body was soon engulfed in flames. I focused, controlling the fire so as to not let it spread to the rest of the room.

This power, which was supposed to be a kind of divine force obtained through faith, had the ability to violate control.

Was this the supreme ability of the gods?

Chapter 240

Tutorial 56th Floor (5)

It was troublesome to put out the fire on the monster's body, so I roughly shoved it back in my inventory. I could smother out the flames at a later time.

I opened the window to let the smoke out of the room and leaned on the wall as I waited for the room to get ventilated.

The <Infringement of Control> is a force that I've previously used; however, I wasn't sure how to use it properly. At the very least, I seemed to know the origins of this power.

[Degree of Faith: 361]

The figure rose little by little every day, and as a result, my power became more powerful by the day. The power I'd felt when the degree of faith was 100, and when it was 200, were vastly different from each other. I felt that the higher the degree of faith was, the more comfortable I felt with handling the power.

It was the divine power of the gods. It was essential to take note of the fact that the essence of the divine power originated from the gods, and not in the wielder himself. Essentially, the wielder borrowed the god's strength.

In comparison to the divine power, the blinding magic Ahbooboo used the other day was considered primitive. The blinding magic worked by flashing a blinding light in someone's vision. Alternatively, you could also block light from entering their eyes. If the magic was further developed, it could begin to target the pupil. This would lead to blinding magic changing from area-type magic to target-designated magic.

However, the divine power was different. It directly tampered with an

organism's nervous system, which made blinding extraordinarily easy. It wasn't as if the nervous system was being destroyed. That couldn't be further from the truth; the nervous system was only being manipulated. But what if you can influence something besides vision?

Take the medulla, for example, the brain's control center of a human's involuntary life-sustaining functions. Breathing, swallowing, and heart rate; they're all controlled by the medulla. If you could block neural signals from this portion of the brain, the target would be helpless.

Healing magic was a sub-magic of divine power. It functioned by treating wounds and diseases by interfering with other people's pain signaling and the immune system.

To summarize, the divine power was a dangerously powerful force. It was hard to believe that I could gain this power by increasing my degree of faith.

Suddenly, I thought of the power I had absorbed from a stone on the 35th floor. It had been given by the King Goblin. After advancing through the stages, I found that it was the same stone that came from the body of monsters. And unlike the stones I got from other stages, where I didn't feel any power, there was actually power in it, a power that I absorbed.

The Spirit King, who I met on the 40th floor, asked how the force absorbed from the stone was related to God, and whether I'd be willing to give it to him. From his attitude, I learned that this power was much more significant than I initially thought.

It wasn't just the Spirit King who was interested in the power, but the gods as well. I've heard that the primary reason why gods make tutorials and summon challengers is to select a new apostle and that the apostle's foremost duty was to collect the magic stones.

It was possible that the divine power and people's faith were proportional to one another. If so, it wasn't strange that I gained such power through a sect with a few believers.

Slowly, my thoughts began to unravel; however, I was still swamped with questions.

First of all, it was weird that I never encountered the link between faith and divine power. I recalled the time I had faced the apostles on the tournament stage. If I hadn't used this power, I might have died on the spot.

On the 35th floor, the power of the source was present, but there wasn't any faith. It's on this floor that I learned about and recognized the power of faith.

I had other questions, as well. Why had the power appeared at that time? Was it because I was experiencing a near-death crisis? I would have used the power a long time ago if I realized it had been there. And why hadn't I been able to use the power to its full extent just now?

Was it because the targets were different? Apostles and monsters differed in many ways, and the amount of power needed to defeat an apostle was much larger than the amount needed for a monster. Questions and hypotheticals came to mind, but I became frustrated at my inability to find a clear answer.

Normally, I'd ask Kirikiri, but this time it was different. Even she would not be able to answer such questions.

Above all, I was currently stuck with the dragon instead of Kirikiri until I cleared the 59th floor. I didn't think that the cheap lizard would do anything to ease my doubts.

[Warrior.] Ahbooboo called.

I was currently pretending to be a statue with the frog. When we weren't moving and communicating with people, we were attempting to be religious statues.

When I asked Ahbooboo why we had to do something so stupid, he'd said that it made people feel more secure. How? I'll never know. The only part of Ahbooboo's explanation I understood were his last words. "It's easier to pray in front of you if you just stay still."

"Yes?"

[An ornament in the center of the first floor shattered, and a mural appeared in its place. It seems to be showing a field outside of the tower.]

“Maybe a new area was unsealed.”

[Possibly, but it’s a bit scary to see it on the wall. Come down and see for yourself.]

Wordlessly, I migrated down to the first floor, where the situation seemed to be quite serious. People nervously stared at me, then back at the queer wall. Usually, when people saw me, they’d be instantly relieved. However, even after seeing me, the anxiety in their eyes did not vanish.

“Don’t do something carelessly,” Ahbooboo warned.

A massive mural of a field covered the wall. The field was many times larger than a soccer stadium, and in the center of it, was a single blooming bud; I recognized it immediately. The plant was far from normal. The leaves of the tightly wound bud were the flesh of a monster, and instead of swaying delicately in the wind, it rhythmically pulsed like a beating heart. Its intestines fluttered in the wind in a disgustingly bloody manner. The mural frightened everyone on the first floor.

The mural on the wall displayed a scene outside the tower. In essence, it was similar to a live broadcast on TV. Hence, in order to encounter the monster in the mural, one would have to leave the tower to go and look for it.

Where had I seen this monster before? Was it the 47th floor?

[Hey, that’s the thing that explodes, isn’t it?]

“Yes, I think that’s right. It was half-buried under the ground back then as well.”

Monsters came in all different shapes and sizes. In comparison to this flower, the other tiny, weak monsters didn’t deserve to be called monsters.

This flower right here was particularly unusual. It stored energy underground, and would eventually explode. The explosion would release tiny spores that would be propagated by the air. It was like a pimple that got popped and released pus.

On the 47th floor, the mission had been to direct people towards the dimension gate before the monster exploded. I didn't know what would happen if the monster exploded and spread its spores, but I assumed it was something terrible.

“What should I do?” I groaned

It was a monster that I had already encountered, but I was still clueless on how to attack it. The goal on the 47th floor was to guide people away from the monster, not confront it.

[Didn't you say you couldn't kill him?]

In addition, there was also the fact that once touched, the monster could explode. Before entering the 47th floor, Kirikiri had advised “You aren't going to pick a fight with the bomb. Instead of killing that monster, you have to lead people away from it.”

When I was on the 47th floor, I avoided the flowering monster in fear of an explosion. I'd thought about attacking it from a distance, but there was also the chance that the radius of the explosion could encompass the whole planet. Typically, it wouldn't be difficult to dismantle a bomb, but this bomb was one that couldn't be dismantled without accidentally detonating it.

“How much time did I have back then?”

[6 days, maybe.]

After the monster has enough stored energy, there would be approximately six days until it exploded. There was still time.

I had to gain faith even with this monster present. Other towers would be able to see the monster from afar, and it occurred to me that this may be a political arena. However, instead of politicians campaigning on TV, people would see seven apostles trying to defeat the monster in

the field in order to gain faith. The apostle who achieves 500 believers wins.

I told Ahbooboo about my hypothesis.

[Will the apostles of other towers try to collect their faith competitively like you? Do they have the same target?] Ahbooboo questioned.

“Maybe.”

Unless absolutely necessary, I wouldn't try to compete with the other apostles over faith; it'd just be too much trouble.

[Well... I guess I'll have to think about something that would appeal to those who'll be watching.]

“No, thanks.”

[What?]

“Let's just kill that monster.”

[What if it explodes?]

I would just have to kill it in a fashion that didn't allow it to explode. Of course, there was still a high chance of it exploding, regardless of how I tried to kill it.

“Even if it explodes, wouldn't the people watching from here think that the monster died?”

I thought that would easily allow my degree of faith to reach 500.

Chapter 241

Tutorial 56th Floor (6)

[What if something goes wrong?]

Of course, attacking the monster didn't guarantee an increase in my degree of faith. The possibility that the monster would explode and people would get caught in the blast wasn't nonexistent. If that happened, I'd have to retry the stage.

If I couldn't obtain the necessary degree of faith, I'd automatically fail the stage and be moved to the waiting room to reattempt the stage; nothing was lost by attempting the stage again.

When I had first entered the stage, I'd inwardly cursed the dragon. However, thanks to the stage it had selected for me, I was able to learn more about the degree of faith and the divine power. If I was able to expand my knowledge of the relationship between the two, there would be nothing wrong in reattempting the stage. In fact, it might be beneficial to reattempt.

However, I was worried about if I failed this stage, that damned dragon wouldn't let me retry the stage. That cheap dragon would likely send me to a completely different stage.

"Whatever. Let's just go and fight this monster."

[Are you going to leave right away?]

"Yea, we're going to have to leave soon."

[Then please wait a little longer. Let me reassure these people. We need to maintain their faith in us.]

Ahbooboo called for the attention of the people who were distracted

by the image of the monster displayed on the wall. Purposefully, he headed toward the opposite side of the wall, making people turn their back to the monster's unsettling image. He began his speech with a story that narrated the events of the last few days and affirmed the sect's doctrines and the greatness of the god.

In the later half of his speech, Ahbooboo detailed the existence of the monster. How dangerous and heinous that monster was. The information was nothing new to me, so I remained relatively unfazed, but there were people who kept looking back at the wall behind them with a concerned expression.

Ahbooboo heroically proclaimed, "As an apostle, he will destroy that monster!"

[Degree of Faith: 393]

[Degree of Faith: 395]

[Degree of Faith: 396]

Wow, I was impressed. Ahbooboo was surprisingly eloquent, and my degree of faith soared.

I motioned for Ahbooboo to finish up his speech. It would be better to leave sooner, so we could reach the monster as fast as we could.

"Frog, you'd better stay here," I whispered quietly so others wouldn't be distracted.

"Kea-ek."

The frog stubbornly refused to be left behind, and I knew it was no use trying to change its mind. If I left it behind, it would only sneak out to follow me.

"Haah fine. Let's go together."

Since the beginning, what the frog wanted from me had always been the same.

Let's go together.

I didn't want to refuse its request, but the task at hand was a dangerous one. Nevertheless, the frog stubbornly refused to be left behind. It would have been nice if the ring used from before could be used in a reverse manner.

When Ahbooboo finished his speech, we immediately set off to go looking for the monster. Before our departure, I warned people to not venture outside the tower and keep a close eye on the wall.

[Degree of Faith: 411]

Perhaps, because of my usual silence, people took my warnings seriously.

My degree of faith had risen by almost 10. It was a large increase, considering that, on the first day, I'd only gain 7 degrees even when I busted my ass with greetings.

* * *

Walking on the green plains was a euphoric experience. Of course, there was a devastating monster somewhere ahead, but it wasn't visible yet.

As the cool breeze caressed my face, and the sound of swaying grass hypnotized me, my mind relaxed.

Somehow, I was reminded of Kirikiri's field. The first time I had gone there, I felt my narrow perception of the world expand; it was as if I had become one with the world. As I walked through the peaceful plains, a similar sensation surfaced.

I frowned as the wind died down and the swaying grass came to a halt. I attempted to make the soft, sweet-smelling grass sway, and slowly called upon the power I had strengthened through accumulating faith. But, moving the grass manually through mana just wasn't as satisfactory as seeing it naturally sway in the wind.

The limits of this power were still unclear, but as I progressed through the tutorial, I was confident that I'd be able to sharpen my skills.

“Kea-ek!”

The frog croaked at Ahbooboo, who was trying to shove the handkerchief up the frog's nostrils. At this, Ahbooboo smiled mischievously and flew in circles around the frog. Annoyed, the frog shot out its tongue, trying to catch Ahbooboo, but all of its attempts were to no avail.

[Ha! It's still 500 years too soon for you to catch me! You son of a bitch!]

“Kea-ek!”

The two of them harassed each other just as little kids would. Their relationship hadn't been this playful back in the tower. It seemed that the two of them were also under some stress from constantly pretending to be stoic and emotionless. After all, he too, had been doing the same, until he left the tower.

* * *

Before I knew it, I had walked so far that I could see the monster vividly. Along with the horrendous visual came a noticeable stench leaking out from its body.

I warned the frog to stay put and silently watch from his position. The frog no longer put up any resistance, and proceeded to camouflage itself behind the long blades of grass.

[Degree of Faith: 463]

My degree of faith rose once more. Maybe the people could now see me, along with the monster, on the wall of the tower. It was likely that the other towers had a view of this monster on their walls as well.

Before approaching the monster, apostles from other towers came to greet me. Claiming that it was impossible to kill this monster, they

proposed a coalition to find a way to achieve the 500 faith count together.

I refused. To me, it was a proposal that had little merit. I wanted to be seen heroically confronting the monster in order to gain faith, but it seemed that no other apostles were interested in doing so.

I turned around and saw the apostles in the distance, watching me from the wall. I stared back at them, unmoving. They definitely thought that I was plotting an elaborate scheme to raise my degree of faith. Well, they weren't wrong.

[I'm surprised. I thought you'd be fighting with them again.]

"Whenever I see an apostle, you think I'll fight them. Isn't that so, Ahbooboo?" I countered.

The apostles I'd met on this stage differed from the apostles I'd previously met. They differed in the sense that they weren't official apostles, chosen by god; they were only apostles in name. As of now, the title of 'Apostle' was given to me to carry out my duties, but there was a huge difference between me and the official apostles such as the Spirit King. I didn't want these little fakes to get involved in the fight.

[Yes, that's true.]

The closer I got to the monster, the worse the smell got, and as a result, my ears began to water as well. Perhaps the greatest danger of this monster was its repugnant appearance. It was shocking that I, who had seen more blood and corpses than anyone else, was saying so.

Its pulsating heart showed violet blood vessels on the outside, glowing dimly. Sebum and pus were formed in clusters, and dark, red, parasite-filled blood poured out of the organ in streams. Tiny human-shaped parasites were scattered around, chewing and swallowing everything in sight.

And... I'd better stop thinking about it. My stomach felt queasy. It's horrendous appearance was why I didn't touch it the last time we met.

[What if it really explodes?] Ahbooboo questioned worriedly.

“We’ll run away before the fire touches the body.”

I approached the monster, and formed a firearm out of a piece of armor in my hand. The armor was engulfed in flames and the surrounding air became distorted from the high heat.

I got rid of the firearm and casted magic. “Fireball.”

It was the most basic fire magic in my arsenal. In comparison to advanced fire magic techniques, it wasn’t nearly as hot.

But, it also had its advantages. The spell consumed very little mana, and it was something that was hard to mess up. In addition, the wielder’s physical condition and concentration did little to affect the quality of the spell. The purpose was to shoot a fireball, so the fire was maintained until it reached its designated location; after which, it got extinguished as the mana depleted.

[What are you doing?]

“Comparing.”

Some of the gods used divine power in the form of spells. Some priests who followed God did the same. So did Ahbooboo.

But I couldn’t use my divine power that way. It moved around and lit up a fire, instead of getting utilised in the form of spells.

It wasn’t long before I’d gotten dangerously close to the monster. I couldn’t afford to get any closer.

I halted, and spoke in a soft voice. “Fire.”

Once I uttered the word, everything around me was swept away in the fire. The fire impaired vision, so I found it hard to see.

As I focused more mana, the flames grew exponentially. It spread

around me in a circle, with no specific sense of direction. The higher it rose, the farther it went.

The fire began to lick at the monster's body. Its skin sizzled, and the water inside its body instantly boiled and evaporated, leaving trails of steam. If left alone, the fire would probably kill the monster.

Suddenly, tentacles started protruding from all over its body. They glistened with unidentifiable bodily fluids and frantically slapped its own body, desperately trying to put out the flames.

But the monster's efforts were futile. The flame spread across the skin of the monster and burned at the flesh, pink muscles, and violet nerves. More blood started to boil and its organs began to swell.

The flames frantically sought out another portion of the monster it could burn. Before the monster could get a chance to explode, it had to be completely slayed. In order to do that, rather than destroyed everything in it, it was critical to burn major anatomical structures like the nerves, brain, and heart.

I was unsure when I would run out of mana or when the monster would explode, but I continued to focus on burning the monster.

I felt as though I was a surgeon desperately operating on a dying patient. Or an engineer who's defusing a time bomb. I didn't know when it would burst, but it made me more nervous, and my concentration increased.

I had been focused on killing the monster when a message suddenly appeared.

[Degree of Faith: 500]

[You have cleared the 56th floor of Hell's Difficulty level.]

[All anomalies and injuries have been recovered]

Alright. We had hit the goal. Now, we could rest easy and burn the monster.

[You'll be automatically moved to the waiting room.]

“What?”

* * *

I stared blankly at the waterfall gushing downwards. I was at the lake where I had met the dragon.

“Kea-ek!”

“Yes, I’m okay.”

I was relieved the frog was worried about me, but I was frustrated at the same time. There were so many things I had yet to accomplish in that stage. I wanted to explore my powers more, attack monsters, and measure the amount of divine power consumed by the Infringement of Control. Moreover, I wanted to research the possibility of using the power for other things besides burning.

I wanted to check the maximum level of faith that could be obtained from one person, what differences each person had, and whether there were any other conditions.

All those opportunities were gone. When the faith level reached 500 and the stage was cleared, all the faith instantly vanished.

[Don’t be too upset. Warrior, wouldn’t there another chance?]

Ahbooboo was right.

My lips parted, releasing a sigh. I slowly walked into the cave behind the waterfall.

The cave looked completely different from before. The stone walls had turned to smooth marble, and the rocky floor was covered with soft carpet. Colorful lights hung from the ceiling.

The bat feces and overgrown vines were nowhere to be found, and a

subtle scent of perfume lingered in the air. The once damp, cool cave was now warm with a fire lit in the middle.

That fucking dragon bastard. It said this wasn't its house, yet look at how it remodeled the cave. How dare the dragon lie to him?

"It's irritating. Let's get rid of this by burning it up."

I cast a magic spell. "Fireball."

[Stop! No, you devil!] the dragon roared. But I ignored its cries.

Chapter 242

Tutorial 57th Floor (1)

[No!]

What did you mean ‘No’? I won’t stop.

I looked around, scanning the variety of furniture that had appeared in the previously empty cave. There were so many suitable things to burn that I didn’t know what to burn first.

“What should I burn first?”

[Let’s burn the picture on the wall first.] Ahbooboo sneered.

Impressive. He had a good eye for things like this.

“The painting on the wall should be the one that burns last. Before that comes burning the furniture used in our daily lives, such as tables and bedding.”

This dragon had hoarded quite a lot of luxurious things, ones that humans would usually have at their homes.

I didn’t get why it bought furniture for humans. Did dragons take the form of another species in their daily lives? If that was the case, the large size of the cave seemed excessive.

[What do you want!?] the dragon bawled. The crystal ball wriggled spastically, juggling the fireball from one round side to the other, just like a hot potato.

“Just let it go. Burning something makes me feel better; less stressed.”

[No! You crazy arsonist!]

What did this dragon mean by ‘No’ again?

[Why do you need to relieve your stress?]

Why? I didn’t know. Maybe it was because the dragon had killed the fun just as I was about to test the limits of the divine power.

It was more accurately phrased as ‘*You can’t take anything from me*’.

I explained to the dragon how I felt.

[I can’t help it. Unlike general stages where post-clearing behavior is also viewed as an evaluation factor, my designated stage is designed only for the challenger to reach the goal. It is normal to be moved here immediately after clearing.]

Then, you should have told me that in advance.

“You little bastard. I told you that I didn’t like leadership missions, and you picked the perfect stage for it, huh?” I growled.

[It’s my job to select a stage based on the shortcomings of the challenger!]

“Then, you could have told me in advance that you were sending me to such a stage.”

[You’d have hated it, nonetheless!]

That was true. I sighed helplessly.

I set the crystal ball down roughly on a clean table and flopped down on the bed. As soon as I hit the soft material, my body felt lethargic, and I lost all motivation and focus.

The last floor had been such a rare opportunity, and I felt dejected from missing it.

[Hmm. There’ll be another chance later, so don’t get too upset.] the

dragon assured.

Yeah, well, there wasn't much I could do about it now. Instead, I asked questions that I had put off.

"What's this vote notification that's been up for a while?"

[Voting begins]

[For: 23, Against: 41]

[Voting begins]

[For: 24, Against: 11]

[Voting begins]

[For: 59, Against: 4]

This window had continued to pop ever since we entered the dragon's cave. It didn't seem like a bug, but then what else could it be?

[Oh, you can see it too? Never mind. It has nothing to do with you. None of your business.]

"What is it?"

[It's a vote for the God of Remorse.] the dragon said vaguely.

[Seeing you on this stage, some suggested taking disciplinary action against the God of Remorse in the vaccine war.]

The God of Remorse, huh? He was the god that designed the 35th stage; it was a memorable stage, one filled with remorse. The God of Remorse had kept a close eye on me in the time I had spent there. Perhaps it was because I suffered on the 35th floor stage that my feelings towards the God of Remorse hadn't been favourable.

However, the source from King Goblin had proved to be helpful when

controlling divine power. Now that I knew the God of Remorse arranged for the source to be given to me, his favourability with me had become better.

The God of Remorse had supposedly put himself at a considerable disadvantage by giving me the power source without permission. I was curious as to why he showed such willingness to break the rules for me.

“Can you tell me about the God of Remorse?” I asked, sitting up on the bed with my legs folded.

If the dragon replaced Kirikiri, it should, at least, provide some information after clearing the stage. Then again, information about gods isn’t that easily obtained.

“Sure.”

We weren’t informed much about gods, and generally, people were more focused on solving problems rather than finding out more information about them.

[To define the God of Remorse, he could be called the god of walking backward.]

It was a sensible analogy.

[When you always look back at the past while walking forwards, you often fall and get lost. That’s when you feel regret, remorse filling within you. He, the God of Remorse, has always been looking behind him.]

It was essential to reflect on past mistakes. It could be a motivation for a better life, a warning not to repeat the same mistakes. But, a god who looks only at the past is unable to see the present and the future; he endlessly repeats the same mistakes. Listening to the description, the God of Remorse didn’t seem like a god one would want to associate with,

[The God of remorse had recently gained a unique position. As the whole area fell into confusion, more and more people asked him for

advice.]

“Huh?”

This was an unexpected explanation. When I asked the dragon for a description, all I wanted was to know was the concept of the God of Remorse, not his status quo. I thought it would be good to know about the world I was unaware of, so I decided to listen quietly.

[Since the vaccine war began, many people have been confused. They sought out the foresight of gods with visionary powers, but even the visionary gods said it wasn't easy to predict what the future held.]

“.....”

[Those, who could not find an answer, went to the God of Remorse. One of the characteristics of remorse is familiarity with past battles. Isn't there a saying like 'He, who looks back, can't see the next moment that comes, but knows better than anyone else what the next moment will be'?]

“Never heard it before.”

[Really? I thought it was a pretty famous saying. To put it simply, we can predict the future through the past; history repeats itself.]

“So, what happened to the people who sought advice? Did they get any?” I questioned.

[I don't know. However, I don't think those who sought advice would have gotten any.] the dragon predicted.

“Why?”

The dragon snorted before answering, [If he had been able to provide useful advice to others, he would have gained prestige rather than remorse.]

It was an explanation that made me speechless. There really were many kinds of strange gods.

[It's true that the God of Remorse was getting a lot of attention. He usually spent his time idling looking at the past, but this time he, himself, came forward. Breaking the rules. Bearing disciplinary action. You're the reason why he did it.] the dragon accused.

"I'm responsible for this? What?"

Was it because the gods had taken pity on me?

[Don't overthink it. The gods were already paying attention to you before that. Although, many still don't know about you. It was only known that the God of Remorse had given an unknown challenger the power of origin without permission and was disciplined for it.]

With so much information to process, I became a little confused, even more so because it had been an unexpected turn of events.

"Yes. Thank you. But, are you allowed to tell me this?"

The amount of information I had obtained through other stages paled in comparison to the amount of information the dragon had just provided me.

[Hmm. It's fine.]

"Okay. I won't burn your house." After it did me such a favor, I couldn't vent my anger on its house without bearing a guilty conscience. I extinguished the fireball that had been floating above my palm.

[Is that so? You're pretty decent. Oh, and as I said before, this cave is not my home.]

* * *

"Kea-ek!" The frog was swimming in the lake under the waterfall.

I was curious as to whether it would act like a dog or a frog when it went into the water, so I watched it carefully.

“Kea-ek!”

Perhaps, because it had a dog’s body, it was dog paddling. After the meal, I continued to watch the frog swim and play, while the dragon talked to me.

[Let’s talk about the next stage. Is there a kind of stage you want to avoid?]

I believed I heard this question before.

“I’d like to avoid the stage where soul-type monsters usually appear.”

[Oh. Why is that?]

I explained to the dragon that the stages with soul-type monsters were mostly boring. The skill of soul exploitation, obtained from the sixth floor, was too deadly for spiritual enemies. I could use a soul sword and skills like soul-steal. Most of all, ghosts with terrible shapes and spirits that usually attacked the mind were not even impressive.

[Oh, is that so?]

You lizard! I had a bad feeling that I might just be sent to a stage full of soul-monsters this time.

[Is there any stage you want?]

The stage I wanted? It would be one where I could get to learn more magic. If not, then a place I could extract information from.

“I wish there was a stage where I could learn more about the source. Or the stage for what you call transformation.”

The dragon thought for a moment before saying, [Okay. Floor 57 and Floor 58 will have what you need. We’ll decide on the 59th floor later.]

Oh, was it a stage where I could learn about the source or

transformation as I wished? I was so thankful that it was finally listening to me.

“It’s not a strange stage, is it?”

[No!]

I felt a little nervous at the dragon’s answer. Was there even a stage that wasn’t strange in Hell’s Difficulty? I was worried that there would be a really crazy stage.

[It’s not dangerous, and as you wish, it’s a stage where you can get a little more information about the source.] the dragon roared.

I still didn’t feel good about it. Pausing, I looked at the portal that had appeared on the floor.

But it’s not like I could quit now, and even if I could, I don’t think the dragon would let me off. I thought I might as well get it over with.

Returning the still swimming frog to the ring, I climbed into the portal.

“Move.”

As the portal spun, a wheezing sound came from the dragon’s crystal ball. I had heard Idy laugh like that once, and the uneasiness I felt only increased.

The place where I was transported to was in the middle of a busy street. There were a lot of people in the street, and the strange thing was that they were all looking up at the sky.

I followed their gaze; there was a black sphere floating in the sky.

[The 57th floor stage begins]

Chapter 243

Tutorial 57th Floor (2)

It resembled modern Earth in many ways. Sturdy buildings soared into the sky, lined up neatly. Roads and sidewalks paved the way to different places.

Except for some minor differences, the style of clothing was also similar to Earth's. I thought my armor would stand out, so I took a thick coat out of my inventory and put it on.

It was fortunate that the weather was a bit chilly. My coat was not much different from the coats these people wore, so I could wear it without standing out. Also, the armor was light and thin, so it was comfortable to wear a coat over it. The soul sword on my waist was mildly uncomfortable, but I decided to let it be.

I adjusted my clothes and looked around again. People were still looking at the black sphere that hovered in the sky. I had no idea what it was.

Occasionally, the sphere would squirm, and the people closely followed its movements. Like everyone else, I peered curiously at the black ball.

After convulsing for a long time, the black sphere finally flashed. It was only for an instant, but the people on the street who witnessed it held their hands together and prayed. I thought that they might be praying to a god in this world, but when I heard their prayers, I felt that it was not the case either.

I could make out a few words.

His sacrifice for us. Great. Peace. Heroic. End. Salvation.

It sounded more like nonsensical rambling and less like praise for God.

A god wouldn't sacrifice anything for humanity.

Then, a message popped up.

[The 57th floor begins]

Description: Two years ago, there was misfortune on the Arahabi planet, which was known for its unusually high frequency of superpowers, along with its high level of civilization. An asteroid and an alien species from outer space landed there, making the people face a death crisis.

Fortunately, a hero saved the planet. The superhuman sealed the entire asteroid along with their world in the sky, to prevent the alien species from causing more destruction. The seal has been intact for two years, but no one knows what's going on inside it.

We want to investigate what's going on inside the seal. The planet has officially rejected requests for vaccination, and we have sent you, a secret investigator, to the planet. There are new items in your inventory.

[Clear Condition]

– Death.

Hmm... What could I say? It was quite a silly stage mission. What did it want me to do? Waiting for me at the end of the lengthy description was the condition of death. What even was this?

Did it mean that once I died, I cleared the stage? It seemed unlikely. Maybe it was a stage where the second clear condition appeared only after your first death.

Oh, my. Now the system was telling me to die. First, I took out the newly received items from my inventory.

They were easy to find because they were all inside a bag that I hadn't seen before. An ID card. Clothing and combat uniform. A watch. One pill and an ornament that looked like a bracelet.

My ID card appeared to be forged. My face and my frequently used alias were on it. It seemed that I'd be addressed as Ho here.

Information about the combat clothes was displayed in the explanation window. They were the clothes worn by the superhumans of this planet during combat. I hastily put them back into my inventory and made a note to change into them later. Roughly, I fastened the watch to my wrist.

The pill was said to be able to forge superpowers. As soon as I saw that the retention time was more than two months, I swallowed the pill.

Finally, I looked at the bracelet.

[Fluid escape assist]

[Description: An aiding device that helps you abandon your body in an emergency and let your spirit escape in the form of fluid. The soul will remain intact for two hours, even if the body is entirely dead or destroyed.]

I'd been given all sorts of strange items.

"What do you think?" I asked Ahboo.

[Well...] Ahbooboo didn't give me a clear answer, but we continued to talk and hypothesize about this stage's mission.

"I don't know what it is that makes me say so, but I feel that there's a high risk of dying or getting hurt during the investigation. That's why I've been given these items. If I can, I'll abandon my body and continue the investigation for two hours."

[Yes, that sounds reasonable. If the mission states death, it would be better to collect as much information as possible before or after death than to keep preserving the body.]

Ahbooboo and I came to this conclusion, but I couldn't help but dislike it. I couldn't believe I was about to die. It was apparent what

danger laid ahead from seeing the ominous message that seemed to foreshadow my death. If I were a normal creature, I wouldn't be able to survive. As of now, I decided that I'd try my best not to die.

[Don't worry too much. I'll resuscitate you in the meantime.]

Thank you, but there's no need. Ahbooboo, without a doubt, had the power to resuscitate me, but in the end, it was the God of Sky that bestowed Ahbooboo power. I didn't want to owe anything to a god. It was too risky.

The watch on my wrist suddenly began to ring. When I lifted my wrist, there was an exclamation mark in the middle instead of the time. Wondering what to do, I raised my right hand and touched the exclamation mark.

<There are 40 minutes left until the next event.>

The wristwatch had sent a holographic message. I looked closely at the holograms, amazed by the function that I saw for the first time. I thought it was a civilization similar to Earth, but it seemed to be a little more advanced than Earth.

<Please convene at the Superpowers Association's Office before the opening.

-The Way to Go>

I touched the holographic item, "The Way to Go", with my hand, and it showed me the way from where I was standing to the association's office.

It had navigation abilities.

[Wow. Let me make one of these.] Ahbooboo muttered in fascination. Ahbooboo would be able to create similar functions by magic and embed them into anyone. It was clear that navigation was a useful function, but Ahbooboo would already know the way, so it wasn't of much help to him.

If we were going to convene somewhere, why did the mission start in the middle of a street? Haah, so annoying. All we could see at the beginning was the level of civilization and the bypassers on the roads. The level of civilization, architecture, and the style of clothing could also be seen in the script office. Then, what the stage wanted to show me would probably be the bypassers in the streets.

Were they praying to the black sphere? That black sphere was said to be the seal, consisting of an entire asteroid and a superhuman. The sphere and people's prayers appeared to be related. What kind of hidden information about the faith was here?

"Hey, Ahbooboo, do you feel anything?" I asked Ahbooboo.

People seemed to be paying great attention to the sphere, so I asked him in my mind.

[Well, I don't feel any divine power.]

Right? Although the people were praying hard, it didn't give rise to any divine feeling. It was a strange thing.

It was even more so because I remembered gathering the faiths of just a few people on the 56th floor and wielding divine power. Did the power of the source have such a significant effect? So much so that one can exert high strength even with just a little bit of divine power?

There were still many unsolved questions. One by one, they were being resolved, but more issues appeared in place of them. I wondered if the day would come when I'd find out all the secrets. I scratched my head for a moment and deeply sighed.

"Let's go and do as I've been told for now."

What else could I even do? I had no choice but to go.

* * *

When I arrived at the office, people were gathered at the entrance. At first glance, every one of them seemed to have superpowers. Adorning

the combat suit, I had previously received allowed me to blend in with them.

No matter how much I looked around, it felt as if I was wearing ordinary clothes, not combat clothes. I wondered if everyone would battle together.

There was a line in front of them. I, too, got swept up in the crowd and headed there. I didn't know why we were brought here, but I would gladly welcome it if it were for a militant or dangerous purpose.

It looked like they were checking our belongings, so I asked Seregia to excuse us and put the sword in the inventory. Then there was an ID test, and finally, an x-ray machine of sorts. Every time a person passed the device, the level and ability of that person as a superhuman would be examined.

Beep-

Name: Ho

Certification number: 21400

Grade: B (1400)

After passing the examiner, my name on the ID card was marked. If you can get a name and a designated number with this machine, why bother checking the ID? I was tempted to complain, but I suppressed the urge and went ahead.

I continued to follow the crowd and walked down a seemingly endless corridor. In the end, a large hall came into sight. It was a conference room, but its size made it look more like an indoor football field. The people coming into the conference room looked at the hologram of their watches and went to their seats, so I followed suit.

Seat number: B112

Fortunately, I was able to find my seat quickly, and I sat down and

looked around.

Perhaps it was because this was a conference room that could accommodate more than 10,000 people, that an endless number of people had been entering for a long time. I felt like I'd have to wait a while for something to start.

A tall man was sitting next to me. He turned and asked, in an amicable manner. "1,400?"

I thought for a moment about his question. Recalling that the number 1400 was attached to mind, I answered, "Uh, yes. One thousand four hundred."

My reply was greeted with a big laugh. "Hey, there's another person besides me who didn't get an A grade because he's 100 points short."

He gave another hearty laugh. The ignorant-looking giant had a longer name than I thought, and I quickly gave up memorizing his name.

I asked how he knew I had 1,400 points.

"It looks like this is your first time in the conference room."

The giant pointed to the seat, saying that one's grade and score determined positions. Therefore, I could quickly know my score by sitting in the chair designated for grade B's.

The giant seemed to feel a sense of homogeneity since I, like himself, had an ambiguous score of 1400. He was probably excited to meet an unfortunate comrade who narrowly fell from grade A and ended up in grade B. From the seating arrangement and the giant's attitude, I could see that the rating meant a lot here.

"Well, even with the same grade, I would be much stronger." the giant muttered

I turned my head to frown at the giant. 'Much stronger'? That wasn't a phrase I could overlook.

“What?” I questioned.

When the giant made eye contact with me, he smiled and asked,
“What are you going to do?”

[Be gentle. You’re now assuming a fake identity.]

Chapter 244

Tutorial 57th Floor (3)

Ahbooboo's words made sense. To infiltrate and gather information, I had to act inconspicuous. It was better to finish quickly and concisely than to run around in circles.

“Oh, my gosh...”

When I poked his side with my elbow, he fell over with a groan. Because of his large size, I could easily hit his vital point. I was sitting right next to him, so it was even more convenient.

“Eck... Cough... Cough...”

[What's wrong with him?] Ahbooboo asked when he saw the giant doubling over and crouching in front of the seat.

[He's in shock. His internal organs are disordered because of that. I told you to be careful. What if he dies?]

He wouldn't die. If there was no internal bleeding, no bone or muscle damage, then why would he die? It would just hurt a little.

Occasionally, people glanced at the wheezing giant, but for the most part, they ignored him. I focused on sitting in my seat as nonchalantly as I could. No one stepped forward and took care of the giant, so it seemed that he was not only stupid but also unpopular. He was a fool, but he made me worried.

This idiot who had a muscle for a brain was bluffing.

[They say there are many people with supernatural powers here. I thought he might have been powerful since he's here.] Ahbooboo frowned.

If the giant had been practicing martial arts or learning magic, I could have figured out his strength without having to hit him. However, since he was a superhuman, I had no idea how to measure his ability.

Curiously, I asked Ahbooboo if he knew about superpowers.

[I don't know either. I only know the basic ideas.]

I asked Ahbooboo to elaborate on his knowledge.

[There aren't many benefits of superpower, and you just have to be lucky to be born with superpowers.]

"What else?" I probed.

[It's hard to tell if someone has superpowers or not, and the use of superpowers requires relatively little mana.]

From what Ahbooboo was saying, superpowers sounded perfect. When fighting against a superhuman, it'd be hard to determine what their abilities were.

[There are disadvantages, too. Superhumans have limited capabilities. Take a wizard, for example. If you're a wizard who can use firewall magic, then you'd be able to use fireball magic since the two types of magic are closely related. However, in the case of superpower, you can't use certain types of powers if you're incapable of it; their skill set is limited.]

Indeed, it was a considerable disadvantage. Superpowers were an innate ability, but a superhuman would never be able to improve on abilities that weren't superpowers.

[I've heard that they can improve their skills. It's just that they can't practice a new ability.]

This was interesting. In a way, many tutorial challengers were similar to superhumans. Some challengers used magic spells but didn't fully understand magic, which limited their improvement and development.

Superpowers were innate, so it wasn't surprising that there was an ID system based on your abilities. However, it created a classist system that categorized people based on how affluent they were with superpowers[1].

"Hey, 1400," I called out to the giant sprawled out on the floor. His coughing ended, and the pain should have already faded, but he continued to lay on the ground and stare at me. There was a stark difference between his current condition and the time he feigned strength.

"What?" responded the giant with tears clinging to his eyelashes. Had it hurt that much? I didn't hit him that hard, though.

I asked the pitiful giant what kind of superpower he had.

Then, the giant looked at me with a puzzled look. Why was he looking at me like that? I was just asking a simple question.

"It's body strengthening..."

* * *

Body strengthening was the ability to improve strength, agility, sense, and endurance significantly. I was shocked; I was able to beat up a person with such an ability.

"I had no idea."

[Warrior, a superhuman with body strengthening could hardly withstand your attack. Imagine what would have happened if he was an average person,] Ahbooboo scolded

"...I'll control my powers," I assured him.

Perhaps, because I kept looking at him with a look of disbelief, the giant pulled his ID card out and showed it to me as proof. On the back of his identification card, was written:

“What is that?” I asked, confused.

He quickly answered that the number indicated a measure of physical reinforcement. “If you’re a superhuman, you should know this.”

[Just pretend that you know, why are you asking such a question? You’ll seem suspicious.] Ahbooboo advised, but I didn’t want to do that. Wasn’t this stage meant for information collection?

I pulled out my ID card and checked the back. Just like the giant’s, there was a number code embedded.

<122>

The number was high. Was it a good thing?

[You’re not going to push that big guy and ask him what it means, are you?]

Um.

[If you don’t know what your ID says, you’ll stand out. It’ll become evident that it’s a fake ID or someone else’s ID.]

Ahbooboo was right. As I was thinking of the meaning of the number code 122, my eyes fell on something

“Work is a Beast Summoner.”

Oh, so I was a summoner. If I had to have a fake ID, I should have gotten a reinforcement power that would make it easier to disguise myself. Just why was I a summoner?

[Why don’t you comfort that giant? It’s embarrassing for him to be beaten by a summoner.]

Instead of saying anything, I simply activated the ring to summon the frog.

“Kea-ek!” As soon as the frog appeared, it complained about being summoned so late.

“Wait, what’s that?”

“Is that a frog? Or a dog?”

Chatter broke out in the crowd as a massive frog appeared in the conference room. Man, our frog’s presence was dope.

“It’s an invisible frog,” I explained to the giant, who had a dazed expression.

[That’s a very insincere explanation.]

* * *

Using the frog, I was able to convince the giant that I was not the one who hit him; it was the invisible frog. When the giant growled at me, the owner, asking why I didn’t stop it, I weakly said that the silent frog had attacked before I could notice anything.

Surprisingly, the giant seemed to believe this lie. I supposed it was better for his ego if he believed that I wasn’t the one who had beaten him.

“So it was the frog’s killer move,” he said. “It’s great that I endured it. It was excruciatingly painful.” After apologizing to each other, the tense atmosphere finally lightened.

“Thank you, 1400,” I said, accepting the snacks and drinks he had bought. In commemoration of his apology and our reconciliation, the giant bought food from the snack bar.

“Why don’t you stop calling me 1400?” 1400 grumbled.

I heard from the giant that the score of 1400 is the highest in grade B. If he had 100 more points, he would have received an A grade. With those extra 100 points, his life could have been different.

It made sense. At the meeting, those that were B-level or lower were strictly excluded and were no more than spectators. Most of the meetings were led by S-levels, while the A-levels sometimes contributed their views.

Me? I just watched the meeting while eating snacks. There was evident differential treatment by grade. I couldn't even share my opinion even though I was called to a meeting. If you were going to treat me like that, I would have rather not come.

"By the way, this is delicious," I complimented.

"Right?" The giant grinned. I felt he was a good guy. Or maybe just a pushover.

Be it me being a summoner, an unexpected accident, a quarrel he had started, bluffing because he didn't want to get beaten, people ignoring him, his buying food.

You could tell he was a pushover. Since it's a stage where we need to gather information, I decided to be kind to this pushover and extract information from him in a comfortable way. Fortunately, 1400 was very talkative.

He worked for the Defense Agency. In a significant accident or crime, they were dispatched to settle the situation and had to mediate disputes in case of conflicts. It was what police should do, but due to the limitations of non-superhumans, people with abilities such as 1,400 were often dispatched.

He was a good friend, and it was nice listening to his daily life. Suddenly, there was a big commotion in the conference room, and a bill was stuck on the front panel of the conference room.

<SSS-class Supercaptain Archiden Rescue and Extraterrestrial Asteroid Disappearance Operations>

"Are they really doing that?" 1,400 muttered, dumbfounded. Looking around, those with B-grade and A-grade abilities seemed visibly puzzled.

The agenda posted on the panel included the mobilization of all capable people above grade B. In other words, I was being forced to go regardless of my own wishes.

[How many of the people in the Supernatural People's Association are capable of ordering that?] I asked.

[Well, didn't you say this was a planet with many superpowers? Perhaps the king or emperor doesn't have power over superhuman affairs. A person with supernatural powers, not a king or an emperor, may be the head of state. Maybe one of them over there is the ruler.] Ahbooboo replied.

Our thoughts differed from each other, but we agreed that the power structure of this society favorably treated superhumans.

The meeting adjourned with that. The agenda was approved, but details of the operation seemed to have not been decided. It would take some time for details to be decided and the operation to be drawn up, according to 1400.

I followed the crowd out of the conference room and asked 1400, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going home. I need to go to work early tomorrow morning."

I was thinking of drinking or having a late-night snack with him, but I did need a place to rest.

"Then I'll come along with you."

"Huh?"

"I'm going to your house."

[1] : If you didn't know, classism is discrimination based on a perceived social class set by society. Feudalism is a type of classism.

Chapter 245

Tutorial 57th Floor (4)

“What are you doing?” I asked the tired-looking 1400, who was standing at the front door.

“Come in, treat it like it’s your own home,” I said casually.

“This- This is my home, though.”

It was quite a neat apartment. This world was similar to that of modern Earth, so the structure of the apartment seemed familiar.

By the way, he was pretty neat. I planned to clean up if the room was dirty, but that wasn’t necessary anymore.

“Sit here,” 1400 instructed.

I sat at the dining table, while he rummaged around in the kitchen cupboard and brought a plate filled with snacks and a bottle of liquor.

“Are you actually going to sleep here tonight?” 1400 questioned.

Seriously, how many times did I have to say it? I nodded in response.

“What about your home?”

“I don’t have one,” I said. No home.

1400 looked at me sympathetically and patted my shoulder.

“Work?” 1400 probed.

“I don’t work either.”

1400 sighed at my answer. “How can a B-grade man have no home or work? If you have the ability, you usually have a job and some money in your pocket. Ah, well, that’s true. Only if you have the ability.”

What did he say?

1400 quietly poured the sparkling wine into my glass. I took a look at the living room while sipping slowly, the smooth wine sliding down my throat.

All I could see were ordinary household objects. Among them, there was only one ambiguous object.

“What’s that?” I asked, pointing to the thing.

“Game console.”

I got curious about this ‘game console’. It looked like a public phone booth that could fit three to four people. Were you supposed to go in there?

“Do you want to try it?”

* * *

“It’s been four days already. One more round?” I asked.

“You’re crazy.”

Game consoles were like those standard FPS games in arcades. It just happened to be a little more advanced than that of Earth’s. There was only about half a generation’s difference. Perhaps if I stayed on Earth longer, Earth would’ve become more similar to this world. The only difference would be that they use various kinds of superpowers instead of guns, but in my opinion, that wasn’t very unique.

Anyway, the games were fun. I asked 1,400 for some basic rules and played a little bit in single mode.

After gaining some confidence, I suggested betting. “Wanna make a bet?”

1400 initially declined the bet; perhaps he was worried I would lose.

“Scared?” I taunted. 1400 immediately accepted the bet.

The bet was a good idea; I could stay at 1400’s house an extra day for every game that I won.

1400 said it was a ridiculous condition, but I was able to win four games and secure four days at his house.

[You’re really good at this. Anyone would think that you’re taking advantage of him.] Ahbooboo said.

Taking advantage? It wasn’t called taking advantage when the other party agreed to play along.

“Hey. Let’s play another round,” I said and restarted the game.

After playing for a few times, I got used to controls. Now, I think I could win even with a few disabilities.

“No, I refuse to play anymore!” 1400 yelled.

“Oh, ho. I got the kill. Is it already my fifth win?”

Miraculously, I secured a five-day stay. 1400 grumbled as he came out of the game booth, lying on the couch in the living room.

“How crazy. Is this really your first time?!”

Even though he complained, he didn’t revoke my five-day stay. Was he going to doubt me because I won the game? Apologies if your pride got hurt.

It was always better to play the game seriously. If you still want to be kind, you can repay the loser with some gratitude. If you become too

meek, those who like taking advantage of pushovers will stick to you like a leech. Fortunately, 1400 was not that much of a pushover.

“You said you didn’t have a job earlier, right?” 1400 asked.

“Yes.”

“Then, would you like to work with me?” 1400 asked if I had any thoughts of working at his workplace. After all, staying at his home would require me to pay rent.

“Of course, I’ll pay accommodation fees.”

The condition for clearing the 57th-floor stage was death, which likely meant to collect as much information as possible before I die.

I thought of the black sphere, the hovering asteroid, the superhuman sealed inside, and the plan that was drawn up to rescue that superhuman. However, there was nothing I could do until the operation began.

“What are we supposed to do there?” I asked.

“It’s the same as what I told you about earlier. Come forward when people need help. Usually, we mediate conflicts between superpowers or stand guard at a crime scene. Sometimes, we guard or track criminals down. Oh, I don’t stakeout since it takes a long time.”

“Okay.”

There was no reason to be displeased with this work. The more the people who got involved, the easier it would be to get information about this place.

[I think it’s okay for me too.] Ahbooboo belatedly expressed his consent.

1400 left the house to make a quick run to the store. While drinking wine, I leaned back on the sofa, enjoying its slightly rough, yet comforting texture against my skin. At this sight, Ahbooboo said,

[You're walking around like it's your own house.]

"He said I could stay here. That makes it my home too."

[What kind of logic is that?] Ahbooboo questioned disdainfully.

* * *

"You didn't sleep?"

"I did. I just woke up, though."

When 1400 returned, I was playing a game in the living room. Although I felt comfortable, I couldn't fall asleep quickly. The feeling of unease I always had when on a stage refused to secede. The addictive game console didn't do much to help my insomnia, either.

After breakfast with 1400, I finished getting ready for work and dressed in a uniform that 1400 had lent to me. The outfit consisted of a large vest, but the front of the garment was rather hard. I wondered how long it would be able to withstand the brute force of supernatural powers.

When I asked 1400, he replied, "Of course, it can't bear the destructive force of superpowers. If someone grade C or higher decides to attack you, the vest isn't going to do anything. But it's better than walking around with nothing. It's light, too, so it shouldn't be too troublesome to carry around."

I muttered, "I see."

After I finished preparing, I lazed around on the sofa and asked 1400 if he wanted to play games, but he said he didn't play games during working hours. Oh, my God. He's so uptight even at his own home; he was tougher than I thought. In the end, I dazedly held a glass of water and sipped it occasionally.

An hour or two later, the device in 1400's pocket rang. Checking the device, he said, "We have a dispatch request. Let's go."

Finally! The moment I had been waiting for. 1400 said his job was to resolve disputes between superhumans, and I was looking forward to seeing what kind of superhumans would be fighting.

* * *

“You son of a b*tch!”

“F*ck you!”

I want to go home and play games was the first thought that came to my mind as soon as I saw the children shouting and swearing at each other.

The request had come from an ordinary school, so I had been very excited when I heard about this location.

What had happened at that school? Did a superhuman run away to a school with children and take hostages during a battle? Or was the battle area just near this school? Even though I entered the school with a pounding heart, I soon let out a sigh in disappointment.

Two young children were fighting against each other. One of them had a blue eye, and the first one's face seemed to have been punched. If each other's superpowers were used, they shouldn't be bruised, but have their heads blown off instead.

“Both are energy-related. I'm in trouble,” 1400, who was standing next to me, murmured.

I asked why he was in trouble. 1400 explained patiently. “When their powers collide with each other, it'll cause an explosion.”

“What's the extent of the explosion?”

“The upper floor, lower floor, and half of this floor will certainly be blown away.”

That was a wide range. In that case, the school would have to be shut down. There would be a hefty amount of reconstruction if the building

were to blow up.

Nearby, teachers were quietly evacuating students, and it looked like they were trying not to provoke the two superhuman students who were fighting. Several teachers were clinging to them, trying to stop them somehow.

“Shut up before I blow you away, you bitch!” one of them growled in anger at a teacher.

He’s going a bit overboard with his language.

“Oh my,” I said monotonously. Young children cussing? What a shocker.

“There are only a few options. Wait until they’re exhausted. Or, if we’re lucky, they’ll make up by themselves.”

No matter how hard I looked, it didn’t seem like those rude children would make up, so I asked how to attack them.

“I take one, and you take one. Can you do it? I would have done it if it were just one person,” 1400 explained. “It’s dangerous to rush in hastily. Because I have no experience, I may fail to control my powers, and if I do, it will cause a massive accident.”

Oh, Lord. Two rude children were fighting, and it caused such a huge problem. This situation was a side effect in the world where superpowers were randomly given. Many young people had high power.

Most of us improved our abilities with gruesome effort, but some were naturally born with god-like powers. And such skills were considered priceless. Outside of this world, there had never been an instance where unqualified children were given abilities.

In many ways, this was a bizarre world.

While I was thinking, 1400 went to talk to them, and upon seeing 1400, the children stopped fighting. Was it because of the B-grade

embedded in his uniform? I had a feeling that was the case.

The reason the children seemed to shrink away in front of 1400 was because he was both superhuman and a B-grade.

Both of them were intimidated. That alone made things much better, but even then, the situation did not settle down.

[This place is amusing.] Ahbooboo commented.

“Yea,” I agreed.

[I still think it’s a little unfair though.] He said quietly, talking about the way people got superpowers randomly. [That easy-to-get power in all of them feels a little strange.]

“You’re appalled by it, aren’t you?”

[Yes.] Ahbooboo and Seregia answered in unison. Seregia, who usually remained silent, answered the same.

The two were from the same world, a world full of criminals who transcended law enforcement using brute force. Civil wars were rampant among humans, and whenever there was a moment of peace, someone would manage to stir up trouble.

For Ahbooboo and Seregia, strength was precious, and it was only natural to pursue it through hours of training. I could understand because I knew their greed for power and their fierceness.

While I was talking to Ahbooboo and Seregia, things took a new turn.

“Do you know who my father is?!”

Ah, I had seen this a lot in Earth dramas. I no longer felt the need to listen to the children’s whining. I formed a transparent ball of energy behind the necks of the children and proceeded to hit them on the back of their necks with it.

The children fainted, and their superpowers naturally dispersed as they lost consciousness. I was prepared to dissipate their powers by force, but it was a waste of effort.

1400 looked at me in bewilderment. The teachers looked at me curiously as well.

I decided to answer their questions about what happened. “Invisible frog.”

I summoned the frog from the ring.

“Kea-ek!” As soon as the frog was summoned, it croaked cheerfully.

Chapter 246

Tutorial 57th Floor (5)

Once the fighting had halted, the parents of the children who had been fighting, arrived. Surprisingly, none of the parents were angry with me.

Instead, one of them quickly bent in gratitude to me and apologized. Both the kids were superhumans, but one of the parents was not. One child's father was a superhuman, but the other child's father was not.

Although the dispute ended, it didn't have a good ending. The father with superpowers treated the other one coldly. Rather than two equals, the pair looked more like the way a nobleman in the Joseon Dynasty treated slaves. Which father would want to bend to others in front of his son? It certainly wasn't a pleasant sight.

"Can't you do anything?" I asked 1400, unable to hold back.

"No," He answered bitterly, disappointment evident in his features. I thought all citizens had the privilege of universal equality, but it turns out this world was too classist for that.

"Then why do you keep watching?"

"You never know." There could be room for intervention. It was such a vain answer.

Fortunately, the father with superpowers never crossed the line. As soon as the situation was about to heat up, 1400 stealthily approached, and the father chose to close the case properly. He must have been satisfied with showing off his power. That gentleman seemed to think this was an extension of his child's quarrel.

When things were over, we went out of the school and visited a small restaurant. While ordering drinks and simple food, Chun said he

should wait for the next dispatch request. Sadly, the meal wasn't very appealing after what had just happened.

"I've solved one thing, but will I get paid?"

"Yeah. This was originally a request from the police, but the police asked me to act as a mediator. You'll get paid depending on the number of fights you resolve."

I had a strong hunch that I wouldn't receive much. How much money would I earn for breaking up a fight between children?

One surprising thing was that the status of B-grade people was higher than I had thought. At first, I hadn't immediately noticed it.

I'd noticed the way the father looked at 1400. He probably thought something along the lines of "Why do people with B-grade superpowers get involved in this kind of thing?" His expression said it all.

Even while walking down the street, several people whispered to each other, saying, "He's a B-grade" and "I'm sure he'll make a lot of money out of this. Why did he have to come here?"

"Why are you doing this? Surely, you have better jobs to do," I asked 1400, purely out of curiosity.

Anyone who had a high enough status could make a lot of money regardless of their profession. Why did 1400 insist on doing work where he'd have to listen to such outrageous things from people?

"What's a better job?"

1400's words made me choke.

[Don't say anything more, Warrior.] Ahbooboo warned, his voice gloomy. He hated things like this.

I didn't bother to reply, and the atmosphere soon became awkward. Fortunately, 1400's device rang once more.

I was worried that we would have to go to a school again to stop another fight, but fortunately, it was a proper fight this time. Two superhumans were fighting in the middle of the street.

“Oh.”

“What happened? It looks pretty tense.”

One superhuman was blasting fire from his hand, and the other was creating an ice wall in the air; it was a showdown between ice and fire.

I wanted to see their fight, but 1400 didn't give me time to spectate the match. Instead, 1400 immediately rushed toward the man who was spewing out fire.

“Take care of the other one!” 1400 quickly jumped forward and shouted at me. He wanted me to stop the man using ice while he was overpowering the weaker one. It was easy to see why 1400 rushed to intercept this fight rather than waiting it out like he did at the school. This battle took place on the street, and bystanders would get injured as collateral during the clash. While the ice wall wouldn't harm the people around it, the flames fired at the ice wall would.

I could see the store owner trying to put out the fire that had spread to his store. The owner was powerless, but he still tried to put out the flames on the store building. Usually, the first thing to do would be to stop the man who was continually releasing flames, but such an option wasn't possible for the weaker store owner.

1400 attacked the flame-thrower. The flame-thrower reflexively belted out a flame towards 1400, but 1400 dodged it and sent his fist flying into the flame-thrower's face, who fainted and fell back in one blow. The fires flickered and began to die down.

I had to do my job, too. “Ahbooboo. Knock him out.”

[Yes, Warrior.]

Ahbooboo put the ice-wielder to sleep using magic, and he collapsed in a deep slumber almost immediately. 1400 didn't stop after knocking out the flame-thrower and continued to put out the flames that had spread to the streets.

"I need your help," I told Ahbooboo.

[Why are you making me do all these little things?] Ahbooboo grumbled but still listened to me, and water poured down on the flames.

As the water kept pouring down, 1400 looked around in surprise. Was he looking for a person with a water superpower? Then, his eyes fell on me. It wasn't just him, though. The eyes of multiple bystanders also shifted toward me.

I felt like something similar had taken place before. 1400's bewildered eyes seemed to be asking, "Did you do this, too?"

I quietly put my hands behind my back and took out the ring.

"Invisible frog."

"Kea-ek!"

"What nonsense..."

1400 muttered, showing a dumbfounded face. It looked like that excuse didn't work this time.

"Then is this frog saliva?" 1400 raised his arms that were wet with water.

How could a frog have so much saliva? This guy sure had strange thoughts.

"This frog can use magic too," I told 1400.

"Kea-ek!" Next to me, the frog croaked and answered no. It was

fortunate that I was the only one who could understand that.

“Oh, what a frog. Wait, is it even a frog? It’s so furry.” 1400 raised his brows.

“It’s a frog,” I reassured him.

“Kea-ek!”

* * *

I solved five fights today. There had been cases where we prevented superhumans from clashing, and situations where we took care of the aftermath of a battle. We also pursued criminals who used superpowers. Ahbooboo did most of the work, but the frog took all the credit.

[This is so unfair! I want to get credit for my work!] exclaimed Ahbooboo.

The frog was lying in the living room, getting a massage by 1400. It was quietly waiting to see if the massage given 1400 felt pleasant. It was fortunate that the frog, who had been a little sulky due to the repeated summons and reverse summons, quickly became cheerful.

[What am I going to do with that big guy?] I asked Ahbooboo.

Today, I had learned a lot about this world. Superhumans were divided into authorized and unauthorized groups. Those who were authorized could use their abilities in public, and those who weren’t, couldn’t. It was a requirement for everyone grade-B or above to be certified. To become a certified public figure, a person below C-grade had to work in public office or wield an exceptional ability. A person with an unauthorized ability was no different from a person without powers.

Nevertheless, I saw that the gap between the two classes was clear. I talked to Ahbooboo about this.

[It’s stupid. It’s better to have universal equality, but they split

everyone into classes and gave them differential treatment.]

“That’s discrimination,” I agreed.

In worlds like Ahbooboo and Seregia’s, where there were emergencies, it made sense why people with abilities would be given preferential treatment. But this place was similar to Earth and hadn’t been invaded by monsters yet. All in all, it was peaceful, and superpowers didn’t do any good.

[It’s so stupid. There are so many idiots who want to show off their power in this peaceful period. The only thing that makes them better than others is that they are born with superpowers. If they don’t have exceptional superpowers, they’re no different from ordinary people. Even if they have minuscule powers, they’ll still try to show them off.]

It certainly was stupid. Most superpowers wouldn’t be of much aid to the nation’s defense capabilities; they were just convenient for everyday life. It was pitiful that the two children from the school were the most powerful out of all the people I had seen today.

It was better to let them enjoy their superiority while shackling their ankles.

[What? Like a noble sacrifice?] Ahbooboo questioned.

A noble sacrifice? I was skeptical.

I was wondering about what Ahbooboo had said about a noble sacrifice when I remembered a similar saying from Ahbooboo’s world.

[The class system is likely used as encouragement for people to raise their position. It’s their way of forcing superhumans to save people.]

It’s a fresh idea except for one problem.

“Then what about the ordinary people? You have to think about them too.”

[What about them? Will they die because of this? An inferiority

complex is an improvement and a desire to improve oneself by seeing better people. Without it, people become powerless.] Ahbooboo reasoned.

Ahbooboo was also a man who had started as an ordinary person and rose in God's eyes. He had achieved the result with his own efforts.

"The problem is that underlying sense of inferiority," I said. Supernatural powers were something that couldn't be gained by sheer effort.

[Oh, that's true.]

It wasn't even a sure if powers would be passed down to the next generation. What an interesting world.

I had a long conversation with Ahbooboo because I thought the situation here would be similar to that of the Earth in the future. Could challengers who had cleared the tutorial and returned to Earth without causing trouble? I didn't think so.

Since I went through a process called a tutorial, I was likely to be more powerful than superhumans. Challengers didn't need much discipline to be strong, and would have a different mindset after passing the tutorial.

[Yes, it's very likely.] Ahbooboo agreed. We continued to talk about this problem. It didn't seem like something we could solve right away, but it was not wise to ignore it either.

* * *

It wasn't until two weeks later that an official letter of reconsideration came from the Supernatural People's Association. For nearly 15 days, I stayed at 1400's house and helped him with his work. I had been through a lot of things and gotten used to this world. In addition to 1400, I came to know a lot of people, so many came to know of me.

Was that why it was so noisy? I listened to the crowd whispering around me while I was walking down the street to the conference hall.

“That’s the invisible frog, isn’t it?”

“That’s right. That’s the invisible frog.”

“Hey... but does it make sense? In this crowded street, an invisible frog as big as a house is hiding.”

“Someone said there are wings on the frog’s back.”

Before I knew it, my nickname had already become the ‘Invisible frog’.

Chapter 247

Tutorial 57th Floor (6)

“Show me the frog!”

“Frog! Frog!”

The tiny children grabbed onto my shirt and hung on. What on Earth had I done wrong?

“Why don’t you just show it to them?” 1400, who was standing a few steps away from me, asked with a huge smile on his face. The children screamed in approval, calling ‘frog’ again and again.

“No. The frog hates attention.” Actually, the frog liked it. Whenever someone took an interest in it, it would become elated. But if I summoned the frog, it would be a challenge to separate it from the children.

“Hey, how much time do we have before the meeting starts? Shall we go ahead and wait?” I asked.

“We still have a lot of time. The conference room wouldn’t even be open right now, so what do you plan to do?” Since a while ago, 1400 had sided with the children. The kids didn’t like him because he looked scary, but he seemed to love them. He was too kind.

I slipped my hand into my pocket and fiddled with the ring. Exasperatedly, I summoned the frog because I couldn’t tolerate the clingy children.

“Kea-ek!”

The children flocked around the frog, who appeared croaking as usual. It was only then that the children, who had been sticking to me, got

off.

“Well, let’s postpone the mediating request to the evening.”

The main culprit of all this was the sincere 1400, who had to go to work in the morning. Even though the Superhumans’ Association summoned him, he dragged me out early in the morning, saying that it was just the right time to leave for lunch.

“I knew the meeting would last for hours,” 1400 said sheepishly.

“Kea-ek!”

I lifted a child onto my back and saw the frog croaking. It suited me better than I thought. Even the frog agreed.

Since it resembled Earth, I got used to living here in just 15 days. There were no bloody wars, but the lack of violence wasn’t dull. It was fun to see and learn about a world with new capabilities and abilities. If I stayed for a long time, maybe I would get bored.

I picked up the newspaper again.

< Invisible frog. Is it really a B-grade superpower? >

<The invisible frog of Ho, a B-grade summoner who has recently become the talk of the town, with too many powerful and diverse abilities. >

It was an analytical article at the corner of the newspaper. The report questioned the performance of the invisible frog and analyzed whether the frog was really all-powerful. Finally, the talk of the invisible frog ended with a guess that it might be the work of some background force.

[When the landslide happened, there had been too much dirt for an ordinary being to hold up. This article probably came about because of that suspicious incident.] Ahbooboo said.

It did seem so. I had confidently used my convenient excuse of

summoning an invisible frog. I should've made it such that no one would have noticed.

[And when you used those wide-area heals in the arena? Some people said it wasn't just a wound-patcher, but a miracle healing effect that works for various diseases.] Ahbooboo pointed out.

I hadn't seen that kind of news.

[It was mentioned briefly on a health program last night. Warrior, if we get investigated, will we get caught for having a fake ID?]

"Well..."

First of all, there was no method to detect abilities that weren't superpowers in this world. The superpower numerical analyzer could be deceived with the pills from the vaccine wars. I was a little nervous as I had become famous with these newspaper articles.

[Wouldn't it be better to be quiet from now on?]

"I think it's too late."

I looked at the frog that was scampering around with the kids. The frog had become famous, too. I had displayed fluency in a variety of abilities, which was an anomaly in this world where people were usually limited to one or two skills. For people in this world, who were accustomed to superpowers, this was very shocking. The frog and I's image had improved dramatically since I was helping civilians with 1400.

The discord between the superhumans and the ordinary people was one of the big social problems here, and the frog that appeared in the midst of this seemed to be very impressive to the people. After a few incidents, citizens whom we met on the street often recognized me and talked to me.

On top of that, the frog was cute, so my popularity was going through the roof. Of course, some superhumans treated us harshly, and there were articles and news reports that attempted to slander us.

I didn't know how to deal with this. We had become more popular than expected, and I felt that it could be problematic.

This ominous feeling soon became a reality. Due to the nature of my work, I spent most of my time with ordinary people and didn't notice that the frog was making headlines.

* * *

"That's the invisible frog, isn't it?"

"That's right. That's the invisible frog."

"Hey... but does that make sense? In this crowded street, an invisible frog as big as a house is hiding."

"Someone says there are wings attached to the frog's back."

No. I never put wings on the frog for this stage. There was constant chattering about the frog. Somehow, I felt like I was being called a frog. Was it because they thought that the frog was a spirit that I summoned with superpowers?

People's eyes continued to follow me even after I sat in the conference room. There was also a rumor that I was a superhuman who the media purposely made famous. Some people approached me stealthily and tried to poke into what I was doing, and some openly expressed their displeasure.

"This is too much pressure," said 1400, who had to take a detour to reach the conference room.

"Why do I have to be the only one dealing with it?" I spoke in a brisk tone, but I could understand his feelings.

The guy didn't like superhumans much, especially the people who had a luxurious taste. And as soon as those high-grade superhumans entered the room, he got nervous. Besides, he didn't get along very well with other superhumans. His work and attitude toward them made it easy to see why.

1400 took out a transparent bag of sweet-smelling crumbly cookies.

“Are we just going to eat snacks and chat while they’re having a meeting over there again?” I asked, taking a bite out of a cookie, the chocolate chips melting in my mouth.

“Yes, there’s really no reason we were invited anyway.”

It was just as 1,400 said. Superhumans of Grade A and above led the meeting, and they were likely indifferent to our opinions.

The meeting topics included the rescue of the previously mentioned SSS-class superhuman and the destruction of the sealed asteroid. I looked at the meeting and talked with 1400 as if I were looking at a match. 1400 said that he felt the plan would not succeed. His opinion was that if the superhuman had the power to destroy the asteroid in the first place, he would not have tried to stop the asteroid alone, even at his own expense.

I tried to pry more into the superpowers of Grade S or higher. He admitted embarrassedly that he didn’t know much about them.

“Then what the hell do you know?” I grumbled.

“Do you know any better?” He argued back.

I kept my mouth shut at his rebuttal. Of course, I didn’t know. It had only been 15 days since I came to this stage.

When he saw me like that, he smiled and explained. The difference between A and S grades was more significant than the difference between B and A. Even if all S-grade superhumans gathered, there wouldn’t be more than 20.

1400 didn’t explain what S-grade superpower really was. In this world, S-grades were treated as aristocrats, who stood at the pinnacle, rather than a national resource. It was sporadic for them to come forward and do something. As a result, people did not know what kind of power S-grade superhumans had.

That explained what happened the day I arrived here. A black sphere had been floating in the sky. They were all looking up to an SSS-grade superhuman who sealed himself inside an asteroid; he was like a god. They prayed to it at a particular time every day. It was during this prayer time that I was summoned to this stage.

There must be a good reason for sending me on this stage at that point.

Otherwise, it would not be unusual if the stage started during the meeting or in front of the association building.

I was anxious. All I knew was that this stage was related to the black sphere. However, it was related to people's prayers. Before I came to this stage, I realized what kind of power people's faith could give me.

While I was organizing my thoughts and ideas, the meeting came to an end. There was no change in the rescue operation, and the date and entry list were made public.

I checked the list on the massive billboard in front of the conference room. There were a lot of unfamiliar names who were probably S-grade or A-grade people. There was only one name I knew. At the very end of the list:

...

– All Yours (A)

– Inamona (A)

– Ho (B)

– Zirzi Cantabria (B)

It was my name. My alias, to be exact. I was one of two B-grade superhumans who had been selected. My thoughts became muddled. It was questionable whether it would be appropriate to include me in that rescue operation in this stage. The reason I was on the list was probably because I had become too famous. If so, I would not have been included in the list. How would I find a way out?

On the contrary, the fake status may have a reason to include me on that list. Maybe it was meant for me to be up there.

“Eight A-grade officials, and rest all are S-grade and above. It’s simple. Grade S is the main power, and Grade A, the bonus.”

Next to me, 1400 mumbled while checking the list. “There are two B-grade superhumans... Wait a minute. Both our names are there, right?”

“Your name’s there too?” I asked.

“Yes, at the end.”

I rechecked the list when I was told that.

– Ho (B)

– Zirzi Cantabia (B)

“I don’t see 1400 written there.”

It was only after seeing 1400 look at me coldly that I remembered that 1400 was not his real name but his nickname.

Chapter 248

Tutorial 57th Floor (7)

The main point of the meeting was to declare that the confirmed list of superhumans would approach the sealed asteroid, examine the situation, and if possible, destroy the seal to deal with asteroids, alien species, and rescue the SSS-grade superhuman.

The date was determined too.

It would be carried out on a large helicopter-like aircraft, made to approach the asteroid in the air.

This survey method was very extreme.

Those who were mobilized for the survey were, of course, incapable of flying.

Their abilities were in the field of vision and detection. Due to the nature of their superpowers being limited to one ability, they had no way to fly in the sky and safely approach the asteroid.

I was thinking about using drones or offering a flight suit, but the decision made in the meeting went beyond my expectations.

It was said that people who could fly would carry the surveyors on their backs.

When this was decided, a heavy exclamation derived from the place where the A-grade and S-grade talents were gathered.

I was not sure if it were the flight-ability superhumans or the surveyors who let out sighs.

Probably both.

No matter how talented you were, you wouldn't have the leisure to mess up over there.

At this point, it was questionable why so many talented people pushed ahead with this plan.

I knew this plan could be a long-cherished task for the top superhuman.

However, if we looked at the opinions that many had during the meeting, they all knew that there was a wide gap between them.

And in my view, there seemed to be more people with negative ideas about the plan.

If they had the same right to speak and vote regardless of their ratings, the plan would have been shot down.

Just because the power was distributed in this manner, with top-notch superhumans pushing it, the plan was heading this way.

I pondered about that point.

“What’s weird about that? I’m sure they are confident about it.”

“Confident?”

“Uh, no matter how unknown the power of the SSS-grade superhuman is, the people over there probably know.”

I guessed so.

They were equally capable of S-grade or higher.

“So, we haven’t made it public, but aren’t you guessing the condition of that sealed asteroid?”

It was an optimistic hypothesis.

The risk related to the asteroid had been wiped out by those above S grade. I thought they were pushing ahead with the plan to make a declaration, to show good results, and to display their abilities to the world.

I wondered if it was really true since I had seen the activities of the association's executives and their tendencies, revealed through the media.

The problem was, if things really were to go so smoothly, I wouldn't be here.

There wouldn't be a point in having a stage mission if something troublesome won't pop up.

[What do you want to do?] Asked Ahbooboo.

This was the good thing about being with him.

He would always ask my opinion when I had to make a decision.

I had to listen to his questions so that I could be more confident in my judgments.

I checked a few things before answering Ahbooboo's question.

As the dragon had said, the final goal of this stage was to gather as much information as possible.

That too, before my death.

No, even for a certain period of time after my death.

Therefore, there will be an accident on this planet that would make it natural for me to die.

And that accident had a high probability of being associated with this asteroid plan.

Here, the first decision must be made.

Whether to approach the asteroid directly or to remain on the ground and watch it while the other superhumans approached the asteroid.

The inclusion of my name in the list of plans was the right way to approach the asteroid, considering it to be done by the system on purpose.

“Let’s go up.”

“Huh? What?”

When I said that casually, 1,400 questioned back in a confused tone from next to me, but I ignored him.

Whatever it was, I didn’t want to stay behind and watch things happen passively.

If possible, I would try to intervene.

[With them?]

[No.]

This time, I spoke to him in my mind so that 1,400 wouldn’t hear.

It didn’t seem necessary to make him join this plan.

I had gotten enough information about this place.

What history it had, how it developed, what disputes it went through.

I have seen what other problems I had now and felt them up close.

I got everything I could possibly get, so I didn’t have to waste any more time.

It seemed better for me to go to the asteroid alone than to follow their plan, which was uncertain.

[Are you going right now? Should I break the ceiling?]

...Why break the ceiling?

[We will leave through the door.]

I saw 1,400 munching on snacks.

Seeing him made me feel grateful for having taken care of me and apologetic for causing him inconvenience unintentionally.

[Let's leave tonight.]

I know I had to say goodbye before I left.

Yes, it's not practical and is meaningless.

But it was enough to spend half a day with him.

[Okay.]

[Warrior.] Seregia called me.

[Yes?]

[You can stay longer.]

I was silent for a moment.

I had a strange sense of deja vu.

I felt as if I had already heard these words before.

However, it seemed that the person who had said this was someone other than Seregia.

[Seregia.]

[Yes, Warrior.]

[You don't have to say anything if you don't want to.]

It was too easy to notice that she was lying.

[Okay. Then let's just leave right now.] Seregia said with a brief pause.

[No.]

[...]

Seregia's silence made me feel uncomfortable.

It was like a child sulking, one who had been given a toy and then snatched away.

Somehow, I felt pleased and giggled to myself.

1,400 sitting next to me gave me a strange look, but what could I do?

The first time I met her came to mind. On the 26th floor, when I had checked the Holy Sword and knew that I had nothing to gain from the palace, I went to the place where the devil was. I had left as soon as I had gotten all the information I needed.

I wouldn't have waited until today for the meeting.

On the first day, the superhumans' association had gathered information, and as soon as I roughly confirmed that the stage was related to the asteroid, I would have flown to the asteroid.

I could have cleared the stage on the second day and left.

The results would be the same, but the process had changed.

Even if we went the same way, we took time to learn how to go back a little.

Even if I had to waste my time meaninglessly.

* * *

That night, I said goodbye to 1,400 and left his house.

Before that, there were some cases in which the association had argued that they would test 1,400's power, but in the end, it was a small thing.

1,400 asked me a few questions before I left his house.

They were related to me.

He had watched me closer than anyone else, so he must have known in many ways that I'm strange.

I answered his questions sincerely, but I didn't know what conclusion 1,400 had come to.

Under the dark, endless sky, we flew up toward the asteroid.

The flamboyant-colored wings spread out, transparent, and barely visible.

I didn't think anyone could see it.

[Sad, huh?] ,asked Ahbooboo during the flight, [He was a good friend.]

He had been a good friend.

1,400 was a man who could be seen everywhere, but in fact, he was hard to find anywhere.

Seregia didn't mean it, but it was okay to stay longer.

I didn't bother to answer.

I didn't think Ahbooboo was asking for an answer either.

But his words drew the God of Sky's curiosity.

The other day, Ahbooboo and I had clearly set a line.

I wanted him to look at me from his point of view, and to not deceive or conceal it.

The God of the Sky seemed very impressed by this promise.

So, he used Ahbooboo's mouth from time to time and asked me questions.

Like now, [Don't you want to go back and see him again?]

It was the same question as Ahbooboo's, but since the God of Sky has asked, I had to answer it.

I shook my head.

This is what was good about facing a god.

In other words, I don't have to explain it for a long time.

I could convey my message to them just by reorganizing my thoughts and repeating myself.

I had gotten confirmation from Kirikiri.

All the characters and the world behind this tutorial had already died and been destroyed.

I had been speculating that for a long time but needed to get a lot of information to confirm it.

After I vowed to get rid of the tutorial itself, the most troubling thing in my mind was not the low success probability of my plan.

It was the idea that all the beings in the tutorial might be erased.

Some of them were memorable.

The people who cried and laughed would still clearly remember being together until now.

It was difficult for them, who had already fallen in the past and had faced repeated incidents, repeated deaths. I could not completely deny that they were living beings.

So, I set my goal straight.

A promise to get rid of the tutorial, and bring back Idy so she could exist as others did.

I wanted to give her, and the others all the things that existed in the tutorial, not a painful eternal life, but a normal one.

If I could meet her again, I wanted to meet her after achieving my purpose.

I wanted it to be a more meaningful meeting for both of us.

[Do you think they want it?] Asked the God of the sky.

Well, I didn't know.

Some might welcome me enthusiastically, some might resent me.

Some may wish for eternal life, while others may curse me for hearing the forbidden truth.

But my goal won't change.

It was not a goal for all of them in the first place.

[The 99 gods are watching you.]

Below the newly emerging message, the ninety-nine god's reactions were enlisted.

Different reactions popped up, increasing one after the other.

They were mainly positive responses.

I knew that the reason for the reaction was not because the gods agreed with my goal, but because they thought it would be impossible for me to achieve my goal.

Considering that fact, I tried to remember the reactions of the gods.

The reactions of the gods according to the situation would greatly help me to grasp their propensity.

There was no unusual response, to say the least.

To put it bluntly, the God of Death regarded my goal as very desirable and the God of Adventure loved it extremely.

Rather than being discouraged by the reaction, I was amused.

The God of Adventure was a god who would put another piece of luggage on a traveller when he saw him walking down the path of penance.

Without realizing it, I shook my head and flew toward the asteroid.

Chapter 249

Tutorial 57th Floor (8)

Multiple layers of barriers wrapped around the asteroid, creating an impenetrable shield.

“Didn’t you tell me that humans wouldn’t be able to touch this?”

[Well... yes, I did.] Ahbooboo answered hesitantly.

Previously, Ahbooboo had advised me that caution would be needed because the barrier didn’t allow human presence.

And if necessary, I would have to use either God’s divine power or an object containing divine power to defend myself.

[It’s created using superpowers.]

“With superpowers?”

[Yes? If invisible frogs can exist, why can’t we also make a barrier?]

True.

We decided to take a closer look at the barrier.

Talaria’s wings allowed us to float through the air without any unease.

But the strong wind, however, still made the ride slightly uncomfortable.

Inside the barrier lied a black asteroid.

I’d heard that an alien race thrived inside, but the rumors were

difficult to confirm from just an outside glimpse.

And not to forget the superhuman in it.

The SSS-grade superhuman.

The asteroid and its contents were frozen, sealed by the superhuman alongside himself.

I'd wondered how such an act could be accomplished, but Ahbooboo wasn't so sure either.

I touched the hard surface of the asteroid with my hand.

I tried pushing it slightly, but it didn't move at all.

This hinted that physical destruction was impossible.

First, I asked Ahbooboobu if he could magically break the barrier.

Ahbooboo answered after using some magic against it.

[It's hard to do, and it'll take some time to figure out. It's my first time encountering such a thing, so I don't think I'll be able to do anything about it right now.]

Ahbooboo couldn't break it instantly.

But I couldn't afford to waste any more time.

I swung my fist at the barrier without mercy.

* * *

The noise emanating from my attack was deafening.

It'd probably awoken many people.

In my attempts to break down the barrier with physical force, a series of ear-piercing shrieks had rung out.

It should've been loud enough to have brought people out of their slumber.

There were people here who treated the sealed asteroid as if it were a god.

In fact, most normal people and a portion of the superhumans indulged in praying and worshipping the asteroid.

For them, the loud noise coming from the asteroid would be comparable to striking lightning bolts.

They'll start panicking and questioning if the aliens have returned, and get anxious about whether their previous dilemma will resurface or not.

I was really sorry about it.

But for me, it was inevitable, and hence, I approached the asteroid.

Fortunately, the asteroid still floated in the air.

Near the asteroid stood a man of short stature.

Sweating profusely and struggling, he was easy to notice. His face flushed bright red, tired from overexerting his superpowers using all his strength.

I couldn't sense any signs of people manifesting superpowers or the superpower itself, but after staying here for a few days, I'd noticed how the people already with superpowers used their abilities.

"Who are you?!" The man's eyes fell on me and he shouted loudly, his eyebrows furrowing.

Who I was?

That was a very difficult question to answer.

It wasn't because I didn't know who I was, but rather because I had an ambiguous identity.

Instead of replying, I remained silent.

This was an opportunity to watch the planet's best superhuman use his superpowers.

Maybe I could even gain something valuable from him.

But on the surface, he looked just like a constipated patient.

"God! I've been holding up this barrier for such a long time, yet you broke it!" He shouted.

He was definitely not a quick-witted man.

"Reply! Did you break it?!" He urged, furious.

Even if I had broken it, what could he do?

I wondered why he wanted an answer.

"Yes, I did break it."

"What the f*ck!"

Although I answered him simply, all he did was swear.

[Maybe it was because he couldn't repair the barrier. If a barrier loses its effect over time, it wouldn't be able to be reused even if it was re-energized, like how the ancient order of unity was reused by future generations.]

It made sense now.

Then had the man intended to seal both himself and the asteroid forever by invigorating it whenever the barrier broke?

Perhaps he felt that over time, a great superhuman would come to rescue him.

And indeed, the Superhumans' Association had planned to rescue him.

I listened carefully to his words and was able to decipher his cursing.

I'd initially thought that he was doing so because he was driven into an extreme situation, but now I could tell that he was referring to a particular person.

It was a name I'd heard recently.

The Vice Chairman of the Superhumans' Association.

Did he think that I was sent by the Vice Chairman?

I was curious about the inside story.

But not curious enough to dig into it.

"Hey!" The man shouted.

"What?"

"Help me!"

I thought about it for a moment.

I wasn't sure if I should help or not.

"I don't know what ability you have, but now that you've broken the barrier, don't you feel ashamed? Hurry up and help! If this asteroid falls, you, me and everyone under us will die!"

He sounded angry, but his words were filled with desperation.

Well, it's natural that he'd be distressed.

This stage's goal was ultimately linked to that man and the asteroid.

However, I'd been asked to gather as much information as possible. Even after I'd died, I was forced to take the form of another soul to continue gathering even more information.

In other words, a near-end catastrophe had been scheduled for this planet.

If I helped the superhuman or put an end to the planet's destruction, complications could arise.

I might fail.

In the end, I came to a conclusion, and ended up watching instead of helping.

After putting some thought into it, I looked back at the man.

His whole body shivered, the exhaustion on his face visible.

Unfortunately, I hadn't learned anything from watching the way he used his power.

"Hey! Help me!"

Instead of answering him, I opened my inventory and took out a bag of snacks I'd gotten from 1400.

[Wow... Talk about shameless...]

* * *

Before I knew it, I had eaten all the snacks, and just when I got bored watching the man shiver, I saw something unusual.

His head had turned as white as a sheet, the skin was wrinkled like an 80-year-old man, and even his body looked withered.

His mouth, which had been spouting endless curses, was shut.

The fluctuating forces around him also slowly began to fade.

He was finally about to die, but something abnormal was happening.

He was gathering more power.

The problem was that this power came out of me.

Since he was about to die, he was using his power recklessly.

“You are gonna be in trouble if you continue like this.”

I warned, but he didn’t hear me.

Was he in a state of delirium?

Was his ability one that could take others’ powers?

I asked Ahbooboo, but he couldn’t answer clearly.

Perhaps because it was rare for Ahbooboo to fail in answering due to his lack of knowledge about magic that he felt awkward.

In any case, this was a ridiculous ability.

He could take the power of others and use it for himself.

It was questionable whether it was possible to violate other people’s powers so much.

I tried not to lose it to him as much as I could.

I knew his desperation, but I didn’t have the slightest intention of

giving up my powers.

Without my experience of the 56th floor, I probably would have been helplessly deprived of my power because of not knowing how to resist.

Then, all of a sudden, strong energies neared from below.

To be exact, from the people who were looking up at the asteroid.

I was anxious.

Most of the people down there were normal humans, and incapable of providing the power wielded by the superhumans.

I thought so, but reality was a bit different.

The force that was gathering towards him was actually enormous, similar to a huge tidal wave entirely focused on him.

I felt it since I was connected to him.

But in my case, I wasn't giving him any power.

His power grew stronger and stronger.

At the same time, my connection with him also become clearer.

I could feel what kind of situation he was in now.

How intensely focused and desperate he was.

I could also sense the people who were giving him strength.

The various emotions they felt were connected to their hero, I could feel their hope and motivation.

I was annoyed by this faint sense of déjà vu.

The only difference was that the receiver of the power was that man, and not me.

This was a one-sided link, and through this, people's powers were going into that man, who was at the other side of the link.

What was that?

Differing from the absorption.

[Why don't you fall back a little?]

[...Let's do that.]

I didn't feel the need to take risks and stay close to him.

He was akin to a bomb.

His body contained the strength of a great number of people.

But the human body was not so grand.

It was hard to think that a superhuman's body would be able to bear the brunt of this humongous power. The chances of an explosion were very high.

I stepped outside the barrier I had broken.

There was something strange about observing the power of the superhuman through this link.

The overall amount of power was so vast that I could not scan it immediately. Just the power flowing out from one person was a lot. Even a normal human was giving out a large amount of energy

If I really wanted to measure that amount of power, I'd have to use a planetary scale unit.

Before the overwhelming force could be handled by the superhuman,

the asteroid was already half destroyed.

The alien species hiding in the asteroid also appeared to have been wiped out.

Nevertheless, the link between the people and the man didn't sever.

Seemingly in need of more strength, he continued to suck in people's powers even after the danger was gone.

Every second, things were changing.

The asteroid was now completely wiped out.

Only the fine dust on the ground proved it existed.

After the asteroid was destroyed, the people began to feel pain, not joy.

They were terrified of the fact that their power was still oozing out of them even though their goal had been achieved. They did not know how to break the link.

My mood was becoming worse.

Even my energy had begun to leak out little by little.

I was trying hard to stop it, but I started to see the powers slipping out of my control little by little.

Do I have to kill him?

Just as I was thinking that Ahbooboo spoke up.

[Maybe he's about to blow up.]

It was a valid point.

However, it could not be called an explosion this time.

Instead of blasting off, power gathered in his body and started to devour it at a rapid pace.

Now his body was no longer a vessel.

It had become a source of power itself.

It continued to multiply all over, just like a cell.

There was no humane part left.

His body, which turned so grotesque that it'd be hard to even assume that it was a human's body, was floating in the air, engulfing people's powers.

The fleshy and bloody mass gradually began to take a shape.

It didn't resemble a normal creature.

But it was quite similar to the shape of a bizarre monster that had already been seen several times.

It was the source.

Chapter 250

Tutorial 57th floor (9)

It had turned into something that was known as the source.

The people began to lose their consciousness.

While the people connected through the link became unconscious, their feelings and emotions passing into me also waned.

The source absorbed the power until the people lost consciousness, but stopped before killing him.

Some people seemed to have died, either because they were killed in an accident or due to their weak vitality.

Even though this was good, it was questionable whether the survivors would be able to maintain a normal life.

Only some would be able to roam around with a sane mind while they had memories of facing the fear and emptiness after their powers got engulfed.

It was soon clear why the source didn't take people's lives.

He probably didn't want to waste his strength in absorbing the energy left behind.

Interesting.

It had intelligence.

Despite being able to make decisions, it had little qualms about devouring people's lifeforce.

The source had now begun to concentrate what remained of its powers.

Its feelings rushed through the link I had with the entity.

It was rejoicing.

Celebrating the situation's turnaround like this.

For having grasped this opportunity.

Lastly, for having a very coveted prey in front of him.

The source turned towards me with obvious provocation, as if it was saying – It's your turn now, get ready to die.

Did it know that I could sense its feelings?

It was unlikely.

All the sources I had previously met were as dumb as birds yet clever in unexpected ways.

I couldn't judge hastily.

Now the only remaining intelligent beings on this planet were me and the source.

It was also uncertain whether that source could be called intelligent.

[You're not really intelligent either...]

Oh shut up.

Don't focus on trivial facts.

The source's link that was previously spread across the planet was now focused on one person.

The pressure on me had increased compared to before.

I dragged out the time by enduring it.

Through this link, we could sense emotions, judgments, and memories of the other party, and at the same time, we were aware that it was a two-way end.

As the link became stronger and thicker, my power was being absorbed faster, but at the same time, I could also gain an insight about the source.

Memories and facts began to escape from both of our consciousness, drifting through the link.

The memories I had when I was a normal human.

My understanding and the concept of dealing with the superpowers were invaluable information that could not be recklessly exchanged for anything.

In addition to that, the knowledge I had as a human being.

Knowledge of a world that was aware of the existence of the tutorial and vaccine.

It was highly likely that the source would come to know about that now.

Last but not least, the new facts that I learned from the source.

I had to find out what kind of future one could weave with the ability to absorb people's power similar to a source.

It was akin to fishing.

I tried hard not to lose my power, but occasionally gave it some.

I acted as though I was about to lose my will.

So that it would become more anxious and make a stronger connection with me for the sake of getting more information out of me.

I felt like a fish that had caught the fisherman.

At the same time, I had to hide my intentions deep in my consciousness so that the source wouldn't notice them.

Thanks to the gods who read my consciousness all the time, I was able to fool the source without any difficulty because I had become proficient.

After a long time of pushing forward and pulling back, I was able to look deeply into the consciousness of the source.

Memories of the origin of human days started pouring into my mind.

Such information was like a part of a novel, regarded only as text.

The source did not seem to regard itself as a human being.

Next, I could sense the emotions of the source.

There was no such thing as a stable future for it, even with this ability, all that existed in it was endless greed.

It had both high intelligence and human memories, but it showed behavior similar to the other sources because of its uncontrollable greed.

I could perceive its principles coinciding with all the other sources I had seen.

Satisfied with the constant stream of information, the source cut off the link at once.

I was confused, but soon I could see what had happened.

Just as I had gotten insight about the source, the source had grasped the thoughts that had been hidden deep in my consciousness in the midst of engulfing my power.

The source started to fly up quickly, screaming.

Was it planning to run away?

Interesting.

I thought, looking at the back of the escaping source.

Even after being eaten up by greed, there remained a minimal instinct in it for survival.

Was its life that important?

Its struggles seemed meaningless to me.

The source was running away at a rapid pace, but it was already too late.

If there was a tempting prey, that too, easily obtainable, any hunter smart enough would have doubted it.

And hunters who aren't alert were usually bitten to death by the prey.

“Ahbooboo.”

When I opened my palm and called Ahbooboo, he flew to my hand.

Usually, the sword was not much because of Ahbooboo's excessive performance, but it had become a useful weapon more than anything else especially when mana flow was irregular.

[God of Light is excited!]

[God of Light encourages everyone to watch together.]

The enthusiastic response of the God of Light was interesting.

Smiling at the response, I prepared myself.

I think the first time I used this art was on the 35th floor.

It hadn't been used a lot since then.

I usually preferred to use explosions.

I asked Ahbbooboo if he was ready.

After setting a right time, I used Light Sword: Pierce, at the source flying up there.

“Pierce through.”

A thin line of light stretched out with a roaring sound, tearing the atmosphere, and the force of its launch pushed the surrounding clouds far beyond the horizon.

The streams of light, brightening the cloudless night sky like day, were penetrating through the source.

From far away, its screams could be heard.

This art had the power to pierce anything, but this was the reason why it was not used often.

The limited range of attack had reduced the ability to kill.

So I had to use one more attack.

“Explosive. Zit Pop.”

The straight series of light began to vibrate.

The vibrations were strong, even for me.

I quickly drew mana and used my skills to prepare for impact.

Even the fist-sized Zit Pop had the power to turn the surrounding area into a mud slush.

The power of the Zit Pop, which used these long streaks of light across the sky as its main form, was hard to measure.

I was driving myself to the brink of death, but I was still excited by the power of the Zit Pop.

I prepared my defense with anticipation, and at the moment of getting struck by the impact of the Zit Pop, I was cheering in my heart.

[God of Light cheers]

The ray of light, which had been thin, expanded greatly to fill the sky.

It was as if a new sun had risen in the sky.

The pressure created by the explosion was immense.

That's when a huge tear appeared in the space.

It was torn apart and transcendent power came out of it.

It was an astounding sight.

[The planet has been vaccinated.]

[Tutorial: Hell Difficulty, you cleared the 57th-floor.]

[God of Light screams]

[Voting begins]

[For: 1 Against: 98]

[The proposal has been voted down.]

[The God of Light asks for a vote again.]

[The God of Sky refuses someone.]

[The God of Chaos mocks someone.]

[The God of Life is annoyed with someone.]

[The God of Light is upset.]

* * *

[It has been confirmed that a new source was created by the phenomenon that occurred on the planet Aharabi. As a researcher, you have succeeded in investigating the world and anomalies of the planet Aharabi, witnessing the creation of the source, and suppressing it.

[You've cleared the 57th floor of Hell's Difficulty Level.]

[All situational anomalies and injuries will be recovered.]

[Automatically moved to the waiting room.]

The next moment, I stood inside the dragon's cave, where I could hear the sound of the waterfall.

The neat interior in the cave made me feel worse.

This was my second time being in this newly-decorated cave.

The most important and exciting moment was when the stage got cleared.

It was only recently when I realized how good it was to be able to decide when to voluntarily leave the stage through the portals.

[God of Light agrees.]

The God of Light seems to have gotten carried away by several gods, but I don't know if it's okay.

I've heard that nothing is more useless than worrying about others, but I was still worried about a god.

It was such a stupid idea.

[You aren't dead?]

After a long time, the dragon's voice came out through the crystal ball.

"Yes. I'm still alive, you damn lizard."

It dares to ask such a question!

God damn it.

It's good that I'm still alive.

"You're the one who's supposed to pick the right stage, and you're sending me to a stage where death is the final condition? Huh? Do I look like a pushover to you? Aren't you being too gutsy?"

I vented my irritation on the dragon.

Damn it. Why was it hiding behind this crystal ball?

[Oh. Didn't you want to go to a stage where you could learn about the source? And even if you died once, you had a chance to become a soul, get resuscitated when you cleared the stage. Besides, you didn't even die.]

When the dragon put forward a reasonable fact, I had nothing to say.

[And I thought this stage would have been very helpful to you.]

“Well... yeah. I admit that’s true.”

I acknowledged the dragon and sat on a chair.

After releasing a deep sigh, I felt more tired.

[Why are you so down?]

What do you mean?

The stage ended in the middle of the explosion.

Explosions were not the only wonderful point.

The light that spread as the shock of the explosion went everywhere, the sound of the blast, and the... Anyway, the aftereffect was important.

[God of Light nods his head fervently.]

* * *

After feeling reenergized, I started talking with the dragon again.

The dragon was a little offended by what I had said before.

It was only after I took some time to cheer up the dragon that I could mention what I wanted to talk about.

Naturally, I wanted to ask the dragon about the source.

The source was similar to the divine power.

There was even a rumor that the source was a great help in gaining power, so all the more reason to delve into this matter.

While talking about this and that, I heard an amazing story from the dragon.

“Is there a god who has divine power along with their powers obtained by faith?”

[Yes.]

It was a shocking fact.

There was a god who had not just destroyed the source and absorbed the power but also gained his own power through faith.

I recollected the names of the gods I knew.

Who could that god possibly be?

There was a god who fit this category more than anyone else.

“God of adventure?”

Chapter 251

Tutorial 57th Floor (10)

[Why don't you take a break for now?]

"I can't do that."

The sooner I solved a question, the better. I knew that if I couldn't solve the mysteries that filled my mind, I wouldn't be able to rest properly, even if I wanted to.

[Species with short life spans are too reckless and short-tempered.] the dragon grumbled.

Was there a reason why it wanted to avoid answering questions?

Instead, the remark it made just now was unworthy of the dragon, who used to say, "We shouldn't treat individuals with preconceptions about their species." Amused, I asked Karin about racial preconceptions.

[But isn't it undeniable? We shouldn't be too obsessed with stereotypes and misjudge people, but it's easier to judge people based on their race. We don't need to stop having preconceptions completely. Doesn't that sound reasonable? You have a quick temper since you are less than 100 years old.] Karin's words made sense.

[That dragon is wrong. From what I see, you're eccentric beyond compare. Who in the world is as crazy as you? To compare you to a normal human being? Now that's racist!] Ahbooboo, who was still in my hands, said indignantly, shaking his core. The past few days, this guy had been talking about me unrestrainedly. In retaliation, I threw him into the inventory.

"I want answers to my questions right now."

The dragon answered me back in a weak, tired voice, [Do as you please.]

This was a bit unexpected. Did the dragon have something urgent to do right now? Otherwise, there seemed to be no other reason to delay answering me. I asked the question that I had planned to ask first.

The subject of the question was, of course, about the source. I was able to learn a lot from this stage. The Dragon had said, “I chose the stage you needed,” and it was indeed a stage where I was able to get the necessary information.

Among the new facts that I discovered, there were many that I had yet to grasp fully. I didn’t understand the superpowers that the 57th-floor superhumans used. I’d only witnessed the creation of a source for a limited time, and I needed more specific information. But what seemed more important was the connection between the original (origin) power and faith.

I knew that the two forces were coupled. The Spirit King had been very keen on the source’s power since it was a great help in building up divinity. But, it seems that the power of the source could work as poison as well. It was similar to how the power of the source devoured the SSS-grade superhuman.

What was truly amazing was that the source could be created by the power of ordinary people on a typical planet without any special requirements. In this respect, the power of the source was similar to faith. I wanted to know the difference between them, along with what they had in common.

[You’re starting with a tricky question.] the dragon whined. It grumbled a lot for a dragon.

[Let’s start with something easy, like what’s common in both of them.]

Actually, I wanted to hear the difference first, but Karin had already begun to explain. I listened to its explanation rather than arguing with it.

[The common point is that power arises from a large population. And

it's usually a power focused on a single entity. You've already seen the source's power thanks to the God of Remorse, and having dealt with faith on the 56th floor. As you may know, the two powers are mostly the same. Some dismiss the source's power and faith as the same; most of the people who think so are those who have never witnessed these powers.]

In other words, there was a clear difference. It looked like it was hard to identify unless one had encountered it before.

[I doubt you'll understand everything I tell you about the differences between the source's power and faith. Even so, new information is continuously being discovered, so the information we know now could be false. I'll just tell you the basics as much as I can.]

Karin was also not fully informed of the source, either, which was unexpected.

Even though the world was going through a cataclysmic upheaval, it seemed somewhat strange that an omnipotent god couldn't fully comprehend a subject.

[Faith does nothing for the gods, but it could be emotionally or physically helpful to the believer. Of course, it may vary slightly depending on the type of faith, but that depends on the believers' interest since it needs to be convincing enough for believers to follow such faith. And there's also the fact that faith is produced continuously until the death of a believer.]

Listening to the dragon, I somehow felt like this was a business or trade talk and not a discussion about the faith of believers. Maybe it was because it had used 'produced' when speaking about believers.

[But the source is different because it consumes everything in a single moment. The power of the source can target intelligent bodies and extract their vitality.]

The power of the source and faith was similar to a lottery and a pension. One was periodic, while another was immediate.

The dragon listened to me and replied, [It's better to see it as a

difference between management and exploitation than that.]

[The source is unique. The source's most prominent feature is that even if everyone doesn't have high trust or desire in the source's host, the recognition of its existence alone is enough to exploit them. Of course, most people usually have faith in it.]

Some people revered the 57th-floor superhuman, but not everyone did. Some of the people in the Superhumans Association had displayed feelings closer to jealousy rather than respect. And there must have been some famous people on the planet who were endlessly hostile. But even those people were deprived of their vitality by the source.

[Next, the source is limited to the planet's boundaries. The vitality of the people is not the only factor that influences the force. The level of society and history of the species also affect it. Perhaps that's why no source has emerged from species that migrated to other planets.]

It was influenced by history and society? Was it really meaningful to absorb people's vitality? I asked the dragon about it.

[No matter what humans do, they'll never achieve the same strength as the source. That's expected. Humans have nothing but useless blood, flesh, and a trace of mana. You don't think that there's an unknown force in a person's soul, right? There is no such thing.] The dragon said flatly.

Somehow, the dragon's description of humans made me feel strange.

[The source only goes for intelligent bodies that contribute to civilization, or for a planet where it can find many potential bodies. Typically, refugees or migrants cannot rebuild a civilization and don't advance, so the source doesn't favor them. Maybe the essence of the source's power comes from absorbing not their intelligence, but the planet they're building, the vitality of their world.]

* * *

I suggested the dragon rest for a while, and I needed time to organize

my thoughts.

“Kea-ek!”

I summoned the frog in the lake and laid on its back. Doing this made me feel like I was floating on a pool noodle in a wave pool. Actually, it felt better than that. The occasional low gurgles the frog made, calmed my mind and body.

When the gurgles stopped, I raised my hand and scratched the back of the frog’s neck. Pleasured, the frog croaked deeply. I could tell the frog was in an excellent mood, and I also felt at ease knowing that.

[Are you still thinking?] The dragon’s voice came from the crystal ball that was flying near me.

Not at all. I was just zoning out.

[If you are exhausted, take a day off and continue tomorrow.]

That didn’t seem necessary. The dragon’s narrated facts were more or less organized in my head.

The explanation of how gods and apostles treated the source puzzled me. Previously, I thought the source was a trophy of hunting. It was like killing a monster and saying, “I’m going to use it since it’ll be of great help.” But looking at it now, it wasn’t that much of a trophy.

The source was no better than poison. Of course, the tutorial was fostering apostles to kill the source and get its by-products, but it was strange that gods and apostles didn’t have any second thoughts about absorbing the power from the source.

[What’s strange about it? The gods also want the source. Power has no face or name. Of course, when a source is born, the affected world will suffer a near-destruction blow, but usually, it doesn’t happen.]

So, the gods typically didn’t interfere with the source, which was surprising given the stigma against them. I still had to get over the many stereotypes.

[Many beings are doing everything they can to create the source artificially. Some results of the experiments have been decent but not perfect. If you emotionally reject the source in the midst of this, you will fall behind.]

This was absurd, and so was the experiment to create the source. How many people had been sacrificed in the course of this experiment?

[Isn't there a tutorial stage with such a world as its background?]

“You mean the island of AoAeo?”

[AoAeo?]

“The 18th-floor stage.”

Even after clearing the 18th-floor, I didn't know why the island had faced such a catastrophe. I didn't even have time to find out why. But upon hearing that there was an experiment, the island of AoAeo came to mind. The dragon replied to me as if remembering what that stage had been.

[That's right. The 18th floor stage. I had never heard of the name of the island until now.]

It wasn't a memory I wanted to look back on. I was thinking about how to change the subject of the conversation when the dragon itself started to say something else.

[It happened in the presence of a god who has achieved both faith and the source's power.]

“At the same time?”

The dragon gave me more details. There was a god who had attained both the source's power and faith on his own. I pondered for a while, thinking back on the gods I knew. Among them, there was one god that caught my attention.

“God of Adventure?”

The dragon did not answer for a moment. The ideal hero that the God of Adventure wanted was very similar to the SSS-grade superhuman before he got turned into a source. If the superhuman hadn't been swallowed up by desire and had enough qualifications to become a deity, wasn't there a chance for it to acquire divinity? I'm sure the superhuman had been admired by many people, so gaining faith wouldn't be tough.

[That's something I can't afford to tell you.] The dragon answered late, but I had been able to infer the answer from its silence. Surely this dragon was easier to deal with than Kirikiri.

[The God of Adventure is disappointed.]

[Are you done with your questions? Then go in and take a rest and start asking tomorrow morning.] it said. It seemed impatient.

Was there something urgent? I noticed something strange in the dragon's words.

“Go in and rest? I'm going to put up a tent in front of the lake and sleep.”

The dragon jumped at my words.

[I've furnished the cave so well. What are you talking about? Why do you think I brought that little furniture?]

“I don't know... because your house used to be dirty and messy?”

[No! And how many times have I told you that this cave is not my home!] the dragon roared. This dragon was so obsessed with strange things.

“Alright, alright. You mean that cave isn't your house, but it's designed for me as a guest?”

[Yes, yes!] the dragon answered proudly. I thought it wanted me to

admire something great in the cave. Then, I should go into the cave as it wished and see what fantastic thing was hidden.

[Look at what's on the left side of the bed you saw earlier. I'm sure it's something you've never seen before.]

"Let me ask you one more thing before that." I cut off the excited dragon's words.

[Huh?]

I couldn't miss the most critical question.

"What's happening on Earth?"

According to the explanation I heard today, the Earth had suitable conditions for a source to be born. It has a long history and a high level of civilization, but its territory had not yet expanded. At the same time, it didn't seem to have a deity to induce a sense of strength and will in the world.

However, the threat facing the Earth was not the birth of a source. Monsters believed to be the source were rushing through the gate at a rapid pace. However, this had nothing to do with the dragon's explanation that I had heard so far.

This time, I argued with the dragon, who hadn't answered immediately. I didn't mean to let this question pass.

"Answer the question. What's happening on Earth?"

Chapter 252

Tutorial 60th Floor (16)

“Are you really not going to go?”

“I’m not going!”

I ended up getting irritated. I’d asked one or two times, expecting a good answer, but hearing him whine about not wanting to go the entire day just made me even more annoyed.

Hochi’s lips formed a pout. That’s it. I had enough. He was not a kid.

“Why are you so anxious to go without me? Do you need a guardian, huh?”

Hochi frowned and asked as if my words had been offensive, “Why? Why aren’t you going?”

I explained this for the last time. Was he asking again because he forgot about it? Or was he just acting up?

“I need to protect the house.”

“There’s a barrier already.”

I guessed he was asking why my house was safe only when I was there. I should have explained it to him earlier.

“The house’s security will only stay intact if I’m here. The barrier will collapse if I don’t come back in three days. That’s why I have to stay here.”

It would have been okay for me to leave Hochi, who was my clone, alone in the tournament, but he was on the verge of crying and

throwing a tantrum. In the end, I decided to send Hochi to the tournament and protect the house. I explained once more to Hochi, who kept interrupting me. Frankly, I wondered if he had heard even half of what I said, but Hochi seemed to be convinced that I had to stay on the 60th floor anyway.

“Yong-yong is running around excitedly. What’s wrong with you? Just go and have fun without me,” I sighed.

Yong-yong, who was younger than Hochi, prepared all day, excited about the fact that he was going out. It was clear that he was probably making a costume for the tournament. Perhaps because of the dragon’s character, Hochi still showed a dependent side, compared to Yong-yong, who was young but independent and had grasped the concept of privacy.

Hochi’s personality was totally out of line with my character, who was his base. Even if we considered his growth and character-building process, he was still far from developing the same mindset as me. Nevertheless, his over-dependence on me had raised questions. It was highly likely that it was a dependence that arose because of someone else. If it was not born from my character, then there were chances that it originated from the remnant nature of others.

I thought I’d try to find out, but soon I gave up. Hochi was no longer a subject of my experiments. It wasn’t good to think of studying him whenever I habitually questioned him.

To hide my thoughts, I turned to the newspaper on the table as if nothing had happened. Hochi seemed to be in a sour mood while I had been talking to him, but I ignored it.

There was a lot of interesting news in today’s paper. Recently, a man working for the government’s Ministry of Awakened came to the first floor. The Order of Vigilance immediately paid him for information and handed it over to the newspaper. Thanks to that, newspapers, which used to be full of rumours about levels, had become packed with full-fledged articles. There were even corrections made to previous reports.

Of course, the information provided by government personnel was unreliable, so this newspaper article was also entirely inaccurate. The

Tutorial's newspaper company obtained information about the outside world and presented analyzing, opinionated papers rather than facts. Later, when conflicting information came in, there would be a correction article as if it were completely natural.

Nevertheless, newspapers had built up considerable credibility within the Tutorial, and challengers, who were always thirsty for outside information, read the paper carefully. I did so, too.

[Taking over another awakened group. Did doing so propel the Awakening Clan's Business even higher?]

Kim Min-hyuk, who is well-known as the former vice president of the Order of Vigilance, is making a drastic move.

Kim Min-hyuk gathered the awakened members of the Order of Vigilance to create the Awakening Clan.

Earlier this month, the clan acquired another awakened group, merging three of South Korea's top 10 conglomerates this year.

...

It was an interesting article. I had thought Kim Min-hyuk would enter politics. However, he used his personal connections to bring together awakened Korean people scattered around the world.

Naturally, while everyone was thinking of establishing a new Awakened Clan, they set up an investment company with the gathered awakened.

It was not surprising that Kim Min-hyuk's 'Clan' was devouring the business industry. Most of the awakened people working with Kim Min-hyuk had enough financial power to be called walking companies. They had broad connections and influence not only in domestic politics and business but also in oversea affairs.

Years had already passed since the Tutorial began, during which the awakened people began to use the money and influence they had earned to raise their social status. The Earth spoiled the awakened with favourable economic policies, valuable strategic resources, or power from state or private organizations.

If we ostracized or questioned the awakened, we would not be protected from the monsters that may appear at any time and place, nor would we have any way to fight with the awakened.

I wondered how Kim Min-hyuk would proceed with his plan. I was a bit anxious, but I was also looking forward to unexpected results. Well, Kim Min-hyuk would do well on his own. The next article caught my eye.

[Lee Joon Suk Awakened, Completely Abandoned G-Class Monster Fighting Operation?]

It was another interesting article. The Earth's G-class monsters had always been a specimen that interested me. Due to the different nature of each individual's source, I couldn't estimate just how powerful the G-class monsters on Earth were.

In the article, Lee Joon Suk had said in an interview, "It is not dangerous if all G-class monsters stay in their territories, so there is no need to risk it."

It was an interview that would make him seem like a coward if you overlooked the power Lee Joon Suk had. In my opinion, Lee Joon Suk was the best challenger the Tutorial had nurtured. If he declared that he would not be able to attack, there were two main possibilities.

The first possibility was of excessive collateral damage occurring in the process of killing G-class monsters. The losses from damaging Earth were too significant compared to the benefit of killing the monster. Lee Joon Suk's ability was also limited to wide-ranged destruction, so it was all the more so. This was why it was dangerous

to specialize in range attacks. It's a constraint in a situation where there's a lot to protect.

The other possibility was, as Lee Joon Suk had said, a G-class monster was an opponent that wasn't always hostile. I planned to research this later.

When I put back the newspaper, I saw Hochi sitting with his arms folded and a sullen look on his face. He'd been like that for a while now.

"Hochi."

"What?" he snapped.

What a nasty tone. I still had a lot to teach him.

"By the way, do you want something from me?"

Hochi replied, "Of course I don't."

I knew he'd say that. He's such a stubborn child. I took out about fifty novels from my inventory that I'd prepared in advance.

"I spent the entire night writing these. Just for you." In reality, it had taken less than an hour to write these 50 books, but I lied and said that I stayed up all night anyway.

"With this, will you agree?" I asked, hoping he'd agree.

"I won't."

Damn it.

"Hey, don't you believe me? I stayed up the whole night, you know?"

"I don't believe you."

Damn it all. I never thought novels wouldn't work as a bribe.

“Why do you want me to be an apostle when you, yourself, are disconnected from the gods?” He asked, eyebrows furrowed.

I couldn’t refute that. I shouldn’t force others to do what I didn’t want to do.

“Then take this.” I took a small yellow ring out of the inventory and threw it to Hochi. Hochi, who I had thought would accept the flying ring, let the ring hit his body, and fall to the floor.

“What are you doing?” I questioned.

“What are *you* doing? What is this?”

Look at this child.

Eventually, with a deep sigh, I explained to Hochi. “That’s the only way you can talk to me, and then I can help you. Just take it.”

“Really?” Hochi picked up the ring that had fallen on the floor.

“But why did you make such an important thing to take this shape?”

“It should be as inconspicuous as possible.” Hochi’s face became sulky again when he heard my words.

“The ring will be proof that I’m with you. Take this if you don’t want to be an apostle. You and Yong-yong won’t be in danger in the tournament, but take it just in case.”

I didn’t tell Hochi, but there was a high chance that danger would approach them. The gods wanted to test Hochi and Yong-Yong’s abilities. If he met a challenger who was becoming an apostle in the tournament, he could get forced into a fight or offered a confusing proposal.

“But if there’s such a ring, can’t you give it to someone else? Then, you would have cleared the 61st floor a long time ago.”

“This ring is only meant for you.”

“Oh, really?”

Tutorial stages on each floor should be considered as different dimensions. And that ring couldn't make a link that traversed dimensions. It could only send out my strength and will. Hochi would be able to make such a link.

So I gave that ring to Hochi, and now he and Yong-yong both were ready to go to the tournament.

Hochi looked a little relieved that he could receive my help when he was in trouble.

“Hey, what about those books?”

“Take it,” I answered. They were books I wrote for Hochi anyway.

Hochi soon felt better and went back to his room with books in his arms.

* * *

“Yes. I'll do well!”

When I saw Yong-yong answering bravely, clenching my hand tightly, I felt more anxious. Not long ago, I teased Hochi about why he was so anxious, but when it was time to let them go, I became nervous as well. My anxiety persisted when I saw Yong-yong, who was determined to do everything well.

“Yong-yong, if there's anyone bothering your uncle-“

“I'll scold them!”

Well, this was quite tough. It wasn't Yong-yong or Hochi, but the person who picked a fight with them, who was the most dangerous.

However, it would be useless to scold such a person because it could be hazardous. As it was the first tournament to take place on a dimensional scale, it was not known what kind of people would emerge within the competition. I didn't want to make Yong-yong, who lacked experience, face a big risk while trying to control his strength, for no reason. It was a selfish thought, but it would be better for Yong-yong to get hurt by his opponents rather than face risks while controlling his strength.

"Yong-yong, will you listen to your uncle?" I questioned him.

"Yes, I'll listen!"

At least he was obedient.

I crouched down to Yong-yong's height. Why was my son so pretty? I was not saying this because he was my son, but Yong-yong was really good-looking.

"Yong-yong, if any strange uncle comes to you asking to be their secret friend--"

"I'll scold him!"

"Yes, scold him."

Hochi looked at Yong-Yong, who had been answering with his hands clasped, and murmured, "That would kill the poor uncle."

"He'd be better off dead." I gave a slight smile.

Chapter 253

Tournament Chapter (1)

“I can’t get in touch with Seok-Hyeon,” Hochi said.

“What?” I questioned.

“I said I can’t get in touch with Seok-Hyeon.”

“Who’s that?”

It was a name I had never heard of before. Hochi frowned and said to me, “You know, my friend Seok-Hyeon. We became close in the community.”

Ah. So Hochi was talking about the kid whom he got close to in the community. He couldn’t reach him?

“He could be dead,” I commented. Hochi angrily glared at me.

It was surprising to see him express his anger so openly because usually, even if he was upset, he would reply sarcastically.

“How could you say such a thing?”

Then what was I supposed to say? If you messaged someone in the Tutorial and they didn’t reply, there was a high probability of them being dead. Eight out of ten people were considered dead in such cases.

The mortality rate in the Tutorial had been steadily decreasing for several years, but it hadn’t reduced to zero. It went from the probability of getting into a car accident while driving a cheap motorcycle to one while driving a luxury car. In terms of death, it could be said that accidents occurred frequently.

“Hey, I can’t help it. No matter how low your difficulty level is in the Tutorial, if you get distracted, you’re just courting death. Especially on solo stages where you can’t get help from others. Low difficulty levels could be more dangerous on the party stage. There have been countless reports of party members killing each other or dying in an accident. “

Park Jung-ah and the Order of Vigilance tried to stop many from dying, but they could not entirely put a halt to murders or other crimes. Even the Order of Vigilance couldn’t impose strict rules and regulations.

“You...”

Oh no. I glanced at Hochi’s face, and it looked like he was about to explode. I soothed him before he started to sulk again or throw a tantrum.

“Go tell Park Jung-ah. The Order of Vigilance will find him on their own. If there was a wrongful accident, they’ll catch the assailants and lock them up.” I assured him that it’d be fine and that they could find him.

Park Jung-ah seemed to have gotten a little gentler, but she was still a tad too serious when it came to dealing with such things. I thought that if I felt this way even when I was not involved in the Order of Vigilance affairs at all, then the others would still be afraid of Park Jung-ah.

“If someone is stuck somewhere on a stage, it’s fine to send his information to the Order of Vigilance. It’d be better than us getting our heads wrapped up among ourselves.”

Hochi looked a little relieved at my words. He seemed to be very close to that friend of his called Seok-Cheon or something. I had assumed he was just a pen pal. Now, I’d have to find out what kind of friend he was.

I sent a message to Park Jung-ah, and we talked about the entry time and the unit we’d meet at.

“Is Yong-Yong still picking clothes? Let’s get him. We have to leave soon.”

We headed to Yong-yong’s room. My son had a somewhat feminine hobby. He would make his own clothes and spend time trying them on. He would also indulge in making small accessories and decorating his room.

This was different from what I had taught him, and he had probably inherited the trait from the dragon. Recently, I began to wonder if Hochi influenced Yong-Yong’s behaviour. After all, Hochi took care of Yong-Yong more than I did. And although Hochi wasn’t particularly feminine, he was more so in many ways compared to me. When I told Hochi this, he burst into laughter.

“You think you’re so different. You were the guy who got trapped on the sixth floor and knitted a scarf. You even gave it a name. What was it again? Hororong, if I remember right.”

Oh, I did. I had never woven mufflers before, but I found knitting very meditative, and at that time, I had seen some threads in the store, so it had been convenient.

Suddenly I thought of Hororong, and remembering its last appearance made me feel guilty. Hochi laughed and teased me when he saw me like that. Either way, I quietly paid a silent tribute for Hororong.

After chatting, we soon arrived in front of Yong-Yong’s room. For convenience, it was called a “room,” but in fact, it shouldn’t be called one.

I thought it would be too much to call an entire tower, Yong-Yong’s room. The top wasn’t even visible when I raised my head. Nevertheless, as the owner of this tower, Yong-Yong declared it as his room, so I had no choice but to follow his decision. From Yong-Yong’s point of view, my house was the entire 60th-floor residential area, and this colossal tower was his personal space.

I knocked on the door of the tower, and soon the door burst open. A cutely dressed Yong-Yong came to sight, giving a warm feeling.

He donned a fur hat, a colorful muffler wrapped around his neck, a thick jumper clinging to his body, and an almost bursting bag hanging to his side filled with god knows what. I was sure it was a bag with a built-in dimensional space, but even then, it was filled to the brim. Someone might've thought we were moving.

The warm clothes were a wise choice. It was said that the tournament location was quite cold, so it was right to wear warm clothes.

Of course, Yong-Yong wouldn't feel cold there, but he did dress up in order to match the dress code. Now, Yong-Yong was a bit taller than my waist, but he still looked small and young to me, perhaps because of his thick overcoat and a big bag.

With a bright smile, I hugged Yong-Yong, who rushed at me and said, "Now, let's go to the square. The portal has shown up."

I was unsettled by the fact that Hochi and Yong Yong would be sent out, even if it was just for a short period. Hochi, who had been anxious, calmed down, and it felt strange to be the only worried one.

"Should I come too?" I murmured, thinking about it.

Yong-Yong, who heard me, said yes because he didn't mind it, and Hochi asked if that would be fine. But it was already decided that I couldn't go. There was a clear reason for me to stay, and it wasn't something that I could change because of my mood. I was both sad and distressed, but it was time for Yong-Yong and Hochi to leave.

* * *

[Hochi]

Look at that restless piece of shit!

Ho-Jae, who had teased me before like a child, was visibly stressed when Yong-Yong and I went up to the portal. I bit back a smile at that sight. He was a respectable man but strange, so if you laughed recklessly, you might end up laughing for a very long time.

“Yong-Yong, say bye to your dad.”

At my words, Yong-Yong, who had been standing next to me and holding my hand tightly, bid farewell Ho-Jae.

“I’ll return soon, Dad. I’ll be sure to have a good time by myself.” I had to hold back my laughter once again at Yong-yong’s words.

Yong-yong’s farewell was no different than what Ho-Jae used to say to Yong-Yong, who kept clinging to him whenever he went to the 61st floor. He was having fun. Did Yong-Yong think that’s what one had to say whenever someone was leaving? It seemed necessary to correct this thought at another time.

We ran to the portal, ignoring Ho-Jae’s face, which had a concerned expression.

As our bodies floated, I could feel Yong-Yong and I get moved somewhere.

It was quite different from when we moved from the 60th floor to the 61st floor. Ho-Jae explained the difference between the two portals in theory, but I couldn’t understand what he meant. I knew quite a bit about magic, but not as much as Ho-Jae or Yong-Yong. At the very least, I knew this portal was unlike other ones.

We were not teleported to any crowded areas, and I thought that it was an excellent choice, since it prevented congestion. Anyone would have been embarrassed if they had suddenly fallen into a crowded square after entering the portal.

The place where Yong-Yong and I moved to was a quiet mountain road. The sign ahead showed which way to go. I tried to go the other way, but a transparent wall blocked the path. Having no other option, I followed the sign as indicated.

An excited Yong-Yong tried to break the transparent wall and go through it, saying that he wanted to chase a flying butterfly. Luckily, I somehow managed to stop him.

“Hello. My name is Baek Sung-Woong.”

“Oh, hello.”

We were able to reach a gathering of people after walking for a while. There were several mountain cabinets, and people were entering and leaving frequently. Some people continued to walk alone, but most had flocked into a group. From what I could make out, they were all members of the Order of Vigilance.

Just as Yong-Yong and I were wondering if we should join them, a tall, scary-looking man approached and greeted us. The sunlight reflected on his bald head.

“This way.”

The bald guy guided us as if it were natural. I assumed he was the guide in charge of us. He had said nothing but greetings, so I couldn't confirm whether I thought it was right. He was quite blunt.

“It's a human!”

Yong-Yong wasn't scared of the bald man, so he approached him and pointed at him. I hurriedly hugged Yong-Yong in surprise, to hold him back.

“I'm sorry!” I apologised to the bald man.

“No, it's fine. By the way, you haven't changed at all.”

“What?”

Did Ho-Jae know this bald guy? As far as I knew, I hadn't ever heard of this guy.

“I've seen you on TV before. It's an honor to be able to guide you.”

“Ah, yes.” I felt like I missed the time to say no to him being our guide.

“Cute!” Yong-Yong, who was in my arms, looked at the bald man and exclaimed.

“No. Don’t say anything, Yong-Yong. Excuse us.” I directed the last sentence at the bald head.

He wasn’t cute. Not at all.

“Cute, cute.”

Yong-Yong wasn’t listening to me. Usually, he was very obedient, but when he got hooked on something, he wouldn’t stop being stubborn, even if he was in a good mood. Yong-Yong stretched out his hands towards the bald man, attempting to touch his bald head.

“I’m so sorry. It’s his first time seeing someone like you,” I apologised.

“Is this the hatchling?”

“Yes, yes. I’m so sorry. He’s usually not this disobedient.”

“Oh, that’s all right. Children are like that. I used to have a kid this big on Earth. I don’t know how much he has grown now since it’s been two years.”

The bald man’s initially serene face turned sad. Wistfulness and sorrow were apparent as he thought about his own child. Even though he looked like a no-nonsense kind of man, he seemed to be softer than I thought. Seeing Yong-Yong seemed to ease his anxiety little by little. I thought we could get along easily over time.

“Ahaha. Cute.” Yong-Yong, who was seated on the bald head’s back, smacked his head.

Oh no, that little punk. He didn’t realize how dangerous it was to do that to a bald person.

The bald head seemed a little embarrassed and upset, and I didn’t know what to do. Come to think of it, it was my first time meeting people and holding a conversation with a bald guy.

“I’m terribly sorry, bald head.” Ah no, his name wasn’t bald head. His name was Baek Sung-Woong.

Perhaps I had been around Ho-Jae for too long, so I just blurted out whatever I had thought like he usually did.

The bald man raised his hand and said, “It’s fine.”

It was such a kind and gentle gesture that I couldn’t help but feel sheepish. I had missed the best time to correct my words.

Chapter 254

Tournament Chapter (2)

“Excuse us.”

“It’s alright.”

Bald Head, or Baek Sung-Woong, cut me off without even listening to my reason. He must have been upset. I gazed at Yong-Yong, who was watching a colourful bird flying between the dense trees, still sitting in my arms. He looked so happy that I didn’t have the heart to nag, so I decided to do it later.

Rather, how do I make Bald Head happy? Should I make a hair-growth serum for him? If I asked Ho-Jae for advice, he wouldn’t make Bald Head’s hair grow back, but he would make his baldness extend to other areas. However, I was not sure if it was right to approach the already sulky Bald Head and ask, “Do you want me to help you grow your hair?” Wouldn’t it hurt him more, thinking that I was teasing him?

[Just make a hair-growth serum and send it to Park Jung-ah. You were going to the Order of Vigilance anyways.] Ho-Jae’s voice rang in my head through the ring I had kept in my inner pocket, and I couldn’t help but be astonished.

Eh, we could talk comfortably with this ring’s help?

[Of course. That’s part of the reason why I asked you to take it.] Ho-Jae said in a deep voice.

How was this possible? Rather than being happy to be able to communicate with him so easily, surprise arose in my mind first. It had ignored all the barriers the gods had built over different dimensions, and even let us talk in real-time without proper coordinates.

If I asked Ho-Jae, he would explain it, but I didn't bother to ask him because he would probably nag me about it, asking why I hadn't studied about this before. Another reason was that I didn't want to take another theoretical class, which would simply be a headache.

[Yong-yong, get back on Bald Head's back. It was fun seeing you play with his Bald Head earlier.]

You crazy bastard. How could you find it interesting to see Yong-Yong slap the bald man on the back? I couldn't feel anything but embarrassment and regret at the sight.

[Wasn't it funny?] Ho-Jae's words made me think that I shouldn't let him around people if we ever got out of the Tutorial and made it back to Earth. It would be hard, but at least one leash was needed to restrain him. Now, I partially understood the mindset of the gods who locked him up on the 60th floor.

[Very mean words.]

Was that my fault? I was just being honest.

[I'll take care of you when you get back.] Ho-Jae warned, but I tried to stay calm.

Of course, that guy would never forget this and surely seek revenge one day, but I would not give in to him.

[Watch your words.]

What? I can't hear you from the 60th floor.

The good news about my provocation was that it made him cut the connection. I chuckled to myself at the small victory. Perhaps because of my sudden laughter, the bald man looked back at me.

"Oh, it's nothing."

"Sure," The Bald Head said huskily and turned around to walk again.

Did he think that I was laughing and making fun of him?

Well, Ho-Jae, Yong-Yong, and I had lived together for so long that I grew accustomed to being indifferent about the emotions of others. I should be more considerate of others around me, and I felt sorry for the bald man.

“Ahaha. Cute.”

I felt even worse for Bald Head when I heard Yong-Yong’s bright laughter.

* * *

I peered at the faint bonfire. The situation was somewhat atrocious. Now, even the initial fear I felt from Bald Head’s face was beginning. The current circumstance was all due to Yong-Yong, who was fast asleep in my arms. Yong-Yong had coiled up like a worm and sobbed in my arms, falling asleep in the process. As I caressed Yong-Yong’s back, I recalled what just happened.

The origin of the problem was the appearance of a massive bear residing on the hillside. I wasn’t astonished by the bear’s presence since I had heard from Ho-Jae that the road to the tournament would have obstacles. And most importantly, I had been aware of that big bear. But Bald Head wasn’t.

As soon as he noticed the bear, Bald Head changed his posture and bent his body, taking a fighting stance. It was an immediate response and happened only a few seconds before the bear charged, growling, so I wanted to give him a high score for his reaction speed. I wondered if this bald man could hunt a bear like that by himself. The problem was that he had overlooked Yong-Yong and the education that he had received from Ho-Jae. Yong-Yong stood on his hind legs and shouted loudly as soon as he saw the growling bear. “Cute!”

I wanted to ask what exactly he found cute, but Yong-Yong exerted his strength without waiting. In the next moment, Yong-Yong’s power pierced the bear, who got swept away in the dense trees and collided with the rocky terrain behind it. There hadn’t been any sound from Yong-Yong’s attack, but the attack caused the bear to release an ear-

splitting roar throughout the mountain. The air around vibrated and countless mountain rocks were destroyed. Of course, the bear died instantly, leaving nothing left except for its hind legs.

Because the bear had died in one blow, Yong-Yong began to cry in my arms. Bald Head felt an intense fear of Yong-Yong. Perhaps it was because of the word 'cute' he had uttered while mutilating the bear.

While we walked down the mountain path in silence, the bald man advised me to go camping, as the sun was setting. That was what we were doing right now—sitting quietly, with a warm bonfire between us.

I thought about how I could reassure the bald man a little bit. First, I thought about the reason why Bald Head would be anxious and afraid.

He was probably scared by what Yong-Yong said when he killed the bear. Before meeting the bear, Yong-Yong had looked at Bald Head and said he was cute. That would explain Bald Head's fear since Yong-Yong hadn't been gentle with the bear. The bear knew Ho-Jae had contacted us, so he did not hold back and attacked freely. Of course, it would have some impact.

But Yong-Yong didn't kill a bear because he thought it was cute. Yong-Yong clearly recognized the bear as an enemy and attacked immediately. However, Yong-Yong's perception of the enemy was a little strange.

For Yong-Yong, the enemy was like a game's villain. It was someone he had to defeat, and the battle against the enemy was almost like a game for Yong-Yong. Of course, it didn't mean that he treated the enemy lightly for fun.

Ho-Jae had taught him how to deal with enemies very well. A little too well. He showed him just how cruel and vicious one had to treat them, how to be thorough in attacking, and in what manner to fight. Yong-Yong actually treated the bear like that. All because Ho-Jae taught Yong-Yong like that.

What a madman.

Yong-Yong successfully controlled his strength while attacking the bear. If he couldn't do that, Ho-Jae wouldn't have thought of bringing him out in the first place.

Yong-Yong could fully control his power, but he was just excited about going out for the first time without Ho-Jae. And Ho-Jae had not taught Yong-Yong how to deal with a relatively weak enemy which was the problem.

Yong-Yong had never experienced such a weak enemy. His enemy was typically strong in any kind of attack, and in the end, he had to overcome them to be satisfied, so his attacks held a lot of power. He did so for a sure victory, even if the power felt from the bear was relatively weak.

Yong-Yong launched an attack that could never be stopped because that was the right thing to do. But when the bear died in vain, he was shocked. As a result, Yong-Yong burst into tears as any child would when an unexpected situation occurred.

After organizing my thoughts, I began to worry about Yong-Yong more than reassuring Bald Head. I called out to Ho-Jae in a hurry. I didn't know if he had really cut the link completely, or if I would be able to hear his answer.

[What?]

I explained to Ho-Jae, who had answered insensitively, about what had just happened and asked for his opinion.

“Hey, will Yong-Yong be okay? What if he does this to other people too?”

[He'll be fine.]

Yong-Yong didn't look fine. If anyone died in an accident, things could get really serious.

[It's not too bad.]

This lunatic's personality is really...

I couldn't figure out his thoughts.

[It's just that Yong-Yong got a little worked up, but he's not going to do that against people. I told him to use something else if possible.]

"Use what?"

[I've taught him to use techniques to deal with enemies without causing them a lot of damage.]

That meant killing them off in one blow. It was clear that Yong-Yong, who listened to Ho-Jae, would kill the person who angered him without any qualms. No, even if Ho-Jae didn't tell him to do so, it was unlikely that Yong-Yong would properly admonish and forgive his opponent if he were angry.

Perhaps I should not let Yong-Yong get angry at anyone at the tournament.

"Damn it. I can't do this alone."

[You brought this upon yourself.] Ho-Jae giggled.

* * *

Fortunately, Bald Head became quite close with Yong-Yong. He still seemed to be afraid, but as he spent more time with Yong-Yong, who was constantly hanging on to him, he became increasingly comfortable. During the three-day walk, Yong-Yong didn't use his strength carelessly, and without using it, he was just like a cute kid.

[Our Yong-Yong needs to continue being pretty. The bald man thinks of his child when he sees Yong-Yong, but our Yong-Yong is much cuter than his child.]

Though it was a rude remark, I agreed with Ho-Jae. It was obvious that anyone would agree if they saw Yong-Yong, who was struggling to make a flower crown, hanging on to the bald man's back.

On the third day of the tournament, we were able to reach the destination after a half-day walk. Numerous tall buildings caught my attention. Since the tournament was being held, it was easy to understand that the buildings were accommodations for people to stay. While walking along the mountainous path, we had passed countless numbers of people. Somehow, I felt dizzy. There were too many people.

Unlike me, Yong-Yong kept saying that the bald man was cute. He seemed to want to roam around, but the bald man secretly tightened his arm so that Yong-Yong wouldn't run away, which was a good idea. If Yong-Yong ran away, it would be hard to find him. Fortunately, Yong-Yong was so distracted that he did not intend to come down from the bald man's back.

The bald man walked faster than he had before. At the same time, Yong-Yong tried not to slip off his back with all the shaking. The bald man soon led us somewhere.

We entered a building and were soon able to reach a large room where several people were seated. It was like a conference room. There, I caught sight of a person who remained in my memory. It was Park Jung-ah.

Somehow, I was pleased. Even though a long time had passed, Park Jung-ah's appearance was exactly how I remembered it.

Park Jung-ah also raised her hand as she saw our group. I thought she was waving to us, but she wasn't. As soon as Park Jung-ah raised her hand, everyone who was talking in the room closed their mouths.

Somehow I felt overwhelmed in such a quiet conference room. It was impressive to me, who had lived with Yong-Yong and Ho-Jae, practically my entire life, to see so many people act in unison.

Park Jung-ah beckoned us to come closer. Then, she turned around, opened a door at the corner of the room, and went in.

Was she beckoning me to follow her?

I silently followed her into the room. I had things to say and things to

ask. I looked back after entering the room. The bald man, who was carrying Yong-Yong, remained in the conference room. As soon as I was about to ask what they were doing, Park Jung-ah slammed the door shut.

What? What was going on?

I was about to ask Park Jung-ah when she opened her mouth first. "It's all right. I made sure that the room was soundproof."

Soundproof. Why soundproof the room?

Before I could express my doubts, Park Jung-ah strode toward me. Her strong approach made me walk back subconsciously. After taking a few steps, my back hit the wall, and Park Jung-ah, who had come closer to me, slammed her hand beside me on the wall and stood there.

At the sight of Park Jung-ah staring at me silently, I swallowed saliva collecting in my mouth. Trying to look as calm as possible, I opened my mouth.

Chapter 255

Tournament Chapter (3)

With her face so close, I felt scared to the point where I couldn't even think of anything else. Her icy but intense gaze made me believe that somehow, she was angry with me. I tried to avoid looking at her, but she was too close, so it wasn't easy.

I opened my mouth with the thought of getting out of this situation somehow. "Well, there's... You know..."

Although she had stopped talking, Park Jung-ah's presence was still overwhelming. Her eyes, quietly staring into mine, began to inch closer. Confused, I raised my hand to cover my mouth.

Park Jung-ah's soft lips touched the back of my hand, as I had swiftly blocked my lips. Her warm breath brushed over my skin, and she glared at me as if trying to convince me to remove my hand. The sight forced me to stay still, unable to breathe.

I wanted to run back, but unfortunately, a wall blocked my retreat. Attempting to push the wall, I leant back against it with all my strength, but the wall didn't budge. Shit, what the hell was this wall made of? Even if I tried to run away from the side, Park Jung-ah's hands were caging me. In the end, I couldn't run away and had to block her lips with my hands, and my eyes shut tight.

After an excruciatingly long moment, Park Jung-ah took her mouth off my hand and stepped back.

Hah. Finally. Perhaps due to the excessive tension and stress, my legs felt weak, and I collapsed, leaning against the wall.

Park Jung-ah murmured, standing a few steps away from me, "You aren't him."

“Yes.”

Obviously! Why did you rush to conclusions without listening to people?

I wanted to scream out about my injustice, but I couldn't. Park Jung-ah, who had stopped attacking me with her lips, began to express her anger, kicking and smashing all the things around her; the chairs, desks, vases, and the lights in this small room shattered.

A variety of objects broke as Park Jung-ah viciously kicked and knocked over furniture. It felt more frightening to see her silently and calmly kicking, rather than shouting and rioting wildly.

I'm scared.

[I'm scared, too.] Ho-jae replied in the same way as I did.

That f*cking asshole.

“Isn't this all your fault? Whatever it is, you did wrong, so isn't it normal for her to be angry?” I raged.

Ho-jae, who would usually answer, “Why is it my fault?”, was unexpectedly silent. Dude, this guy definitely had something to do with Park Jung-ah's tantrum.

“Hey, what I need to talk to you about is this ring. You said I'm the one who's a conduit, right?”

[Yes, I did.]

I listened to Ho-jae and organized my thoughts. His words meant that anyone could communicate with Ho-jae through this ring as long as I was nearby.

[Yes, so you can just give her the ring later.]

“No wonder you made this device into a ring. By the way, isn't this

ring too monotonous to present to a woman?”

[It can change its exterior design a little bit.] Ho-jae explained.

“So it could do that, too. By the way, what did you do to make her so angry? I don’t recall much,” I questioned him.

[Well... well, there’s a lot of things.]

Judging from Ho-jae’s soft voice, it was unlikely that he would elaborate. I didn’t know any details, but it was clear that he had done something wrong. Firstly, I waited for Park Jung-ah to calm down.

Park Jung-ah, who had been angry for a long time, lethargically approached me and sat down.

“Is it true?” she said with a sigh.

“Yes, I’m his clone. Oh, but I’m not entirely the same as him. Different personalities, different thoughts. It’s better to call me his younger brother.” To start off, I introduced myself.

“I should apologize to you. I’m so sorry. I got a little excited,” Park Jung-ah said frankly. “I feel better after kicking something.”

“No, no. It’s okay. I don’t know what’s going on, but it’s his fault.”

“Yes, it is.” Park Jung-ah pushed the blame to Ho-jae, not specifying any more details. What the Hell did he do wrong?

We struck up a conversation about the bald man who had guided us since we entered the tournament, Baek Sung-woong, and the things that happened on the way. I heard the explanation of what would be done throughout the tournament. I was impressed by her kind and caring attitude that starkly contrasted the way she had just been beating up the surrounding objects. It felt like talking to a customer centre employee. Oh, of course, I had never met or spoken to a customer centre employee. It was just a feeling.

Upon hearing that she needed to take special care of Yong-yong and

that my friend Seok-cheon could not be reached, Park Jung-ah replied that she would do everything possible to help me. In particular, I gave some examples of measures to use when taking care of Yong-yong, and asked again if it was okay to proceed in this way.

Park Jung-ah's explanation ended by saying, "If you have any other questions or needs, you can ask Baek Sung-woong." And she asked me to have a drink with her if I had time in the evening.

"Yong-yong and I don't drink."

"Because you're a minor?"

"N- No, that's not," I stammered.

Park Jung-ah said, "I don't plan on giving alcohol to Yong-yong, who looks like a young child, so I'll prepare a non-alcoholic drink for him."

Before leaving the room, I gave the ring to Park Jung-ah.

"Take this ring. You can talk to Ho-jae with this."

Park Jung-ah murmured as she fidgeted with the ring, a sullen look on her face, "We can have a conversation through messages..."

"You'll be able to hear his voice, unlike in a message," I explained.

Park Jung-ah nodded her head slowly. "Yes, I can hear your voice. I mean, how does this work? Can I just talk with the ring on? Oh, really?" She spoke aloud, touching the ring.

It seemed that Ho-jae was answering through the ring.

"Then I'll be going," I said to her.

I left Park Jung-ah, who was obsessed with the ring and slipped out of the room. Before I left the room, I saw Park Jung-ah bowing her head slightly. It seemed to me that there was a sense of regret and gratitude for me. She bid me farewell with a warm expression and closed the

door.

“Hey, Lee Ho-jae.” Park Jung-ah spoke out, her voice cut off as the door closed.

Just before the door closed with a thud, I somehow felt that she was about to start swearing, but I ignored it.

“Uncle!”

As soon as I saw Yong-yong, who was on Baek Sung-woong’s back, I hugged him. I had wondered if he’d even come after me, but it was good that he didn’t. If Yong-yong had come in, it would have been a complicated situation.

“Uncle, who was that?” Yong-yong asked, pointing to the door.

I couldn’t tell if he asked because I was taken there or because of the conversation that had taken place there. If it were for Yong-yong, he would have heard the discussion even with the room’s soundproofing, which added to his question.

I felt embarrassed to answer Yong-yong’s question. At times like this, I would usually have to ask Ho-jae, but there was no way to because he was talking to Park Jung-ah.

“That’s- Well- I’ll tell you later.”

I was not yet ready to explain to Yong-yong about the complicated family history even more so because it was a story that I didn’t know well either.

* * *

[Lee Yeon-hee]

“It’s not worth it,” I said, looking at the four men standing on the narrow slope. To be honest, it was annoying.

“Ignore whatever the girl says, we just have to do our job,” one of them said.

“What do you want?”

Of course, it was apparent what this group’s goal was after they blocked the middle of the road to the tournament area and started a quarrel, but I asked them out of courtesy.

“Hell’s difficulty challenger, Lee Yeon-hee, the second in history to have information about the level of competence that the challenger on the 60th floor possesses. We want information on him.”

“Who exactly wants to know about him?” I wondered what kind of person would tempt fate to take a closer look at the power of a Hell’s difficulty challenger.

“I can’t tell you that. To be honest, you wouldn’t be able to memorize all the names even if I listed it for you.”

“There must be a lot of people interested in him,” I commented.

“Of course. It’s said that the 61st floor can only be cleared with two people. That means if both of you are on the 61st floor, you could clear it quickly.”

His words made me feel worse. The man was spouting random things.

“There are many people who support this, but there are also many who are anxious. And there are more who want to know what changes this will bring and how to cope with them,” he continued.

Somehow, his words made me feel sick with every passing minute. They weren’t strange, but they still felt so disgusting and insignificant.

“Is it worth your life?” I questioned.

At my words, the man covered his mouth and laughed, but this was not a laughing matter. What was he laughing for?

“I’m confident I’ll live somehow. These friends here have been promised enough rewards even if they die,” he replied, laughing.

“Really?”

“Right. Now, shall we get started?” The man asked cheerfully.

I decided to act.

“Kill.”

With my move, the spirits that had settled in the brains of the four men began to move. The spirits that had entered the enemies’ nose with fine dust accumulated in the brain, melted it, neutralized the enemy, and finished their work.

There was nothing strange about the four men falling down on the floor like puppets with broken strings. I tapped their bodies with my feet, making sure they were unconscious.

“Incinerate them so that no one knows what happened.”

Leaving behind the bodies of four men, which began to burn quietly, I continued to walk down the mountainous path.

* * *

The tournament was divided into sections for each dimension and server within the dimension.

The tournament itself was integrated at all levels, but it was quite a troublesome process to meet people on different levels.

The Korean server was connected to a global integration server, and other levels of integrated servers were linked to global integration servers.

Therefore, if you wanted to move to a different server, you would have to move from a Korean server to a globally integrated server,

from that globally integrated server to a third-level integrated server, from that third-level integrated server to an individual server at another level.

A total of three server portals must be passed.

There were even individual restrictions and rules to pass through the portal. In some dimensions, rules were already established within the tournament, while some newer dimensions chose to follow the existing rules. The Earth's, especially our Korean server, was on that side.

That's why I had to enter the tournament's integrated zone with the permission of the Order of Vigilance, the organization that managed Korea's allocated zone. It was not too difficult, so far. If you had a criminal record within the Tutorial or were subjected to investigation, the Order of Vigilance gave you the right to enter the globally integrated area after a brief review.

Compared to the many gates to pass, the gates to Earth's integrated server were among the simplest unless you had a prickly relationship with the member of the Order of Vigilance in charge of the gate.

"This is the first time I've seen you," a voice called out, and I turned around.

I was annoyed to see Park Jung-ah standing in front of me, greeting me. "Hello."

It seemed to me that she was deliberately provoking me. As soon as I saw her, I saw that she had hidden her hands behind her back hurriedly. There was a ring on her finger that was clearly emanating Ho-jae's power.

"You want to move to an integrated server?"

"Yes," I answered shortly.

"May I ask why?"

Chapter 256

Tournament Chapter (4)

[Lee Yeon-hee]

Looking back, I think I hated that woman from the beginning. I just didn't like her face on the documentary programs of TV. Park Jung-ah was similar to a celebrity who became famous using nepotism, despite having no acting skills. It was despicable.

E/N: AS DEFINED BY MERRIAM-WEBSTER, nepotism is 'favoritism (as in appointment to a job) based on kinship'.

Of course, I've begun to hate her more since joining the Tutorial. The documentary's narrative was that the leader of the Order of Vigilance may be in a relationship with Ho-jae, but in reality, the woman only fought with him. There were no personal messages, but they had a good enough connection to confront each other openly in the community. Maybe it was a bit far-fetched to call it a confrontation. They were childishly hanging on to each other's words, fighting over them, and clinging to each other. It was tough for me to like it.

Having read all the articles in the community, I was well aware of what happened in the Tutorial's early days. It seemed to me that I was upset to see him talking down on me and fighting back on the subject that he had saved me.

Watching the couple date and eventually break up, then grow close again afterward, made me hate her even more.

And now that we've met face to face for the first time, I hated the woman more than ever. Look at that face. Oh, my God. Was that the face of a woman over thirty? The Tutorial was promoting a scam. Park Jung-ah would look like a high school student if she wore a school uniform.

But dressing in a professional suit made her look pretentious, putting too much effort into her looks.

“Will you tell me the reason?” she asked, eyes examining me.

“No.”

I wondered if the rumor that the Order of Vigilance was actually a group of whipped guys was true.

**Note from Imagine: in case you don't know whipped means in love/infatuated. It's usually used for the latter

*(Adjective. **whipped** (comparative more **whipped**, superlative most **whipped**) (slang) Controlled by a spouse or significant other to an unreasonable degree.)***

Maybe Park Jung-ah was tricking people with that face obliviously.

As soon as she saw me, she glanced down at the ring on her finger and pretended to hide it behind her back. No matter how much I thought about it, her supposedly subtle movement was a definite ‘f*ck you’ gesture. After being hit on the head by Park Jung-ah's behavior, my doubts kept piling up.

“I'm sorry, but I need a reason to move you to an integrated server, for the sake of procedures.”

“I have an appointment. I'm sorry, but I can't tell you anymore because it's too personal. And I don't have much time, so I can't follow all the procedures.”

I had a good excuse in store, but I didn't want to say it. Not to this woman, at least.

“Personal?” she frowned, murmuring the word. Somehow, I took pleasure in her dissatisfaction.

That woman couldn't force her rules on me. It wasn't because there was a problem with her rules, but I just didn't want to accept them.

With great power comes great responsibility. It was a famous saying, but it was complete bullshit. With great power comes respect.

The same went for the rules of the Order of Vigilance. I respected their plans, unquestioningly. But, the Order of Vigilance, who ruled the Tutorial with an iron fist, gave up its control to a strong woman whom the order could not control. The result was, of course, tragic.

In a way, it was good. Some things couldn't be recklessly cut or controlled. If you forced rules on the ordinary people, the rules and those who enforced them would be destroyed.

I was confident that the Order of Vigilance wouldn't stop me, and I was looking forward to forcing myself to the point where I'd have to stop myself. If so, I would be able to show without any regrets, the strength I had.

"I'll permit you. But if there's a problem with the integrated server, or if there's a violation of the rules, we can't help you," Park Jung-ah said.

You can't help me, anyway. Even if you could, I wouldn't need it.

"Rules aren't made for people to get punished for breaking them. It's the same as why you shouldn't commit a crime, not because you go to jail, but because it is inherently wrong. We'll tolerate you ignoring our rules, but we won't help you when you're in trouble," she continued,

How ironic. A woman who had committed more crimes than anyone else in the Tutorial was giving me this advice.

"Isn't it fair?"

"Yes, it's fair enough. Thank you."

I didn't have any complaints, nor did I need the help of these people anyway. However, I just didn't like her attitude of teaching, as usual.

[Park Jung-ah]

“Am I doing well?” I mumbled to myself.

The members talked in hushed voices in the passageway. The committee reacted very strongly to my statement regarding Lee Yeon-hee’s departure to an integrated server. The committee had planned to turn the integrated server zone into an empty area. They had wanted to leave it as empty as possible with exceptions made for public meetings and the like. Meanwhile, my announcement of Lee Yeon-hee’s departure must have sounded irresponsible to them, as I didn’t know her purpose. But all I could say to the committee was that we couldn’t help it.

[You’re doing enough.] Ho-jae’s voice flowed into my head through the ring.

“Ugh. I can’t even mutter this to myself.” I covered my face in embarrassment. A light laugh came from the ring.

[It’s just as you said. Rules cannot help you as one cannot be bound by discipline for too long. I thought it was obvious, too.]

What do you mean? I got up from my seat.

Entering the conference room, where the Order of Vigilance members had gathered, I could see several people moving in a row.

I asked one of the closest people, “What’s going on?”

“I got a report that a Ranker was making a fuss, that’s him.”

The man pointed to a ranker. I had never seen him before, but he was famous enough just by his looks. The man was now sleeping on the floor, reeking of liquor. There was an Order of Vigilance member who approached and talked to him.

“Mister, mister! Wake up!”

The drunk Ranker managed to open his eyes, but he couldn’t regain

his senses.

“Mister, can’t you drink a bit less?”

“Oh, no,” the drunk Ranker answered. The Order of Vigilance member laughed at the sight.

“Who in the community would have known that such a reputable man could be so weak. Hahaha.”

“I never thought he’d be like this when he’s drunk.” Everyone started laughing loudly at what someone said. To be honest, I couldn’t comprehend why this was so funny.

“What about the victim?” I asked impatiently.

“No one was hurt, but he was so drunk that people around him reported feeling uneasy.”

It was dangerous. If that man had used his power on people while he was drunk, there could have been a massive accident. It occurred to me that I should have banned drinking in this tournament.

“Then we’ll go out again.”

“Yes. Have a good day.”

The field personnel of the Order of Vigilance left the conference room. I looked back on my memory, but I couldn’t remember where they had been stationed. Now everyone was doing their job well, even though I didn’t know everything.

I hesitated. The members were asking if this situation was funny or serious, and whether or not punishment should befall the man.

“Are you hurt?” I noticed an Order of Vigilance member with a towel on his face.

“Yes, I’ve got a slight cut,” the member replied.

No matter how drunk the Ranker was, injuring a person was going too far.

“This is...” I trailed off.

“It’s fine. When he wakes up, I’ll ask him for a meal as an apology.”

I couldn’t get used to this way of speaking. It wasn’t like this before.

“Don’t think about getting fed. Think about treatment. It’ll leave a scar,” I warned.

“Hey, it’s not like I can’t live with a scar. What’s wrong with getting a meal from a Ranker like him? He’s going to live like a king when he goes out on Earth.” The member shook his head.

I decided not to pressure him anymore when he said he was okay. I delivered some instructions and came out.

The Order of Vigilance’s atmosphere has changed a lot, and I was well aware of it.

Times had changed. People were clearing the Tutorial faster and going outside. The shorter the spent in the Tutorial, the smaller the problem.

The Earth was slowly stabilizing and awakened people gained wealth and honor. The higher the reward after the clearing, the more steadily the Tutorial’s challengers engaged in growth. The challengers, who used to resemble mercenaries and adventurers running for their lives, now looked like test-takers preparing for the exam.

The Order of Vigilance changed accordingly. The problems had diminished, and the atmosphere had softened. Rather than punishing people, it was full of things that helped them avoid any inconvenience or difficulty in clearing. Now that several generational shifts have taken place, the Order of Vigilance, which was in a position to control and govern the first Korean Tutorial servers, had turned into a supporter of the challengers.

That was what happened before. Initially, a fitting punishment for the

drunk man should've been carried out. No matter how drunk he was, the penalty for attacking an Order of Vigilance member trying to guide him had to be made clear, and it was a proper incident to publicize it to the outside world. But now that the Order of Vigilance had changed, I couldn't make them move the way I wanted them to.

[What are you thinking?]

“The world is changing these days.”

The advent of the Tutorials and the emergence of monsters was like opening a new world. People who had fallen into the new world had created all sorts of problems and confusion. But it has been stagnant ever since. At least for me, it was. No matter how turbulent the outside world was, it had always been the same routine for me.

I watched for crimes, made sure that the Order of Vigilance didn't have any accidents, took care of the new arrivals, and sorted out the items and information they had gathered and distributed to the people. And I spent the rest of the time cheering for Lee Yeon-hee.

I remembered that Kim Min-hyuk cared a lot about his life in the Tutorial. He predicted that a lot of people would settle down in the Tutorial and that they'd create a lot of problems. In response, I told him that a decent society was needed for the settlers. But contrary to his expectations, the number of people left in the Tutorial was now minuscule. Naturally, since this problem had diminished, his arrangements had become meaningless. Now, I could see why he left.

Many things had changed, but I was still the same.

“Do you remember when the vice-captain went outside?” I asked.

[Remember what?] Ho-jae questioned.

“You told me that I should be the mother of the Order of Vigilance, but it turns out I was completely out of sync with them.”

[Sorry. That was a bit of a hassle. After Kim Min-hyuk left, it's apparent that it would be more trouble.]

“Nobody asked,” I snapped

Whoo, I had almost lost my temper again. I needed to calm down.

[But you’ve been doing great.]

“You can’t convince me.”

Everyone expected me to do everything well. I should take care of the internal affairs that Kim Min-hyuk was in charge of, beyond my public appearances, but I didn’t get the job done correctly. The remaining Order of Vigilance members led the change on their own, and I could only tolerate and watch it.

The Order of Vigilance had changed a lot from when Kim Min-hyuk and I took charge of each other’s roles. Just as there was no problem with the Order of Vigilance, even when Kim Min-hyuk was gone, it seemed that there would be no problem with the Order of Vigilance without me now. No, I think it would be better without me.

Somehow I lost my energy and sighed. I took a seat on the bench by the roadside. I used to suffer from the threat of assassination, and I couldn’t even come out alone like this during tournament days, but now, sitting here made me feel refreshed and empty at the same time. While sitting here on the streets, I somehow understood the feelings of those who became jobless overnight.

[Just relax and say what you want to say.]

Ho-jae whispered.

[Speak out about how you feel.]

Chapter 257

Tournament Chapter (5)

[Park Jung-ah]

“Can I be honest?”

[Sure.]

I didn't know what was wrong with me. Maybe I was too excited about receiving the ring. As if I were drunk, I began to talk about a topic that I usually wouldn't even think about.

“I know I don't deserve it. If I go to Earth right now, the families of those who died under my hands will hunt me down. I thought I was right, but now I'm aware that I wasn't.”

I wanted to say what I wanted briefly, but this was just the beginning of a long excuse that started to tumble out of my mouth. I couldn't help it because I had already been deprived of my honor.

“I used the excuse that what I did was for the people, so I decided to live the rest of my life for people with penitence.”

Kim Min-hyuk once told me something. Had he said it on the day of the agreement? He said I had two jobs. The first, to catch and kill criminals, and the second, to protect people.

Of course, the job that meant more to me was the latter, and the former was only used to support the latter. Kim Min-hyuk had asked me not to justify my actions by saying I was protecting people. Instead of deceiving yourself by using excuses, try to distinguish between the two jobs, and work sincerely. The meaning was sincere, the words I said were kind, but in the end, it only revealed my desire to kill the criminals.

I already knew my true nature, so I wasn't confident that I could live outside with my head raised.

I imitated Kim Min-hyuk's words and proclaimed that I would remain in the Tutorial for the rest of my life and take charge of the Order of Vigilance, claiming that I'd do the same as him. When Ho-jae was trapped on the 60th floor while I was close to finishing the floors, I felt sick. When Lee Yeon-hee appeared and began cruising toward the 60th floor, I cheered for her, but I was nervous.

When Kim Min-hyuk went outside, I felt something change. In the end, everything would change over time, and everyone remaining in the Tutorial would go out one by one, and I'd be left here all alone. It was unfortunate, but it was inevitable. I thought it was something I had to endure.

But time passed. When a man's cunning heart sprouts a new desire, perhaps by itself, it erases his past deeds. Ever since the buried passion had sprouted out in my heart, its presence had been increasing rapidly.

"Now, I want to go outside, too."

[You can still go out.] Ho-jae softly whispered as if it were natural. As if there were no problems with my wishes.

"I want to meet you."

I wanted to meet him, talk face to face, and walk around together. After a few short days, I wanted to feel relieved by his side. I wanted to have him by my side. If he wouldn't stay willingly, I was willing to chase him around.

[We'll be able to meet soon.]

* * *

[Hochi]

"You did a great job. Well done."

“No, I’ll come back tomorrow morning.”

I greeted Baek Sung-woong, who stood in front of the door. Today, Baek Sung-woong had a tough day. I could assure you that today would have been more difficult for Baek Sung-woong if Yong-yong hadn’t been there when the bear suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

After visiting their headquarters, we were guided to our accommodation. Yong-yong, who finished organizing his furniture and decorations in the quarters, insisted that the room was now cleaned up, so he wanted to go outside again. His demand was out of the blue for me, who was about to sleep, and for Baek Sung-woong, who was returning to his quarters.

I persuaded Yong-yong to rest today and play tomorrow, but it didn’t work. Eventually, me and Baek Sung-woong had to take Yong-yong around the streets. The streets were like a market. Countless people roamed, and some sold delicious snacks or items.

I had no choice but to look back, keeping an eye on Yong-yong. Yong-yong, who looked around excitedly, wanted to buy things. However, Yong-yong, who had no items for people to use or any currency distributed by the Order of Vigilance, could not buy anything. Sometimes I got some snacks that people gave me because Yong-yong was cute, but it wasn’t enough to fill Yong-yong’s desire.

Baek Sung-woong suggested asking the Order of Vigilance for some money, but I refused because I didn’t know how much Yong-yong would spend. All the items in the market wouldn’t be enough to satisfy Yong-yong’s greed. After all, the boy was a dragon.

I briefly explained business transactions before Yong-yong, who heard the discussion, proudly declared that he would buy the goods he wanted by himself.

His proclamation stunned me into silence. At this point, I didn’t think I’d be surprised if the sky suddenly collapsed upon us. Fortunately, Yong-yong’s bedtime allowed him to postpone the reckless challenge to tomorrow, but in the end, his business would begin tomorrow.

“Haah. Isn’t this too much.”

I wished I could talk to Ho-jae, but I couldn't get any advice after I gave the ring to Park Jung-ah. Like Yong-yong, the new items and experiences made me excited. Everything around us seemed to be full of ignorance and unfamiliarity. But, those experiences weren't just exciting, they were tiring.

Knock knock.

Someone knocked on the door. It was Park Jung-ah. I wondered the reason for her visit, but then I recalled her saying she would come over this evening. I stood up to open the door.

* * *

"Shall we go to another room and drink?" Park Jung-ah asked, looking at Yong-yong, who was dozing off on my lap. Then Yong-yong, who had his eyes closed, shook his head.

"Let's just drink it here," I said sheepishly.

As soon as I and Park Jung-ah sat face to face at the table, Yong-yong got out of bed and sat on my lap. He seemed to want to join. He was sleepy enough to doze off on my lap, but I guess he didn't want to sleep alone in bed.

"The child must have been very tired."

"Ah, yes."

Tired? Yong-yong doesn't sleep just because he's tired. Basically, the dragon species was a species that slept on its own. Therefore, they hibernate for months or years.

Previously, when Yong-yong entered his first sleep cycle, I and Ho-jae decided to come up with measures to deal with it. Every day without Yong-yong was so boring and depressing. Ho-jae took steps to help Yong-yong sleep little by little every day. Since then, Yong-yong has been forced to sleep for several hours a day.

"By the way, the interior is a bit girly. Was it supposed to be like

this?” Park Jung-ah asked, looking around the room. I knew what she meant. The room was painted pink, and the furniture that decorated the interior was covered in lace. I let her know that it was Yong-yong’s handmade furniture and decorations.

“Oh, really? Well she’s a girl, so I guess she’d like it this way,” she murmured.

“What? Yong-yong is a boy.”

“What?” Park Jung-ah asked. “What are you talking about?”

“Yong-yong is a boy. Male. You know, XY Chromosome. Not a daughter, but a son.”

“What?” Park Jung-ah had serious doubts about Yong-yong’s gender, but I made it clear that the interior design was Yong-yong’s personal taste and that his gender should not even be involved.

The reaction was worse than I thought. Park Jung-ah seemed to be beyond embarrassed. From Ho-jae’s perspective, I knew Yong-yong’s taste was very feminine, but was that something to be so serious about? I didn’t know.

“What about Ho-jae? Did he say anything with the ring?”

“Yes, we were talking about it earlier, but he said he’d stop by the 61st floor in the evening. I haven’t heard from him since.”

The 61st floor? It was impossible. No matter how little my technical understanding is, I could see that Park Jung-ah’s words weren’t making sense. The 61st floor was already in Hojae’s domain. Whether he was on the 60th floor or the 61st floor, it would have nothing to do with communication.

Then why did he suddenly stop communicating? Did he really have something to do? Or did he not want to join the conversation between Park Jung-ah and me? First of all, I decided to move as I had wanted.

“Oh, and you can take it easy. Think of me as Ho-jae’s brother.”

In fact, it was better to speak informally and treat her comfortably. It was discomfoting to be given an honor that I didn't deserve, and to top it off, Park Jung-ah was much older than me in terms of age.

"Yes, I will."

I could see why this woman fitted well with a crazy guy like Ho-jae.

We drank together in a somewhat harmonious atmosphere.

Park Jung-ah confidently said, "This is the most powerful drink ever developed." No matter how good it was, I drank all I wanted, but I couldn't feel any intoxication. On the contrary, Park Jung-ah got drunk quickly.

Park Jung-ah tried to speed up the conversation before she was too drunk to hear my thoughts. What Park Jung-ah wanted to ask me was related to Ho-jae.

"How do you and Ho-Jae get along?"

"How do we get along?"

"Yes. I've been told through messages and the ring, but I still want to know more. How do you get along with him?"

Maybe this question caused Ho-jae to cut off communication. Maybe he was pretending that he couldn't listen to Park Jung-ah so that she can ask me this question comfortably.

"We're doing fine. We get along better than you think. We usually eat together, teach Yong-yong, and spend the rest of our time focusing on research. I was unstable and had a hard time, but I've gotten a lot better recently. It's better now."

Park Jung-ah listened carefully as if she was trying to memorize what I said. She also told me a little about what had happened in the past, and we shared some anecdotes that we liked.

When I heard as much as I wanted to hear, or when I was satisfied

with Park Jung-ah's face, I asked her a question too. There was always a question I was curious about.

"But why did you two have a bad relationship?"

Ho-jae didn't explain well. When I was born, the two were already at odds. I had been confused by the inconsistent memories and the facts that remained in my head.

"There are several reasons. First of all, I turned down all the requests."

"Requests?"

Park Jung-ah said, "I'm sorry, but I can't talk about this."

The underlying tone in her words suggested that it'd be better to ask Ho-jae myself.

"That's why we got estranged the first time, and since then, I kept on instigating fights. I was angry and disappointed."

The requests seemed to be a big deal, and it occurred to me that even if I asked Ho-jae directly, I would probably not be able to hear the answer.

"Then I threw a stone."

"A stone?" I asked her out of the blue, but she ignored me and continued her drunk rambling.

"In the past, I overheard him talking in the second tournament. I didn't know who he was talking to. I thought he was talking to himself back then, but now that I think about it, it seems like he was having a conversation with the sword he had at the time. It was kind of weird to talk about that with a sword."

It was a scene in my memory. One day, Ho-jae once revealed his innermost feelings next to Park Jung-ah, who was asleep.

“I’ve always been anxious. I wonder if the existence of my feelings means little to him. Maybe our relationship doesn’t mean much to him, contrary to what I think.”

Before I could even recall my memory, Park Jung-ah continued her words. She was already mumbling to herself, not caring at all.

“So I threw it, thinking that the stone I threw could cause a stir in the lake. It was a stupid idea, but it worked. I was happy to see him get angry at me as well, instead of breaking our relationship, but on the other hand I was also upset.”

It was strange.

“It’s strange, isn’t it? It was then that I got even more furious and swore at him to stir a reaction. Maybe I thought a reaction would provide proof that he still cared about me.”

I had no idea what she was rambling about.

(Note from Imagine: Ho-Chi doesn’t get it because he supposedly should have all the memories of Ho-Jae and yet he doesn’t understand nor does he have any idea what shes talking about)

“Anyway, I apologize on behalf of Ho-jae. I don’t have all the details, but it’s probably Hojae’s fault anyway,” I reassured Park Jung-ah, and she burst into laughter upon hearing my words. “If there’s anything I can do for you, just let me know. I’ll help you with anything.”

“Really?” she asked.

“Of course.”

* * *

It was relaxing. I thought Park Jung-ah was drunk enough to forget everything. The problem was that Park Jung-ah still remembered my words and did not forget my promise.

[In 100 seconds, the duel will begin. Both participants are informed to get ready for the duel and please stand by.]

[Tournament – Duel Stage, Round 1 will begin shortly]

Chapter 258

Tournament Chapter (6)

[Hochi]

[In 100 seconds, the duel will begin. Both participants are asked to get ready for the duel, and please stand by.]

[Tournament – Duel Stage, Round 1 will begin shortly]

* * *

The duel stage consisted of very easy-to-understand rules. Before the start of the first round, the list of participants would be made public. All participants would choose their opponents from the list, and a duel would take place under a bilateral agreement. The winner would advance to the second round, where participants who advanced would pick each other, and the second round would begin with a deal.

It was impressive that they knew who the opponent was in advance and agreed to compete with each other following the pretence of a duel. If we wanted to distinguish our opponents, we had to be able to build a stable multiplier. Of course, it'd take more time to get into the higher rounds, and eventually, you'd have to go to the end and meet the strongest opponent. The duel was like a luck-based game, assuming that the participants were well acquainted. It wasn't difficult to avoid strong players and bad-tempered opponents if you had the right connections.

In that sense, I had to wait for a very long time.

[Waiting time: 4 hours 13 minutes]

The others participated in the first round, advanced to the second and third rounds, and I wasn't even starting the first round yet. The reason was, of course, easily understood.

[Challenger: Lee Ho-jae]

It was obvious why other challengers didn't ask me to duel. When the challenger's name was written as Lee Ho-jae, which crazy person would want to fight? They had enough sense not to fight with Lee Ho-jae. If they considered their life precious, it was best not to get entangled at all.

Damn it. Why wasn't my name listed instead?

I didn't have many regrets about being a clone. I couldn't blame Ho-jae for being born like that in the first place, and I was satisfied with my situation right now. However, I felt terrible about being treated like an entirely different person. The fact that the system judged me to be Lee Ho-jae made me upset.

Couldn't it tell the difference between us? If I wasn't him, why was it treating me the same as Ho-jae? Either way, it was unpleasant.

I felt uncomfortable, but I was more depressed because I was spending time in a daze. It was not like I was waiting for someone. What was going on? I hoped I didn't have to be alone until the end of the stage like this. That would make me look so funny. I'd be an unselected loner.

Suddenly, I wondered why Park Jung-ah put me on the stage. No matter how much I had been drinking, I had said that I'd do anything for Park Jung-ah and made a promise. The next day Park Jung-ah asked me to join the stage, so I accepted it. I had meant to do her a favour instead of apologizing for the inconvenience that Ho-jae had caused her.

But now, I wondered how my wasted time here would help her. What was Yong-yong doing?

Bald Su... *shakes head* Baek Sung-woong must be having a hard time. Yong-yong had vowed to make money in the market from today onwards, and I hoped that he wouldn't do anything ridiculous.

I thought about it for a long time when a message came to my mind with a loud noise.

[Mr. Mike Benderop has asked Lee Ho-jae to fight a duel. Will you accept it?]

“Yes,” I answered reflexively, relieved at the thought of finally getting out of this boredom, but on the other hand, I was anxious. The other side saw the name Lee Ho-jae and asked for a duel. It was evident that the opponent was a lunatic. I didn't know their strength, but it wasn't very relaxing to face a madman regardless of their power.

[In 100 seconds, the duel will begin. Both participants are asked to get ready for the duel, and please stand by.]

[Competition – Duel Stage, Round 1 will begin shortly]

After a while, my body teleported to the duel stage. There were a lot of people outside the massive stadium, which was the stage. Looking at the large crowd, it was a little understandable why Park Jung-ah asked me to participate. If so, many people were concentrating enthusiastically on the duel, and I could effectively imprint myself on them. The problem was that I didn't know how I should act.

[Suit yourself.] I heard Ho-jae's voice through the ring I had put inside

my pocket. While I was drinking with Park Jung-ah yesterday, the ring I had given her split in two. One was for her, and the other for me, but its performance remained the same. Of course, Park Jung-ah's was something I could only use if I were nearby.

However, there were many differences in design. Park Jung-ah's ring was a pretty ring with a diamond in it, while mine was just a plain yellow ring. It was a ring design that I hated the most. At my complaint, Ho-jae once again replied that this would be most familiar to me, which was a very unpleasant answer.

“So I can do whatever I want? You won't scold me later?”

[Yes.]

I tried to reach out a little to Ho-jae's insensitive voice, but he didn't seem to care about the rest.

“What if I cause some accidents here and there?”

[Just do whatever you want.]

Tch. I tried to intimidate him by saying I'd make trouble with his name, but I didn't think it worked.

I looked at the summoned opponent in the stadium. The opponent whom I thought was a genuine lunatic was an unexpectedly handsome man. Perhaps because I was with Baek Sung-woong all day yesterday, I had compared the two subconsciously. There was a big difference, of course, visually. Oh, of course, Baek Sung-woong was manly and good-looking, but his bald head deducted some points.

Baek Sung-woong said he shaved because he liked being neat, but I knew that he had started balding from the centre of his head. Of course, he tried to hide it, but it was evident to me.

Before the duel began, the opponent introduced himself and asked me to address him as Mike. In response, I also briefly introduced myself.

Mike was surprised that I was Lee Ho-jae's clone, and not him. He had

an astonished look on his face.

“So, what’s your deal?” I asked, thinking that he likely wanted to strike a deal with me. Mike wasn’t as crazy as expected, and if he weren’t crazy, he wouldn’t be dueling with a challenger named Lee Ho-jae for fun unless there was anything he needed to talk about.

“We need information from the 31st to 34th floors.”

Oh, he was an American challenger. I was well aware that the American challengers were struggling with the demon stages, which started from the 31st to the 34th floor. The stages were also quite tricky. Ho-jae on the 61st floor was comparable to the American challengers on the 31st floor.

The most significant feature of the demon stages, which started from the 31st floor, involved party play, but the number of parties decreased as you went up the floor. And when facing the most powerful enemy on the 34th floor, the challenger must fight it off and win.

Come to think of it, the design was incredibly stupid, but the 31st floor was an easy stage. By avoiding strong demons and searching for easy demons and collecting vouchers, it was easy to clear off on your own and not with a party. However, on the 32nd floor, only strong demons appeared, so the level of difficulty rose exponentially. It was even more complicated than the 33rd floor. Nevertheless, the number of party players got reduced. In the end, you had to challenge the demon king by yourself.

The Tutorial up to the 30th floor encouraged party play as if to announce its usefulness. In a solo stage, one was usually focused on testing one’s navigation, survival, reasoning, and social abilities. Naturally, challengers become more accustomed to role-sharing battles that aligned with party members rather than single combat.

However, the Tutorial suddenly asked the challenger to fight alone. It was not hard to guess why American challengers had been struggling there for years.

Thinking of stages preceding the 60th floor, the Tutorial required one

to break through everything and get through it by themselves. There was a stage that saved and protected many people, but only one challenger was the right fighter. He alone must carry out judgments and battles that control people's lives. However, the 61st-floor stage could not proceed without team members. The stages after the residential area always tried to force down the challenger in a similar manner.

"What should I do?"

[Do as you please.] Ho-jae answered nonchalantly and so, I did as he said.

I gave the American challenger the information I know, and Mike was very pleased with my information. Previously, Ho-jae's report was heard through the words of a challenger who graduated from the Korean server's Tutorial, so the Korean government added a Newbie level to the U.S. server. There were many errors and omissions. I gave him the information that I knew, and he asked questions like a child who was excited to get a toy. In some parts that I didn't know well, I asked Ho-jae.

"When you meet demons, do you lose your fighting power? What do you do if that happens? Did you lose yours too?" Mike asked.

"No. Try to remember. Did that ever happen? If you meet demons and your combat power decreases, you can stop them to some extent by being resistant to fear or to mental attacks. It's its most important not to be intimidated by the demon king, but most people aren't able to do that."

That was obvious. The demon king didn't get his title by doing nothing. Of course, as soon as one first saw doppelgangers of the top demon species, they wouldn't think of a monster that Ho-jae had caught and forced to write down information.

After I gave the information, Mike repeatedly thanked me with a look of gratitude on his face. I, somehow, stopped him from paying me back. It was too difficult for me to get satisfied with material compensation. Instead, I asked for a meal before the tournament ended. Mike said he had a famous chef in the U.S. server, and that he would visit the Korean server area with him.

Not long after I entered the tournament, I got to make another good friend. I was as satisfied with Mike.

The crowd wondered why Mike and I sat together on the duel stage and urged us by asking, “Why aren’t you fighting?”, but we ignored the buzz.

* * *

[Lee Yeon-hee]

“I can’t.” The man standing in front of me answered briefly. He was the only Asian-looking man in that group. Judging from the accent, I assumed he was Chinese.

“Why?”

“Your request was accepted, and the committee is reviewing it. Now that the review is unfinished, we cannot let you move on to another level.”

They wanted me to wait? The problem was how long it’d take to get approved. Even if I was sure the request would be accepted, I had no intention of wasting my time.

“Of course, the principles are important, but we still don’t have enough information about other dimensions. I can’t let you go alone now that we’ve just been in touch with them. If things go wrong, there may be new disputes, and in the worst case, there could be inter-dimensional conflicts.”

I stared at the Chinese man who kept rambling. Now, I could see how misleading Park Jung-ah’s response was. She was straightforward and explained the things I could do but didn’t say what I couldn’t. Oh, of course, it wasn’t like I liked her. But this old man was more irritating than she was.

The man talked with a stubborn look on his face, but his words made no difference to me. Instead of wasting time pointlessly, I decided it was better to strike them out. As soon as I finished my judgment, I launched an attack.

(Note from Imagine: If you don't remember Ho-Jae had met the demon king before the 34th floor in the floor where he met Ahbooboo and first used the Light Style Sword Technique to defeat a summoned demon king, hence why the word "doppelganger" was used)

Chapter 259

Tournament Chapter (7)

(Quick Correction for Chap 258 from Imagine: The Doppelganger they were talking about may have been the one from way back then, the floor where he's stuck in a tunnel with one of them being a doppelganger who took the place of another. Sorry for the misunderstanding with the last chapter guys.)

[Lee Yeon-hee]

The man died much faster than I thought he would. Candidates who entered the Tutorial and had all kinds of bizarre abilities were no different than normal humans. And I was not impressed by that fact.

“Stop it!” the Chinese man shouted, and the shield unfolded. Unfortunately for him, the shield shattered before my attack.

“Deploy.”

The seven thorns that floated around me flew in all directions. With a loud whizz, the thorns flew ahead at high speed. Some bypassed the shield, while others pierced through the body of the enemy. Everything in its route became destroyed; nothing was able to stop those incoming attacks.

People died; some screamed till their throats became hoarse, rolling on the floor with small bloody punctures dotting their body. Due to excessive bleeding and shock, some died slowly, suffering from intense pain or ruptured internal organs, and others died instantly, without even realizing it.

I couldn't feel any excitement at the scene. It was a scene that I had seen so many times that it even felt natural. The difference between what I had seen before and now was that the victims were different.

Who I killed before were members of the Tutorial, and those who died now were human beings on Earth.

It could be interpreted as a big difference. Killing beings in the Tutorial, who were destined to die, was different from killing the living. But perhaps because of the familiarity of killing, I could not feel any difference.

When I was young, my parents had always told me not to commit a crime. In modern society, committing murder was a big moral and legal issue, but in the Tournament stage of the Tutorial, all that morality and law became nonexistent.

Morality and law are built upon the belief of universal equality, and of course, those people and I were not of the same level.

“Ahhhhh...”

“Cough. Ke-ahek. Hek.” There were groans everywhere. Some survivors rolled on the floor. They vomited blood, and it seemed inevitable that they were going to die sooner or later.

“Retrieve.”

The seven thorns flying in the air came back into my hand, moving according to the user's will. One thorn was as long as a man's palm and as thin as his little finger, but it was enough to pierce a hole in the human body. The thorns were capable of flying around quickly, making a squeaky noise, and penetrating the enemy's weaknesses one by one. The enemies, distracted by the sound and the thorns' blurry images, would become incapacitated as an increasing amount of holes appeared on their bodies. It was a very efficient weapon to kill people.

Now, there was no one blocking my way. Oh, of course, many half-dead bodies were falling and dying, but no one would stop me. I was careful not to step on the corpses and the blood, weaving my way through them.

The portal shone brightly, but before I stepped into it, a man appeared on the brightly lit portal.

“It’s not too late,” the man said. It was a man whom I had met not long ago.

“Isad.”

“Yes. You... What was your name again? Well, it doesn’t matter. I’m here to pick you up.”

The reason he couldn’t remember my name was simple. It was because I had never told him. As he said, it didn’t matter.

Isad was a man whom I had met on the 56th floor. When the Dragon, who was replacing the manager, asked me what stage I wanted, I replied that I wanted the stage that Lee Ho-jae had cleared. Fortunately, the Dragon sent me to the same place.

In that stage, where the main goal was to establish a sect and gather people’s faith, it had several other Hell Difficulty’s Challengers besides me. I met Isad there.

“Who the hell are these scumbags?” Isad murmured, cursing out loud. With a snap of his fingers, the bodies on the floor began to disintegrate. In an instant, the skin and muscles turned into blood and even evaporated. When the iron scent of blood had disappeared, the bodies that had fallen around them left without a trace. There had still been some survivors, but Isad had wiped them all out cleanly.

“Now, you’re a little cleaner, tch.”

Before entering the Tutorial, Isad once boasted that he was already one of the strongest superhumans in his world. Perhaps because of that, he was not pleased with the people of ability who gained strength from the Tutorial. To be exact, he hated those who were incompetent before entering the Tutorial but gained strength by coming in here. Perhaps he didn’t like that they got to go into the Tutorial and quickly learn abilities, but on the contrary, I didn’t like it when he boasted without thinking. It was safe to say that I didn’t get along with him.

“Why did you have to come?”

Izad snorted rather than answering my words straightaway. Pointing to the portal, he said, "I've set the coordinates, so go quickly. I'm waiting."

"What about you?"

"I have something to do here."

(Note from Imagine: Damn Yeon-Hee is Unhinged Jesus)

* * *

[Hochi]

Since the first round, the number of challengers had soared. People who had been interested in me but hesitated because of Lee Ho-jae's name started to challenge me one by one. Of course, not many people duelled properly. More people wanted to talk to me than those who wanted to fight me.

I answered one question after another about the success or growth of the Tutorial, or questions to satisfy their curiosity. The audience, who didn't get to see any fights, listened to the conversations between the challengers and me as if it was interesting.

I had already met 15 challengers and was on the way to the 15th round. The more challengers I met, the more people challenged me over time. People not only wanted to ask questions, but some wanted to learn a lesson through a confrontation with me. I didn't like it, but I dealt with it to a certain level. Contrary to my initial concerns, I was able to deal with it efficiently, and through that, I was able to point out what the other party needed to improve in. Most of the challengers seemed satisfied.

"My brother said he wants to try, but I don't know if he can," said the 15th challenger, who finished his duel with me.

"Oh, tell your brother to finish the rounds quickly." It would be nice if I got to meet him too.

Even if we can't interact this time, if another tournament was held, we could meet in the future.

The challenger nodded. His brother was three years younger than him. He said that he was in the Tutorial and introduced his name.

"Tell him to level up quickly and fight me."

"Hahaha. I hope so, too, but it's easier said than done," said the challenger with a smile.

Well, I had already made it to the 15th round. To meet me, one must now advance to at least 16 rounds, and to do so, they must win against the previous fifteen challengers. Achieving 15 consecutive wins against the same Tutorial challengers wasn't easy.

[What do you mean? It's *too* easy.]

Let's ignore that bastard Ho-jae's opinion.

"Anyways, he'll be trying hard to catch up before the 20th round." The challenger remarked.

If he wanted to meet me, he had to do so before the 20th round.

The feature of this stage was that it would only run within the Earth's server until the 19th round, and after that, it could also mix with other planet's challengers. Unlike previous rounds held only in the Earth Zone, from the 20th round onwards, you would challengers that had advanced to the 20th round in another planet's duel stage.

It was interesting—a duel with another species. I heard that there were several challengers on Earth who participated in the duel stage to experience this.

I was looking forward to it, too. I was going to watch the duel between the earthlings and the alien challengers. I didn't particularly want to participate and fight. In the first place, I didn't like to fight anyone, nor did I want to face an alien challenger on a duel stage, who wouldn't even want to talk to me. I promised to participate in the

duel stage until the 19th round. I also told Park Jung-ah that. Park Jung-ah said that was more than enough.

Before leaving, the 15th challenger said, “I hope we can have a chance to talk and not duel, next time,” adding, “See you later.” It was a warm remark.

Before coming to the Tournament, I was worried that I might get yelled at by the people, but fortunately, their reactions were generally favourable. I got told that I was unexpectedly pleasant.

“Hey, don’t you think people like me more than you?” I tried talking to Ho-jae.

[No.]

[What do you mean no? They like it because I’m much kinder than you. I thought the audience would be scared, but they said I was a better person than they had thought.]

[Yes, yes. People must be ecstatic to have met you.] Ho-jae said sarcastically.

Was he offended?

“Are you upset?”

[Shut up. Why would I be upset?] Ho-jae roared all of a sudden.

He was definitely mad.

“You’re mad,” I teased.

[No.]

“Aye. Is this that upsetting?”

[No.]

[Round 18 starts.]

[Isad has asked Lee Ho-jae to fight a duel.]

[Will you accept?]

“Yes.”

As soon as I finished the 17th round, I accepted the incoming duel request. It was already the 18th round, but the request came right away, so I wondered if more people had advanced farther than I thought.

[In 100 seconds, the duel will begin. Both participants are asked to get ready for the duel, and please stand by.]

[Tournament – Duel Stage, Round 18 will begin shortly]

As soon as I got a notification, two messages came from Park Jung-ah.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Be careful.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Isad is a challenger who's not from Earth.]

I could already notice before Park Jung-ah told me. I could tell that the other party was not from the Earth just by looking. People from Earth couldn't possibly have silver skin. The audience also was calling him a challenger from another planet. I had heard that challengers from other worlds are usually only encountered after the 20th round,

so I didn't expect to get one so soon.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Looks like he crossed into the Earth's server and took part.]

Park Jung-ah quickly solved my doubt and added another warning.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Stay safe. It's said that he killed all the challengers he met up to the 18th round.]

Park Jung-ah had said to be careful because he was a homicidal maniac, but it wasn't very helpful. That silver-skinned lunatic's face smiled as soon as he faced me. I knew I was inviting death.

"Hey, what do I do?"

[Take care of it.]

I asked Ho-jae, who was still sulking, but he only answered in a monotonous manner.

Chapter 260

Tournament Chapter (8)

[Lee Hochi]

A lot was happening right now. I couldn't believe that someone was picking a real fight with me. It was too sudden. There was no way I could have done anything to make him hold a grudge. Oh, he must have thought I was Ho-jae.

I was immediately convinced. No matter who it was, if you were famous, you were bound to bear hatred and grudges. Ho-jae's power was recognized among other planets as well. Perhaps that was why the silver-faced man looked like he was out for my blood.

[Don't overthink it and focus on how you'll deal with it.] Ho-jae's calm voice rang in my mind.

You want me to deal with him? And how exactly do I do that?

While I was thinking about this, my opponent, who had been silent all this time, opened his mouth.

"I never thought I'd get to meet the famous scammer."

What? What scammer?

[You know, you stole power from the gods back then, when you lied about being an apostle.]

Oh right. There was that.

I ran away from home before the 61st floor became Ho-jae's domain and became exposed to the gods' eyes for the first time. Naturally, countless gods' eyes fell on me, their interests peaked, and they gave

suggestions

At that time, when I had a lot of worries about myself, some of those suggestions sounded very tempting. As I pondered over some of the proposals, there was a competition between the gods without my knowledge. The gods, who had repeatedly asked me to come under them, eventually offered power as a bait.

I came to my senses at that point. It occurred to me that if I followed anyone, I might walk the wrong path, so I decided to go back to the 60th floor after accepting the powers.

The gods had no idea what I was thinking. When one god presented me with power, the other gods offered more, and I returned to the 60th floor, grateful for the powers.

[It was a clever move.] Ho-jae murmured.

It was Ho-jae that benefited from those powers, not me. After all, I had never used them before, and above all, I wasn't interested. Ho-jae participated in the research of those powers, but that was all.

"I can't believe you stole so many powers and disappeared," the silver-faced opponent continued.

Excuse me? Stole? Who stole it? I just took what I was given.

"Did you know that there are only two chances for a single god to present power to a challenger? One chance is used up when they ask you to be an apostle."

Of course, I knew about it. Ho-jae had received similar offers countless times. He was a professional in that area.

"Do you know how many people didn't get a chance because of you?!" the opponent suddenly shouted, eyes blazing with anger.

[He doesn't seem to have the powers. Hey, ask him if he has any powers.] Ho-jae urged me.

“Do you have power?” I questioned, following Ho-jae’s advice.

The opponent did not answer immediately. From that, I could figure out the answer.

“Oh. So you’re powerless, too. Is that why you’re angry? Because you don’t have power? Do you feel it was my fault? Don’t you think it was because of your poor abilities? “

I had never been in a battle since I was born, but Ho-jae had taught me enough. If I met with an enemy, I was to weaken the enemy’s confidence if I had the chance. And I was confident that I could do this well, even if I didn’t know anything else.

“No matter how much power I’ve stolen, I didn’t accept the apostle proposal. Oh, have you been offered the position of an apostle yet?”

[Aye. No way.] Ho-jae chimed in.

“Hmm? Just by looking at you, I can tell that you’ve crossed 50 floors of Hell’s Difficulty, but you haven’t even gotten an offer? Oh, my God. That can’t be true. No way. Have you not been getting apostle offers from the sixth floor?”

“Shut up,” the silver-faced man growled.

“Huh? What?”

“Shut up!” my opponent shouted again.

“Huh? I couldn’t hear you. I can’t hear the weak cries of a powerless person.”

[After 30 seconds, the duel will begin.]

I had been teasing my opponent for a long time before a message appeared.

Damn it. Give me about 300 more seconds.

“I’ll kill you,” the pissed-off man mumbled to himself. *Phew, what a crazy guy.*

“Hey, what should I do?” I tried talking to Ho-jae again.

[What to do? Kill him.] A simple answer came back.

[The Earth’s challengers have just come up. You know, if you let him go, he’ll come at them instead. Just kill him. Wipe out the issue.]

While I was talking to Ho-jae, I heard the sound of paper tearing from the air, and Yong-yong’s head popped out.

“Uncle!”

“Yong-yong!” *Our pretty Yongyong.*

There had been so many layers of barriers, but he had ripped through them all.

“Would you like some help?”

“No. It’s alright.”

It seems that he had sensed my danger and broke through the barrier. I was very grateful for his concern, but I had no intention of asking Yong-yong to fight for me.

“Huh? Is that a Hatchling? What are you going to do by summoning a little Hatchling, who has not even lived for 100 years? You don’t even know how to wield the enormous power you have. You certainly don’t even deserve the power.”

“Yong Yong is not a baby!”

Yong-yong tried to display maturity by shouting, but it didn't work out very well.

"Yong-yong, go back to Baek Sung-woong," I said, stroking Yong-yong's head.

Yong-yong asked back with a worried face, "What about Uncle?"

"I'll join you soon."

Yong-yong thought for a moment and then disappeared, saying, "Okay."

I was glad to see him go.

[What's good about it? It would have been good to let Yong-yong experience it.]

"I don't want to let him."

Of course, I knew well that Yong-yong had little resistance to fighting and wouldn't hesitate to kill someone. Still, I hated it.

[Then how are you going to take care of that?] Ho-jae asked.

"Well..."

[What? You can deal with this quickly. Even if you don't kill him, you can still subdue him.]

"Still..."

It was hard to explain, but I didn't want to deal with him.

Ho-jae sighed and said, [Yes. Even a tiny dog will bark and run, but who'll deal with it sincerely? They'll either shoo it away or ignore it. No matter how much you fight, you will win anyway. You don't have to fight assholes if you have nothing to gain.]

Yeah. That was precisely how I felt right now.

[But it's not always possible to avoid fighting like this. Someday you'll end up fighting too. If I can't help you, then you might regret not having experienced combat in advance.]

I thought so too. I might regret it someday.

[Okay? Well, if I were there, I'd have to show my strength anyway. That way, those flies would be less annoying.] said Ho-jae.

The message appeared at the same time as the words.

[In 10 seconds, the duel will begin.]

Less than 10 seconds before the message appeared the space in front of me began to compress. Darkness flowed from the tear in space and soon engulfed my opponent and me.

"I'll kill you this time."

* * *

[Isad]

Looking at the oblivion in front of me, I thought about where this all had started. Was it when I was asked by the gods to test that power? Or when I was ordered to contact a challenger on the 57th floor? Maybe it was when I first received an invitation message from the Tutorial? I went back in time and slowly swam up in the river of my memories.

It was from that day when everything started. When the parasitic monster that the source vomited made our family a host. Since that day, I began to live with the idea of killing and destroying all the

sources that exist in the world.

Although I was late, I chose Mado's path and succeeded, beginning to conquer the sources one by one. Before I knew it, my name was spread all over the continent, and I was labelled a hero. Nevertheless, there were countless sources left on the continent, and there was still a long way to deal with them all.

Then the Tutorial appeared. The people who were invited there came back strong. Gradually, they began to root out the source.

I was happy, but I felt deprived. That had been my job; my duty; my role. It was not for those who used to plough fields and feed cattle.

While I was thinking about it, I was invited to the Tutorial. I thought the gods had finally recognized me. Of course, I chose Hell's Difficulty. No matter how difficult it was, I didn't have any difficulties.

Basic magic alone could clear most of the stages. Of course, the level of difficulty had increased rapidly, but so far, there had been no stage that tested my limits.

Even now, when I reached the 60th floor, I felt impatient. I was not much different from how I had been before the Tutorial. The only thing that mattered here was whether or not the gods granted me power. But no god gave me any power.

I blamed them. The gods were unaware of my abilities, even though they were gods. It seemed as though all hope crumbled around me. I had given up. For some reason, I may never be able to grasp that power.

Meanwhile, the Dragon, whom I had met on the 56th floor, made a suggestion.

"If the gods don't care, why don't you work for the Tutorial?:

I readily accepted the authority that may be rewarded according to my performance.

According to the mission they gave me, I contacted a female challenger on the 57th floor and created a link with several challengers who were in a similar position. When I came in here, I was assigned to meet that wicked scammer on the duel stage and test his strength.

I was confident. Until I met that scammer, the duel opponents I encountered were all rubbish. Before entering the Tutorial, they had all been worse than the low-ranking mercenaries. It was disappointing.

When I faced the scammer, similar feelings of disappointment and disgust washed over me. He was the same as everyone else, no more disappointing than the rest of the population. The gods had granted him such enormous strength, but he didn't know how to deal with it. In all ways, he was useless. He didn't do anything.

I was furious that such tremendous power was gifted to such an incompetent b*stard. So when the message notified me that the duel was about to begin, I was delighted.

And then, darkness came.

The oblivion, which veiled my eyes, hid the scammer and gave off an ominous feeling. It reeked of danger. My self-confidence evaporated, and thoughts of survival were the only thing that filled my head.

But I couldn't. I couldn't escape or turn my eyes from it.

An outstretched hand, reached to me from inside the dark, made me tremble in horror. I became paralyzed in a moment of terror, unable to look away.

What I felt was beyond fear. It was despair clutching at every fibre of my being. What had I been thinking? From the beginning, I knew nothing.

The hands, wrapped in the dark currents, had several colourful bracelets, and as I watched, the bracelets vanished one by one. I was sure. This was my end.

“Die, wizard,” the oblivion spat.

* * *

[Lee Yeon-hee]

Blergh.

I grabbed the stand and bent down to hurl my stomach’s contents. Many people were throwing up like me or were utterly unconscious. Most of them were high-level challengers. The low-level challengers would not even be able to sense what had just happened.

It was only I in this arena who knew what was happening now. For most people, only two words that came out of the darkness would show that the other person’s body had disappeared. The problem was the way.

It was not that hard to kill a person with a word. You could chant a spell to burn them, freeze them to death, stab them to death, or push them to their end. But you couldn’t just kill them directly.

Converting death to life was not a surprising ability, albeit rare. The gods could heal, revive, and resuscitate.

However, the ability to convert life into death, and to force one to end, was an ability that one had never thought of or even imagined.

If the finger hadn’t been pointing directly at Isad after saying those two words, the power could have affected everyone. Could I have survived that power then? It was hard to tell.

“Are you still sure?”

Before I knew it, my hand holding the ring was full of sweat. It felt uncomfortable holding the ring.

No answer came from the ring.

“Answer me, are you still sure?”

I clenched the silent ring in frustration and slammed it on the floor. The despair that I had imagined in my head finally materialized before my eyes. It was horrifying to see Ho-jae’s ambiguous power surface, and I stepped out of the stage in a gloomy mood.

Chapter 261

Tournament Chapter (9)

[Park Jung-ah]

“Ah, I don’t know!”

I shouted as my eyes opened suddenly, fixing themselves on the ceiling. I had woken up with a start, sweat drenching my back. The members who were working beside me looked at me in surprise. I raised my hand, signalling that everything was fine, and laid back on my chair.

I had been suffering for days already. The Korean rankers to the district committee and foreign rankers were all asking what the hell had happened on the duel stage. But it wasn’t only them; I, too, couldn’t help but feel perplexed about how to explain the incident.

Some unheard-of alien broke into the Earth’s server and took part in the duel stage, advancing to the top round and putting all the challengers he met in trouble. His target was Hochi. When the foreigner met and confronted Hochi, the foreigner had been showing a confident attitude. That was until he disappeared.

That was the extent of the information we knew. Any more details were unknown, but people kept asking me for information. Every time I had to repeat the same thing like a parrot. “I don’t know.”

While wallowing in self-pity, I received several messages. Tired of answering back one by one, I decided to ignore it by pushing it roughly into the corner of my vision.

What should I do?

Figuring out the extent of Hochi’s powers was a more pressing issue than dealing with the dead. I hadn’t even thought of checking how

much power he had in the first place. But other people thought I was aware, which wasn't the case. Now, I had to bear the consequences of that incident.

In need of advice, I left the conference room and went into another room. I softly asked, fidgeting with the ring, "What should I do?"

[I don't know.] Ho-Jae answered in a clear voice.

I questioned again, feeling refreshed. "Will you die?"

[Oh, why would I die? Do you maybe want to kill me?]

Of course, I couldn't kill him, but I had grown used to having such tit-for-tat conversations. We were over thirty now, yet we still talked like children.

[You know what, don't answer that. I can't bear to hear. I don't even want to know.]

"Tch."

[Hey, that doesn't mean you can click your tongue.]

Ho-jae was of no help. As always, it was up to me to deal with the accident. He didn't get involved, nor did he want to.

"Hmm, I wasn't expecting much from you anyway."

I was asking just in case.

"Oppa, how strong are you now?"

[What did you say?]

"How strong are you? Of course, it's hard for me to comprehend, but explain it to me."

[No, the way you just addressed me.]

“What? Oppa?”

[Yes.]

What was the big deal? What else was I supposed to call him? When we fought, I called him a b*tch, but I couldn't call him that now.

[I think this is the first time you've called me that]

That could be possible. However, the last time we met was ten years ago. How many times had I changed what I called Ho-jae? I thought back for a moment.

“No, I've said it before.”

[When? Ah. Well. I remember. I'm sure that's...]

He must have recollected it too, but he trailed off. It was a bit embarrassing to say when that incident had happened.

[Whatever, say it again. Again.]

“What? Oppa?”

[Yes.]

I don't know what was wrong with Ho-jae, acting like a child even though he's already grown older.

I felt embarrassed. Slightly breathless, I said what Ho-jae wanted me to. “...Oppa.”

[Again.]

“Oppa.” Without realizing it, I had lowered my head and mumbled it again. I was the only one in this room anyway.

[Again.]

“Ah, really?! Do you want to hear me call you Oppa that much?”

[No, it's just fun when you get shy.]

(Note from Imagine: I love these bits of Ho-Jae and Jung-Ah's Chemistry)

At that moment, I had the impulse to take off the ring and hurl it as far away as I could.

I should calm down.

[Hoo. Haah. Hoo. Haah. Take a deep breath and calm down.]

My anger, which was about to die down, resurfaced, but somehow I managed to regain my composure. It was a bad habit to get this angry. *It would be a good idea to fix it.*

As calmly as possible, I asked again what I had asked earlier. Fortunately, Ho-jae also answered thoughtfully, not teasing anymore.

[About my power?]

“Yes.”

[Well- well, how should I explain it so that you understand?]

“How about your level?”

[Oh, yeah. There's that level measure. It's easy to understand using that, even though it can't be called a standard method of measuring.]

Ho-jae had always insisted that their level had nothing to do with strength. However, all the other challengers used the level as a criterion for strength.

“So what's your level?”

I wanted to speed up this conversation because I was worried that Ho-

jae's lengthy lecture on levels would start at any moment.

[500.]

"500?"

That was an unimaginably high number. Of course, it was a high value, but that was not the reason I was surprised.

"Not level 501?"

[Yes. 500.]

Back after I had heard about level from Ho-jae, I had noticed that his level always increased by 50 levels every time we met. He soon reached level 101, level 151, level 201, and so on. But 500?

[Max level.]

* * *

[Lee Hochi]

"Well, what am I supposed to say?"

"What?"

What should I say to Yong-yong, who was looking at me with sparkling eyes? I didn't know.

"Nothing. Well done."

Yong-yong said he would make his own money to buy what he wanted in the market. At that critical moment, I had to participate in the tournament and had gone away. I had been curious and anxious about how Yong-yong would make money, but he was doing better than I thought.

I thought Yong-yong would sell the things he made or make money

with his magic skills. I was worried it could be dangerous for him, but Yong-yong was making money in a healthier way than I thought. He was looking at people's fortune.

Their business was going very well. It was a shop inside a small, cosy tent with just a wooden desk, but there was a long line outside the tent.

<The fortune-telling shop of Benedictus Lericia Piacan Laucones Naupolion Niss Tiamart Carsearin Balakas Shanso Gardandes Necesario III>

The name made it seem like a pharaoh, who had laid inside a pyramid for millennia, had reincarnated, and was dabbling in fortune-telling. It was a surprise that Yong-yong could remember that name because I completely forgot it in a few seconds.

"By the way, when did you learn fortune-telling?" As far as I remembered, Ho-jae had never taught me anything like that.

Did he teach him when I wasn't there?

"There was a store that did fortune-telling. I think Yong-yong got the idea from that store," Baek Sung-woong said.

Baek Sung-woong said Yong-yong had been very interested in the shop and asked the fortune teller how to do this and that. It was a business secret, but the owner gave his secret away to our cute Yong-yong. Yong-yong was doing business based on what he had learned at that time.

"Thank you. Where is that store? I should go and say hello."

"Ah... that store is gone," Baek Sung-woong said.

"What? Why?"

"Their original location was next to this tent."

When I heard what Baek Sung-woong said, I came out of the tent, and

as he said, there was an empty shop next to the tent. I glanced at the people standing in a long line out of the tent again.

I see.

Yong-yong probably drew in all the customers from the neighbouring store.

Of course, Yong-yong must not have had any ill will; he was still too innocent after all. I felt sorry for the fortune-teller who had lost his business. Shop-owners at the tournament may not be very life-threatening, but the fortune-teller's feelings wouldn't be pleasant either. I should ask Park Jung-ah about his whereabouts later.

I went back into the tent. Inside the tent, Yong-yong sat on the floor with a small table in front of him. Behind Yong-yong was a thin sheet of cloth, and Baek Sung-woong's role was to make an adult figure behind the fabric.

Of course, there was a lot of stale air inside the tent, but this was also a part of Yong-yong's fortune-telling shop. No, this was also a part of Benedictus Lericia Piacan Laucones Naupolion Niss Tiamart Carsearin Balakas Shanso Gardandes Necesario III fortune-telling shop's charm.

There happened to be a couple who came to look at their fortunes. Yong-yong shook his arm in the air, looking at them, and threw the dice. The number that appeared on the dice was three.

"How's our compatibility?"

"It's the best," Yong-yong gave a thumbs up and said.

No, it was common sense that it was not the best result if you got a three instead of one or six. Also, shouldn't this couple at least look at the dice after Yong-tong threw it? And Yong-yong could have asked for their names or date of birth, but he just rolled the dice.

Questions arose in my head, but the couple liked it. Rather than rejoicing over the fact that their fortune was good, they looked at Yong-yong, who looked extra cute today.

Even if he stayed still, he was a cute dragon, but the way he seriously rolled the dice and stated the fortune doubled his cuteness. Also, people seemed to keep coming to see the cute hatchling, as he told good fortunes.

I was watching Yong-yong, who was always looking at people's fortunes when a message came from Park Jung-ah.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: I found your friend Lee Seok-hyeon. As expected, he couldn't get out of the stage. He's younger than I thought. Send him a message.]

I could finally get in touch with Seok-hyeon; one of the reasons why I had entered the tournament. I wondered what had happened that he couldn't reply. Happily, I sent him a message.

* * *

[Baek Sung-woong]

Much to my relief, the store was booming with business all day. I had been worried a lot.

Ever since I saw Yong-yong explode and kill a bear, I wondered if this cute kid might hurt people because he couldn't control his strength. I vowed to watch and take care of him more carefully, and fortunately, neither Yong-yong nor Lee Hochi hated me for interfering. Instead, I felt thankful to them, who had instead been grateful to me for taking good care of them.

It had only been a few days, but we went around together all day long, so we became very close. In the process, I learned more about them.

When Park Jung-ah told me I would be in charge of the two people, I felt annoyed, wondering why I had been forced to do this. But now I thought that I was lucky to have met them and get to know them.

I watched Yong-yong regularly presenting fortunes to the guests. In a way, he seemed to be role-playing as an adult and being cute at the same time, which reminded me of my child on Earth.

At that moment, a new guest came in. Unlike other guests, who came with their lovers or friends, he or she was alone. There were often such guests. Most of the customers wanted to see Yong-yong for fun, but some seriously asked about their fate. There were always groups who wanted to risk their lives on silly, hopeless whims and came to visit Yong-yong.

“Can I achieve my goal? Can I do well?” the guest asked.

It was a vague question, but the guest seemed to want to know the answer.

Yong-yong was still very young, but not a fool. He noticed that the guest didn't just want words of comfort and thought for a moment before answering. Yong-Yong asked the questioner what he was curious about first, rather than telling their fortune.

“Who do you want to kill?”

Chapter 262

Tournament Chapter (9)

[Baek Sung-woong]

“Who do you want to kill?” asked Yong-yong. It was as if he were asking what her name was before he read the fortune. The problem was the question’s content.

Who do you want to kill?

This was what Yong-yong had uttered. These words made me shudder. Yong-yong saying words like ‘kill’ felt unnatural.

The woman’s body reflexively stiffened up. She, who had asked if she could achieve her goal, stared hostilely at Yong-yong as soon as she heard Yong-yong’s question

I knew Yong-yong’s power and ability. Of course, I didn’t know everything, but I knew quite a lot compared to other challengers. I was confident. That’s why I knew I would be of little help to Yong-yong if anything happened. However, I couldn’t just watch them, doing nothing.

I had to do something. I tried to pull off the cloth that was blocking my way to stand in between Yong-yong and the woman.

My heart wanted to protect him. Shortly after the cloth was removed, I noticed that my body could not move. It was as if invisible shackles had latched me into place. Flinching was not even an option. My arm ached when I tried to shift it, and my lips throbbed when I forced them apart. It was as if my skin and muscles were tightly bound by an invisible force that pierced my body whenever I attempted to budge.

“No one,” the woman replied. She was staring intensely at Yong-yong, but from her attitude, it seemed likely that she would continue the

conversation, rather than attack him.

Did she want me to stay out of their conversation? But that didn't mean I'd comply with her wishes. There was always something I could do, no matter how immobile my body was.

[Baek Sung-woong, 89th floor: Sir, this is an emergency.]

I requested rescue teams and combat teams of the Order of Vigilance to be dispatched.

It would be a weaker dispatch compared to last year, but it would be better than nothing. There was also a 90th-floor Hard Difficulty challenger, in the militant group, so I was sure it would be of some help.

First, after I did what I could, I focused again on the conversation between Yong-yong and the woman. I was the only witness to this conversation, and I needed to remember this.

"Then what do you want to kill?" Yong-yong asked again.

Is it possible that what she wants to kill is not a person?

"I don't want to kill anything. Why do you think I want to kill something?" asked the woman.

"Because Auntie wants to."

"I'm not your Auntie, you little brat."

Yong-yong didn't answer the woman's words, making her frown like she was offended by his silence. She continued, very firmly expressing her displeasure.

"Yes, I do want to kill something. I wish to kill this world."

Are you a crazy bitch?

In the past, there used to be a lot of psychopaths in the Tutorial. When people thought they didn't have a future, they went insane, swinging their weapons madly. I heard that the Order of Vigilance was troubled by daily accidents back then and that some of those psychopaths were punished.

I thought that this woman fell into that category of psychopaths. Although the fact that one could go out soon had significantly reduced mental illness in the Tutorial, there were still some actual psychopaths. There was nothing strange about anyone who had a mental illness here.

"I want to cut off the restraints that bind me to this world," said the woman. I could relate to that. It had been less than 30 seconds, but being tied up was a real pain.

"Sometimes, I feel like untying these restraints by just cutting off my wrists and ankles."

That's a little...

As expected, she was a madwoman.

"But that won't untie all the restraints. Yeah, I want to kill as you said. If I kill everyone who's tied me up, won't I be free even if I can't break the restraints? That's what I think."

The woman carried on with her stupid remarks. Yong-yong answered her question with no sign of disgust.

"Understood."

"You understand?" The woman's lips arched up in a smirk.

"How can a pretty little boy understand me?" she asked, mockery evident in her tone. She looked terrifying.

"That's what everybody says," she accused.

"Everyone says this?"

Unlike the woman, who seemed to be upset by something, Yong-yong remained calm.

“Because they’re all the same.” Rather than get enraged at Yong-yong’s words, the woman accepted it.

“They’re all the same. Yeah, you’re right. After all, I’m only thinking about myself and forcing others to accept. They’re all the same, indeed.”

The woman’s hands slammed the tabletop suddenly, creating a loud boom that reverberated in the tent. Her force would have made a hole in an iron plate, but much to my surprise, the table stayed intact. Neither Yong-yong nor the woman seemed interested in this fact.

“I was forced by a man into this sh*t. He urged me to move on. If he hadn’t, I would have become suicidal instead of forcing myself to survive on plain water and jerky. What else could I do? I had to move forward to survive. But since then, I haven’t been holding out well. I was forced to cheat, hurt, and kill. I couldn’t have survived if I didn’t do so. And now, here I am,” the woman spoke solemnly.

Each word of hers carried in a different tone.

“I’m grateful to Mister. He gave me the will to live and never forced me to do anything.”

Mister? Who was she talking about?

“But in the end, there was something he wanted from me. He didn’t care about me. After all, they’re all the same. I’m tired of everything now. I want to throw it all away,” the woman murmured. “The problem is, I can’t get over it. I can’t break these restraints with my strength.”

“So?” Yong-yong questioned.

“I need more trump cards.”

Yong-yong raised his hand and said, pointing to himself, “And that’s

me.”

“Yes.”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t want to be one,” Yong-yong replied, as if he were in a restaurant, commenting that he didn’t want to eat some side dishes.

The woman smiled at the remark, making me feel a sudden urge of déjà vu. Her gruesome smile was eerily familiar, reminding me of when I interviewed new employees in the district. Yeah, that was the smile I saw there then. Of course, the smiles of the people left in my memory didn’t seem so eerie, but they had a similar expression.

“You don’t have to be sorry. I’ll take you even if you don’t want to.”

As the woman expressed her intention to kidnap, I shouted inwardly.

When’s the goddamn team coming?

This place was less than three minutes away from what the Order of Vigilance was using as headquarters.

The woman raised her hand, and a red dot appeared on it as if someone were pointing at it with a laser pointer. The space between her and Yong-yong fluctuated before anyone could identify the power. Someone had shown up, dividing the space between them.

* * *

[Lee Hochi]

The place Park Jung-ah told me to go was a lounge next to the Order of Vigilance’s conference room. I assumed that Park Jung-ah was talking to Seo-hyeon. I was relieved that he was safe.

When I asked Ho-jae why I couldn’t reach Seok-hyeon, Ho-jae said Seok-hyeon must have died in an accident. And that it was normal. It was a cold-hearted response.

But apparently, his response was valid, and when I asked Park Jung-ah to find out where Seok-hyeon was, somehow, her attitude seemed no different from Ho-jae's, which made me more anxious.

“Oh. You're here?” asked Park Jung-ah.

It was as if a man lying inside a bathhouse was asking a friend who came late. Oh, of course, I had never been to a bathhouse, but that's what it felt like. Park Jung-ah was getting more comfortable with me. I didn't think we were that close yet, so I was still a bit awkward. Was it because of the difference in our age? Beside Park Jung-ah sat Seok-hyeon.

“Hi,” a boy awkwardly greeted me.

I had heard it many times, but this was my first time seeing it. He was very young. Seok-hyeon's appearance was slightly unusual as the Tutorial did not summon young people under a certain age.

“Yes. Hi.”

I also said hello to Seok-hyeon. I was acting weird, too. We had talked a lot through messages, but seeing his face in person like this made me feel embarrassed.

Park Jung-ah left the room with a smile on her face. It only occurred to me later that her mischievous smile seemed to make fun of me.

* * *

Fortunately, I was able to get close to Seok-hyeon quickly. No, it was safe to say that we were close, so we got into sync.

Seok-hyeon was stuck on a stage as expected. Among the stages of Easy difficulty, there was said to be a stage that was quite unusual.

“So the stage goal was to escort the prince and the princess till they get married, and remove all sources of danger. The danger is spread all over, and it's a bit risky.”

That sounded easy. You had to wait for the danger to come, and if you solved it, it would be fine, right?

“I’ve challenged the stage many times.”

“You’ve tried it many times?”

“Yes.”

Seok-hyeon said he had already challenged the 72nd floor more than ten times. I couldn’t help but ask why.

“Why?”

“Because it’s fun.”

Unlike other stages, the 72nd floor of Easy Difficulty had a luxurious lifestyle. Of course, there was a mission, but it was easy to clear. So Seok-hyeon explained that he was challenging it several times to recreate the feelings he had experienced there, almost like role-play.

“It’s fun. No matter what I do, the people don’t remember it the next time. Once I had a big fight with a man, but next time, he was friendly. Oh, there, I’m a wanderer who has gone into hiding. Also, everyone wants to be close to me because I’m so strong.”

The stage’s characteristics that no one knew anything about was enough to awaken a child’s curiosity. Seok-hyeon had tested everything he could do there.

The princess and prince’s marriage came to an end due to Seok-hyeon’s mischief, and he was unable to get out of the stage because of this complicated situation. Fortunately, with the help of the Order of Vigilance, he was able to return to the waiting room after failing.

Seok-hyeon, who had explained this to me, looked happy. I had seen something similar in the community before. Stages with pretty characters couldn’t be challenged repeatedly, so challengers memorized lines or the mission’s sequence. They also shared the location, the way to visit, how they spoke, the way they liked each

other, and gifts. They spoke as if they were really enjoying the game, failing, and then meeting up the floor's characters again while retrying the stage.

It was a disgusting thought. Ho-jae once thought the same. But then he looked at people on the floor who were repeating these incidents forever when the challengers met them again after failing to clear the stage. That was when Ho-jae could only feel sorry for them. Ho-jae had admitted that their deaths and lives were worthless and had no qualms about cutting them down, but they were not toys.

I saw that Seok-hyeon was still excited. This child was not particularly evil. But the attitude of others towards him was strange. Was that how people normally behaved? Or was I just different?

Chapter 263

Tournament Chapter (10)

[Lee Hochi]

When something big suddenly occurs, you may not be able to deal with it because you're in a hurry. However, it can be dealt with immediately if you had somehow foreseen that it would take place.

This time, the latter happened. I didn't know if it was because I always had Yong-yong's safety in mind, or because of Ho-jae's essence left behind in me, but I immediately opened a portal as soon as I felt a powerful force near Yong-yong. Seok-hyeon, who had been talking for a long time, gave me a surprised look, but now was not the time to explain the situation to him.

The power that appeared out of nowhere seemed extremely dangerous, but on the other hand, it felt familiar. It was the same as the power released by a technique Ho-jae had often used. I knew that Ho-jae wasn't here, and even if he did use it here, his attack wouldn't stop on this scale. And if it wasn't Ho-jae, there was only one person who could use that technique in this tournament.

As a result, I was able to see who was pulling Yong Yong-yong even before I crossed the portal. Upon teleporting into Yong-yong's fortune-telling tent, I called out her name, "Lee Yeon-hee."

"Mister?"

* * *

"Put it down."

"No."

Lee Yeon-hee's short answer made my heartbeat erratic. In terms of conversation, this was no different than reprimanding a child who was playing with a knife, but if anyone knew what was on Lee Yeon-hee's hand, they would have no choice but to be nervous.

"You know, it'll explode if I die. It will explode if I lose control, get offended, lose focus, or if my mana cycle gets disrupted."

Damn it. Why did you have to teach her that technique?

I had no choice but to blame Ho-jae. No matter what, he shouldn't have taught such dangerous techniques.

That technique, which had a funny name, Zit Pop, was a technique that Ho-jae had often used when he was clearing Hell difficulty floors. On a stage of Hell's Difficulty, the power had once exploded, and it was clear that if it blew up here, the Korean challengers would be eradicated.

There may be many features of Zit Pop, but the most terrible fact about it was that once it took the form of a sphere, the user couldn't make any changes. It was all about controlling the sphere so that it wouldn't burst and explode when they wanted it to. In other words, as long as that small sphere existed on Lee Yeon-hee's hand, regardless of whether she fainted or got killed, that sphere would explode.

To the naked eye, it appeared to be only a tiny red light, with a bit of heat emitted. In my judgement, the sphere was similar in level to the ones Ho-jae used in the past.

"I added some effects to my taste. It'll be great if it explodes."

*You crazy b*tch.*

Why are all the Hell's Difficulty challengers half-insane?

"If it explodes, you won't be safe either!"

"Well, I'm confident that I'll survive." Lee Yeon-hee commented slyly, lips spreading to form a smile.

*What kind of sh*is this?*

“Hey, is she telling the truth?” I asked Ho-jae.

[I think so.]

Ho-jae seemed to think that she could survive. Somehow, his voice sounded strange, as if he were talking with something in his mouth.

“Hey, what are you eating right now?”

[Popcorn.]

*You crazy b*stard.*

I couldn't help but curse.

I was going to ask for help, but I didn't think that a person leisurely eating popcorn would be willing to offer any.

Yong-yong stared at Lee Yeon-hee sullenly, while Baek Sung-woong hung in the air, his body convulsing once in a while, magical restraints restricting his movement. The funny thing was that both Lee Yeon-hee's restraints and Yong-yong's restraints encircled him. Yong-yong's magic seemed to be a means to protect Baek Sung-woong. My level of magic was lower than that of Yong-yong, so it was hard to tell.

“This is amazing. You look different,” Lee Yeon-hee muttered, eyes scanning my body.

“When I saw you on TV, you looked like a thin man. On the 17th floor, you looked like a crazy dog. Right now, you look very gentle.”

“I'm different from Ho-jae.”

Lee Yeon-hee had a look on her face as if she couldn't quite understand, but soon she had a knowing look on her face. She questioned, “Are you his clone?”

That's right. Damn it.

I was upset by her comment. If I wanted to attack Lee Yeon-hee, now would be a good time, since she would have lost concentration due to our conversation.

“Man, can I stop her?” I asked Ho-jae for insurance before I acted.

[Of course.]

Alright, let's do it.

Now that the situation had come to this, I regretted having to use my power on a person I met recently. This meeting was my first real fight, but what could I do?

I made a firm commitment in my mind and used my power.

[Time lapse]

[Indomitable force]

[Mana suppression]

[Sensitive Seal]

[External Power Block]

With more than a thousand powers, I had a hard time handling them all. In addition, there were so many techniques that I didn't even know the effects of, so I used the ones I was most familiar with.

[Battleground]

It was a technique I had learned from Ho-jae, and not from the gods of the temple. It was more like I was taught, rather than him teaching me. This technology, which was ambiguous enough to be called Ho-jae's original technique as well as a copy of other methods, directly involved the principle of space. Usually, Ho-jae folded up space and used it as a way to cross over at once.

But if I applied this to the space I was currently standing on, I would increase the distance between this tent and outside.

After confirming that the space was strangely distorted, I came up with some techniques in my head. Then, Lee Yeon-hee's voice rang in my head.

[You're wasting too much time. I guess it's not a bad idea to kill them all halfway.]

Lee Yeon-hee's body began to warm all of a sudden. When the hidden energy was revealed, we could all see what she meant. Lee Yeon-hee didn't just create one Zit Pop. There were at least dozens of Zit Pop inside her body. No, you could even say it was her body.

Rather than the fact that she had been completely hiding her power, I was astonished at her idea of making the Zit Pop as her own body.

Even in the time-lapse, where the time had almost stopped, the Zit Pop's explosion did not seem to slow down at all. In an instant, Lee Yeon-hee's body disappeared without any trace, and only a blazing, intense light, along with scorching heat, was left on the spot. It was as if a star had exploded.

I hurriedly used my power to protect Yong-yong from it. The shield made by all kinds of gods and the massive ball of energy created by Lee Yeon-hee collided.

At that moment, Yong-yong knocked sharply on the wooden table.

Knock, knock.

A clear tap sounded in the tent.

In the blink of an eye, I stepped out from a portal again. Lee Yeon-hee turned back, my unexpected entry startling her.

I opened my mouth with a hard look on my face. "Lee Yeon-hee."

"Mister?" Lee Yeon-hee looked at me with a slightly surprised look and called out.

Baek Sung-woong was still confined in the air, while Yong-yong sat at the table with a sullen look on his face. There was silence in the tent. There was no deafening explosion, light, or immense heat that should have shaken the world.

Before even questioning the strange phenomenon, Lee Yeon-hee lost consciousness and collapsed like a puppet with broken strings.

* * *

I took Baek Sung-woong back to his quarters. I could have stayed in the tent, but when I thought of the guests coming in after seeing the sign of a fortune-telling shop, I thought it was better to move to a quiet place. I laid Baek Sung-woong, who had fainted, on his bed, and pulled up a pink blanket to cover him well. He had not gotten knocked out by the shock but was put to sleep by Yong-yong's magic.

Lee Yeon-hee, on the other hand, did not seem to be asleep. No one would sleep with their eyes wide open, and both arms and legs bent. I had been trying to move her body roughly with my powers. In the process, Lee Yeon-hee did not wake up and try to rebel. With a few bans in place, her body would never move again.

"She was a clone." Yong-yong murmured.

"Yes."

Had she been trying to blow herself up? It seemed like she had tried to

make another attempt to kidnap Yong-yong, even after she looked half-dead. She shouldn't have intended to take non-challengers as hostages in the first place.

Next to Baek Sung-woong's bed, I sat on the floor. Yong-yong sat on my lap and buried his face in my shoulder. I held Yong-yong tightly and patted him on the back. Yong-yong had no experience of being exposed to other people's malice.

And in the meantime, I cursed Ho-jae, who was just watching from the sidelines. Despite what had happened, he just remained silent and watched us.

What a rotten fellow.

As I held Yong-yong tightly, his heartbeat gradually stabilized. I didn't know who was comforting who. After calming down to some extent, I asked, "Yong-yong, did you turn back time?"

As far as I knew, it was not easy to turn back time. I was sure it's obvious, but even the gods, who were considered almighty, were in a realm where time could not be touched. The gods associated with time, such as the gods of slowness and repentance, were not considered unique for no reason.

Sometimes, Lee Ho-jae would say that time was a law of the universe that proved existence just by its flow, and that the reversal of time was a grandiose trick that was bound to be meaningless. Even Ho-jae, who said so, could not reverse the time. If he could, he wouldn't have been locked up on the 60th floor.

Unfortunately, I couldn't find out what Yong-yong had done. There was a level difference between Yong-yong and me. It was a difference that could not even be measured, so I asked honestly.

"No, I did nothing."

"You did nothing?"

"Yes, nothing ever happened."

What do you mean? I don't understand.

"If you ask the bald man, he'll tell you that he doesn't remember as soon as he wakes up."

As far as I knew, Baek Sung-woong was conscious until just before Lee Yeon-hee blew himself up. I didn't care about it after that.

"Didn't he lose consciousness after the explosion?"

"Yes. But for him, the explosion didn't happen."

"...But I still remember it."

"She fell because she saw something. The only thing that unfolded before her was the possibility of a future that didn't exist. The auntie of the past had to face a memory from a future that didn't exist, and she couldn't bear seeing such a future."

Yong-yong, I still don't understand.

I had no idea what he was saying.

"Yong-yong, but I remember it, and I didn't even faint?"

"Uncle is fine. Uncle hasn't faced such a problem, and you won't remember in the future."

"...Why?"

I didn't even understand what I had heard so far, but I still asked. When Yong-yong heard me, he said in a quiet voice, as always. "Because Uncle is not bound by Cause."

Chapter 264

Tournament Chapter (11)

[Lee Hochi]

Although something terrible had happened in the evening, Yong-yong fell asleep peacefully at bedtime, although I forgot to sing a lullaby to him. As I stared at Yong-yong, his sleeping figure began to remind me of an angel.

[Our Yong-yong is far better than an angel. Have you ever seen an angel?] Ho-jae commented.

No, it's just a feeling, and I was using that feeling as a reference. What are you talking about?

I got up from the bed and walked to the window. Sitting in a small chair in front of the window, I could see people on the street. Even though it was late at night, people still roamed around, and the city was bustling with life. The number of people remaining in the Tutorial had reduced. I thought that this tournament was a massive comfort festival for people.

Attacking a stage with a small number of people made you feel like you were getting closer to the outside world. I could sense the feeling of leaving home for the first time and facing the world. There were many good things, but there were also bad ones. In that sense, today had been a very mentally exhausting day.

“So, what the hell is Cause?”

[Yong-yong explained it to you earlier.]

But I hadn't understood Yong-yong had gently explained Cause and Effect. Even though I couldn't understand the concept at all, I didn't mention it to Yong-yong, who had taught it for a long time. I just

pretended I understood everything and moved on.

[That's what I keep telling you to study.] Ho-jae had been nagging me for the whole day. [My explanation is not that different anyway. Who did Yong-yong learn from in the first place?]

"Sure... but explain it to me in an easier way. Does it make sense that I don't know much about myself? I should know better."

Ho-jae laughed at my words and said, [What do you know? How many people in the world know about themselves? You don't need to think much. I know you don't care much about Cause and Effect. If you did, you would have studied that earlier. You care because everyone has it, but in reality, you're not the only one who isn't bound by Cause and Effect.]

What a rotten fellow. He just spat out whatever he wanted in a roundabout manner.

"Yes, but why am I the only one who isn't affected by Cause and Effect? I asked because I was curious about that!"

I was angry. Yong-yong might hear it and wake up, so I quieted my voice. The understanding of Cause and Effect was an essential problem to me, so Ho-jae's nonchalant attitude infuriated me.

[Hold on, it's not great that everyone else has it. It's great that you aren't bound by it. And to be exact, it's not that you're completely excluded.]

"Is that a good thing, then?"

[Of course, some gods would go crazy if they knew. Do you think that the gods invested their power into you for nothing?]

I was glad that it wasn't bad. However, the desire to know more about Cause and Effect remained unchanged.

"Please explain it in detail."

[Easy enough for you to understand?]

“Yes.”

[If you need to solve a problem, it's necessary to look at its Cause and Effect. It would be easier to look at the result of the Cause. Let me elaborate; for example,] Ho-jae began to explain. [Your friend Seok-hyeon. The result, which was you meeting him today, required you both to have a conversation and get closer, which in other words could be considered a cause.]

That's right.

[Of course, this fundamental Cause applies to you. If it didn't apply, you wouldn't be able to be on the same level as the others in the first place. The important thing is that Cause exists as a law.]

“A law?”

[Yes. The Cause is one of the laws of the universe, like time. Time cannot be rewound in 100 seconds or 100 million seconds. In the same way, the Cause and Effect applied in that way to Yong-yong's magic...]

“I don't understand.”

Ho-jae told me to shut up. After a while, he growled out, [You'll be forced to study when you return. Anyway, I'll give you another example of this. People usually don't exist in two spaces at the same time. Likewise, a person cannot walk outside the house while washing dishes inside the house at the same time. Because they only have one body.]

No, it was possible to do that like Lee Yeon-hee, who had come to the tent this evening. It was possible if she had divided herself and made a clone, and rumour had it that Lee Yeon-hee's body had already gone beyond the Earth's zone to an alien server. Earlier, Park Jung-ah that Lee Yeon-hee left her clone here before moving on.

[I'm explaining it with a simple example that makes it easier for you to understand. Don't think any further. And Lee Yeon-hee's clone is no

different than her taking a clump of her hair and sending it elsewhere. Ultimately, there's only one existence.]

As Ho-jae spoke, I decided to keep my mouth shut.

[A man's consciousness cannot exist in both the future and the past. Consciousness can't exist at two different times at the same time. The basic premise of this problem is Cause. It tells why the awareness of one from the future and the past must be different.]

Hearing what Ho-jae said, I was silent for a moment. I needed time to check if what I understood was right.

When the number of people on the street decreased one by one, and the bustling street became quiet, I finally concluded: if ten years ago, when Seok-hyeon had not yet entered the Tutorial, and he had been a little baby, could he and I meet? That was impossible. Not only was I not born then, but I also had no connection with Seok-hyun.

If I went back in time now, it was possible to find Seok-hyeon and get to know his past version. That would create a Cause.

But I could not meet Seok-hyeon from 10 years ago when I had never met him, gotten close to him, or even been born yet. It was just, of course, impossible. But was I not saying the same? I asked Ho-jae.

[You can't make the impossible possible by creating a Cause and Effect when you were not even born. Well, maybe you could if you were above my level, but I doubt it. It's just that when Cause and Effect are tampered with, you are unaffected.]

Now I thought about space, not time. Earlier, Ho-jae said that people could not exist in two places at the same time.

Lee Yeon-hee broke this law by cloning herself. Ho-jae had said it was no different from pulling out a lock of her hair and sending it elsewhere. If you added flesh, and ability to a lock of hair, you could make a clone. As a result, Lee Yeon-hee did not exist in two places as two beings. Instead, she had divided herself and occupied two areas at the same time.

That didn't seem to break the law. It was challenging to organize my thoughts because of the variable magic. It was rather a hindrance to grasp the concept at my level because it was a type of magic meant to defy the law in the first place.

Let's think of space differently.

If there were Heaven and Hell, man would not exist in two places at the same time. Whether divided by magic or not, his existence would be only one, and it would be sent to only one place.

There was one more place besides Heaven and Hell. When Ho-jae was on the 61st floor, Ho-jae had to exist at the same time in two places. His consciousness in one place would not be the same as the other.

"You're there, but you are also here."

[Huh?]

"If your body is my body, and you and I are the same, then this shouldn't be possible."

It might have sounded somewhat out of the blue, but instead of asking what it meant, Ho-jae remained silent. The silence made me feel worse.

"In the end, the Cause needed to meet Seok-hyeon was something added on its own when I was made."

I lowered the curtain on the window, which only reflected the empty streets, and went to bed.

[Uh- well. That-]

"Too noisy, I'm going to bed."

Ho-jae apologized profusely, but I covered myself in a blanket and pretended to be asleep, but sleep didn't come to me. I resented the fact that Ho-jae knew I was not sleeping and was listening to his apology. It was the worst day ever.

Today, I decided not to go out and instead, rested at the dorm. Yong-yong went out a few times. After lunch, when I was eating the apple Baek Sung-woong had peeled for me, Park Jung-ah came to the room.

“A face-to-face talk?” Park Jung-ah nodded.

Everyone had been busy and distracted for the past few days. If I remembered right, Park Jung-ah had been hiding somewhere in the corner and spending time alone, but others must have been busy.

“I’ve been playing around in the market. I had been blocking the requests for a long time, but now I’ve got so many requests, I’m a little burdened.”

It seemed that she hadn’t gone to the market today. Who wanted to meet me? I asked Park Jung-ah about that.

“There’s a lot of people. The national government, a corporation, a guild, a mercenary group, religious people, and more. Not only from Korea but from all over the world. Funnily enough, Korea has the least number of requests.”

Perhaps the reason why Koreans had the least requests was because of Ho-jae. Koreans would have heard more stories about Ho-jae than people from other countries.

“Well, what should I do?” I asked.

“Do as you please. I don’t care.”

“I’ll come with you then.”

I wondered what kind of story the Order of Vigilance would tell and what kind of proposal they would come up with. Of course, Ho-jae wouldn’t mind what they suggested, but I was different. It was like a chance to get a glimpse of Earth’s situation, so I was interested.

“Uh... will you?”

“Yes. Yong-yong, will you play with Baek Sung-woong?”

“No, I want to go too!”

I didn’t think it was something to be so happy about. Somehow I felt like only middle-aged office workers would come to meet me there—no offence to Baek Sung-woong.

“Then we’ll help you with the interview or something. There are quite a few things to help out with,” Park Jung-ah said.

“Yes, please.”

Park Jeong-ah briefly asked for understanding and sent a message to the Order of Vigilance. I kind of felt that she was excited.

“So you’re not thinking of going over to another server?” Park Jung-ah asked with sparkling eyes.

I think she liked the fact that she had work to do. Somehow, I couldn’t match the memory of her complaining to Ho-jae about not helping her with work every time.

“Other zones?”

“Yes. We are in the Earth zone. There are conferences on a global scale, and people come from alien servers.”

“I want to go!” Before I could answer, Yong-yong raised his hand and shouted.

Chapter 265

Tournament Chapter (12)

[Park Jung-ah]

“I want to go!” Yong-yong raised his hand and shouted.

As soon as I explained about the Earth zone, Yong-yong showed a keen interest.

There wouldn't be any problem for Yong-yong to go to the Earth zone. After all, large-scale conferences took place there, and people from different planets would wander, but in the end, they were a minority. The Earth zone's public area was half-empty, and the number of participants attending the conference or otherworldly visitors did not amount to many.

Instead, the Earth zone was probably safer than the Korean. There were only a few groups of people in the Earth zone, so in case of an accident, the damage would be minimal.

Hochi tried to control an excited Yong-yong, who was bouncing with his hands up.

“Yong-yong, there'll be people from different places there, it may be dangerous,” Hochi persuaded.

“I'm gonna catch Auntie!”

I couldn't help but flinch. While looking around as if nothing was wrong, I met Baek Sung-woong's eyes, who avoided my gaze.

I tried to mask my embarrassment and asked Yong-yong what he meant. Fortunately, the 'Auntie' Yong-yong mentioned was Lee Yeon-hee, who came to the tent yesterday, and not me. I didn't know if that

was a good thing or a bad thing.

The age gap between Lee Yeon-hee and me is... Let's not think about it.

I was a little sad because I thought I might look like an old lady to Yong-yong.

“What do you mean, Yong-yong? I can’t believe you’re going to catch Lee Yeon-hee!” Hochi asked Yong-yong in awe.

Yong-yong explained his thoughts to me, saying he would catch Lee Yeon-hee himself since she would not have recovered from the blow she had suffered yesterday. Yong-yong somehow looked proud. Maybe he thought it was a good plan.

Hochi was, of course, astonished, and so was I.

Yong-yong’s decision was grounded on two reasons. The first was the speculation that Lee Yeon-hee may not have recovered yet. The second was that it would be done on the way to other servers.

Of course, his points made sense, but I was surprised that such a young child had decided to catch his opponent as soon as the conditions were established.

Is there a problem with that child’s emotional capacity? I knew it was none of my business, but I was still worried.

Hochi struggled to withhold Yong-yong, who was eager to catch Lee Yeon-hee. I was bringing out snacks, toys, surprise gifts, and all sorts of conciliatory items from the market, but they didn’t seem to subdue Yong-yong.

“Dad will hate it. He might scold you,” Hochi said.

“Huh? No. Dad’s going to like it.”

“Oh- Will he?”

It was self-evident who the two of them were talking about. If Yong-yong had problems with education, it was clear who the culprit was.

“Then, Uncle hates it! I refuse to let you go!”

Seeing Hochi’s desperate efforts, I thought I should help him.

“Yong-yong, even if you go to the Earth Zone, you won’t find Lee Yeon-hee. You don’t know what server Lee Yeon-hee went to.”

We didn’t even know precisely how many other planets participated in the Tournament. It was questionable how Lee Yeon-hee entered the different server’s zone without permission. The inter-dimensional portal was closed, and without the consent from both sides, the portal was not operational. Lee Yeon-hee may not have known people from other servers, but we couldn’t figure out where she went since the portal closed shortly after her departure.

“I can figure that out,” Yong-yong pointed at himself and said. He had a proud look on his face again.

Before I questioned Yong-yong about his ability, I glanced at Hochi, who nodded quietly.

It’s true?

“But, you wouldn’t be able to go if you can’t open a portal on that planet?”

“I can open that too,” Yong-yong announced again with a smug look.

I looked at Hochi, and he nodded this time as well.

“Then shall we go catch her together?”

* * *

[Lee Hochi]

I didn't know Park Jung-ah would betray me here.

When Park Jung-ah found out that Yong-yong could visit Lee Yeon-hee, she immediately changed her stance. It was decided that some Order of Vigilance members would follow Yong-yong and clean up any mess he made. That option was comparatively better than Yong-yong falling into another planet and causing an accident by himself, but it still was not the right decision. The right choice was not to send Yong-yong at all.

Fortunately, just as I thought it would be hard to stop Yong-yong from being stubborn, Ho-jae intervened, making it clear to Yong-yong not to visit Lee Yeon-hee. Yong-yong was confused by Ho-jae's words. Yong-yong had been taught that if he had an enemy, he should end them neatly, and if the enemy did not recover from his first attack, he should not miss the opportunity to strike again.

Ho-jae explained that Lee Yeon-hee was the enemy who would revisit him. I couldn't understand Ho-jae's logic, but Yong-yong accepted it.

I decided to put off going to the Earth Zone for next time, and first meet people who wanted to meet me. The first person I met was probably a government official in the South Korean government.

"Hello?"

The official who came to the room was quite different than I expected. First of all, he was much younger than I thought he would be. I had imagined a bald man with a small potbelly and thin hair would arrive. Why aren't there people like that from the National Assembly on TV? Of course, I had never seen a TV or National Assembly, but I was expecting someone like that to come.

However, the man who came was youthful and handsome and seemed to be a little picky at a relatively young age. It brought me back to real life with a sharp kick.

"The Korean government will use every possible means to sign a contract that will benefit you. Of course, on the premise that you clear the Tutorial."

“Oh, yes...”

Despite his fresh appearance, the government official drawled on and on about dull topics. I didn't expect the interview to be spectacular, but this guy's words were horrendously slow.

He first spoke of the contract and laid out a roundabout critique of the Awakened fighting with the Korean Government. Next, he bragged about himself.

Really. I was not kidding, the man bragged about himself in front of me.

He talked about how successful he was, his job in the civil service community, and the treatment he had outside of the Tutorial. When he explained the contract, I was annoyed by his blatant way of showing off, but I didn't know it would end up like this.

Listening to constant boasts that I didn't care about was more annoying than I thought it'd be. I was glad that I left Yong-yong with Baek Sung-woong. We had to send him back on the pretext of tiredness, with a promise to continue our conversation by drinking together next time. I was mentally tired.

“He was a strange man.”

Park Jung-ah nodded at my words.

“I don't think he's capable enough to be there.”

Park Jung-ah nodded again. “He's not capable. Rather, he is incompetent and bothers the people around him. But.”

“But?”

“This is how it has been in the Tutorial. He's a civil servant, and he delivered the right message to the Order of Vigilance. He's the bridge between the Tutorial and the outside government, that's how much weight he's got.”

Park Jung-ah added, “There has always been a person like that before.” She also said, “Maybe a separate line of government officials came into the tutorial from outside.”

It was a surprise to me, but at the same time, I was wholeheartedly disinterested in the topic.

Park Jung-ah, who seemed to sense my boredom, asked if she should continue the conference tomorrow. I thought for a moment and replied that I would like to go on. Of course, it wasn’t a pleasant interview, but I tried to delude myself into thinking that this was also a person-to-person experience.

Park Jung-ah decided to head back. Afterward, I decided to talk to Ho-jae.

[What?]

“What do you think of him?”

[Why are you picking at people? Huh?]

What do you mean picking at people?

However, it was also not right to actively refute his question.

The government official, who deluded himself into thinking he was superior, evoked a sense of discomfort within me. On top of his unpleasant attitude, his own ability achieved none of what he boasted about. I didn’t think it was right to brag about himself.

It may not be something I cared about because it was his opinion, but I felt it’s not a good idea to reveal it openly. It was not that it was wrong, it was just a little unpleasant even to the eyes of a total stranger.

[Yes, it is.]

“Is that so?”

[He does it because it's easier than winning everything with his own ability. He'll do whatever it takes to increase his status and honor. Even good luck could become his ability.]

Was that so? I didn't really feel it. Of course, the memories I had may be biased.

Ho-jae used to be a professional gamer who lived on his own. After entering the Tutorial, he got what he wanted through sheer effort and by taking advantage of any opportunity he got. The memories I had conditioned me to think that things could only be achieved through effort.

[The more effortless and meaningless the victory is, the more ruthless society tends to be towards the victor. That's the difference between inside and outside the Tutorial. If it's a society where it's hard to reverse their status with ability, it's better if one starts with a rank set from the beginning.]

"Isn't Korea a capitalist country?"

[Yeah, because there's a hierarchy. When the hierarchy crumbles and the cycle disappears, there'll be nothing different. Oh, it might already have changed a bit these days. There will be the Awakened too. It'll become more of a mess.]

I thought for a moment. I organized my thoughts several times, but it was a fact that neither touched nor interested me. It sounded irrelevant to me.

I could see that I was living in a different world from people that was not just separated by spacial difference. We were different, socially and emotionally. So I questioned, "What do you want to do when you go outside?"

I wondered how Ho-jae looked at others and their society. I had a mountain load of things I wanted to do when I go outside. I wanted to see exciting books, movies, and dramas in real life, visit a theater or an amusement park. Whether it be a pleasant or unpleasant experience, I still wanted to meet many people.

But did Ho-jae think the same?

[Well...]

“What do you mean by ‘well’? Don’t you have something you want to do, something you want to see? You must have a wish.”

[No, I don’t have any.]

“Not even one?”

Ho-jae answered in a slightly shaky voice, [Uhh... I don’t really want to do anything even if I go back to Earth.]

Chapter 266

Tutorial 59th floor (1)

[Lee Ho Jae]

“Nothing.”

[Not even one? No family or lover?] asked the dragon.

Why was she prying into people’s private lives?

“None.”

Before entering the Tutorial, I didn’t meet with anyone. It had been years since I started living without my family, and the people I knew became decreased one by one after retirement. Of course, it was my fault that my relationship with them became estranged, but I didn’t bother to revisit them.

[Then what the hell were you doing before you came in here? Don’t humans have their roles in society?]

“I was a jobless man, that’s why!” I growled.

I had no close friends or a job. *Why do you assume I’d have a role in society?*

It was right to ask first how it had been initially.

[Oh, no... Sorry.] Ahbooboo, who had been listening to me and the dragon’s conversation quietly, murmured. Anger surged in my mind.

[Well... sorry. I shouldn’t have asked.] The dragon apologized to me, voice tinged with regret. I’d like to throw away Ahbooboo’s core and the dragon’s crystal ball somewhere.

I ignored the annoying duo and approached the frog, who was half-drenched in a pool of water near the valley. I climbed onto the frog, who was struggling. As I stretched out and lay down, I felt more comfortable than expected. It was strangely pleasant to feel the frog vibrate every time it croaked. The sensation was similar to a cat purring when it's happy.

"Frog, you're the only good one."

"Keeeeeek!"

Why does it cry when it is in a good mood? I wondered how the vocal cords were constructed.

[But the more diverse the wish, the better.]

"...Huh? Are you still talking about that?"

The dragon had been asking me what I wanted to do when I cleared the Tutorial. Naturally, I didn't have anything, in particular, I wanted to do. At one time, I didn't want to go out of the Tutorial and kept thinking about living here. There was no way I would want to go out on Earth and do anything. Of course, with strength, I could help people and get delicious food, but I didn't count that as a wish.

[Then wouldn't life feel so meaningless? Isn't there anything to do back home?]

"There's work to be done."

I had a goal. When I cleared the Tutorial and reach Earth, I had a vague goal to accomplish, but I didn't even know what to do for it. I'd have to work somehow to achieve that goal.

[Oh, my. Is the goal is to take lives?]

"Maybe the goal is to support a life that was falling apart." Lying on the frog's back, I continued. It was a bittersweet remark, but it was true.

[But think more about it. Keep thinking. Your life will be much longer than you think.]

“I got it. I got it. It’s alright. I will.”

I had been carrying on the conversation insincerely, but the dragon hadn’t stopped giving advice. This dragon had a tenacious side.

[All goals are bound to succeed or fail one day, and even the strongest wills become dull over time. If none of your wishes remain then, life will be hard to continue positively.]

Was this advice from a dragon who lived alone for a long time as a senior in his life? I thought this was funny.

“Yes, I see. Thanks for the nice talk. Not right now, but maybe after a long time, I’ll find a goal. I sure hope so.”

[I wish you find new hope.]

* * *

[Ready to go?]

“Yeah.”

Now that I had enough rest, it was natural to move on to the next stage. There was no merit in staying here any longer. When I mentioned this, the dragon seemed very upset.

[Sad.]

What a shame. A scaredy-cat dragon that doesn’t show its nose and just talked over the crystal ball.

[Then we’ll have to pick the next stage. Oh no.]

“What?”

[Your next stage has been set. God... the gods want this stage.]

Did the gods get involved in the stage selection? It wasn't surprising because if the dragon had the authority to choose the stage, so would the gods. But contrary to my idea, the dragon was quite displeased.

[What an act of overpowering authority. I can't wait to see how the gods will repay this debt to me.]

Instead of the words of anticipation, what I heard was an annoyed tone. That little dragon had a complaint with the gods, so I wondered how it would be resolved. Of course, I didn't want to pry into it.

"So, what's the designated stage?"

[It won't be much different from the previous stages.] the dragon replied. The 56th, 57th, and 58th stages were all stages associated with divinity or source.

"This has the source again?"

[No. It's related to the source, but the subject won't be that.]

"Then?"

[Go in and judge.]

'Go in and judge.'

Are you not going to give me even the slightest amount of information?

If it were Kirikiri, I would try to draw more information out with a cake, but the dragon never went back on its word and didn't give me any advice about the stage.

Was it that bad that the gods were involved in the stage selection? As it was a dragon, it may have a high level of pride in its work. Maybe it was more offended because it couldn't complain to the gods since it

was working for them. Whatever it was, it didn't matter to me. As a result, I had to get into the stage without any detailed information.

Damn it.

[Goodbye, I hope to see you again someday.]

When I got on the portal, the dragon bid me goodbye, and I felt the same way. The next time we met, I wanted to meet face to face, not through a crystal ball.

* * *

[The 59th floor stage begins.]

What was this? The place where I was summoned was inside of a high spire of what appeared to be a military fortress. Outside the spire window, a panoramic view of the fort was seen, and beside the fortress was a rugged rocky mountain. Just by looking at it, you could tell that this was a stage where we had to defend against an attack.

The theme of this stage was quite easy to understand, so I could see why the dragon didn't add a detailed explanation.

“Hey, isn't this the source?”

[That's the source.]

In the room at the top of the spire, there was a strange creature: a monster reminiscent of primates, such as monkeys or orangutans, which had no hair on its body. Of course, it wasn't even wearing clothes, so its gross pink skin stood out.

“It doesn't look appealing,” Ahbooboo agreed with me.

The monster did not have senses such as eyes, nose, and ears. There was only an unusual gudgeon on the mouth and forehead. Somehow, I felt disgusted by its bizarre appearance.

[The 59th floor stage begins.]

[A short time ago, a source was born on a continent on an unknown planet. Its birth process is unknown, but it is assumed that the great sorcerer who had set out to fight against the ancient demons, having been buried beneath the planet's soil, had turned into a source. Before the power of the source spread throughout the planet, the indigenous gods of the planet succeeded in suppressing the source. The problem was, right after that, the source disappeared. The two native gods, who were powerfully influential, are eager to find and monopolize each other's source first. Their followers, hunters, sorcerers are crazy about research. There are people in this world who want to see the source.]

[Clear Goal]

– Protect the source for as long as possible.

It was also a relatively simple stage to understand. Recently, I had to use my head a lot, since we had been passing through complicated and demanding stages, so I was glad to have a stage which I could complete using sheer force. It was just a stage where we had to hold out for a long time while protecting the source of this spire. Given that they didn't specify the time, but gave a clue that it would take a long time, there seemed to be a time limit when the stage gets forced to end, like on the 57th floor.

The source had been creeping up on me for a while. It was like seeing a monkey approaching cautiously. Actually, it was a lot more disgusting than that. First of all, I let it come close. The source, which was near my nose, hesitated for a moment and then opened its mouth.

[Giaraaak!]

(T/N: Sound of a laugh supposedly.)

“You son of a b*tch.”

It bared its teeth, making me slap the back of the head of the source who suddenly tried to bite my arm. The source fell on the floor with a roar.

“You’re such a naughty one. Don’t latch your teeth to someone more powerful than you.”

[Aigoo, Warrior. You shouldn’t have treated it so harshly. It passed out. What if it died like this?]

“You can heal it.”

[You’re so shameless... What if it died instantly and you didn’t clear the stage? I think it’s a dead monster already.]

Ahbooboo flew around the source, making sure there were no problems. It occurred to me that he was exceptionally active.

[After this stage, we’ll go to the 60th floor, right?]

“Yes, we will.”

[If I go there, I’ll be able to repair myself, right?]

“...Maybe”

I couldn’t give him a definite answer. Kirikiri had already confirmed that there may be a way to repair the Sword in the store window after the 60th floor. But, it had been a vague remark. Perhaps there were other conditions for Ahbooboo’s repair, given his state. I just wanted the requirement to be simple.

“By the way, I don’t think there’ll be an intruder coming in right away.”

[Yes, I think it's a relaxing stage. What to do?] Ahbooboo asked me.

“Shouldn't you start experimenting?”

[Yeah?]

I had met many sources, so I was tired of it. It was too much after I had caught a lot of them.

Among them, there were many small human-sized sources. Such small sources usually had very feeble powers. To put it bluntly, it had the power of a vicious monster beast. But this one was different.

No matter how weak they all looked, the power felt in their body had never been more than that of a beast's, unlike this source. Above all, even the native gods here, in addition to countless people, coveted this source. When would we ever get such a big fish again?

“Let's test it before the intruders come.”

Chapter 267

Tutorial 59th floor (2)

“Kkeureuk,” the monster croaked.

“Just a little more. Don’t you think this part is less resistant to burns?”
I noted.

[That’s because it’s a hot-spot, where it’s groin would be located.]
Ahbooboo said.

“It doesn’t have an organ there now. It’s just a stump.”

Ahbooboo groaned at my words.

Why was he complaining about it? He was just burning a monster.

[I heard this monster was originally a human being. Then, wouldn’t it be natural for that part to hurt?]

“That’s interesting. It’s surprising that it didn’t suffer exceptionally, even though it lost an important organ.”

[Why is that interesting?]

“First of all, I need to find out whether it’s actually feeling genuine pain or phantom pain.”

Instead of setting fire to the source, Ahbooboo kept asking me questions.

[Why do you have to know that?]

“When we actually hit that area, if it feels more pain, we can continue

to use the place as a weakness. Of course I'd want to research more. If it's pain is caused by phantom pains, the monster is aware of his body structure when he was a human being. Even if it's unconscious. I'll find out. I don't know if other monsters are like this monster, but this is the only subject we're given right now, so I can't help it."

I kindly explained the purpose of the experiment to Ahbooboo, but he didn't seem to think the experiment was necessary...

[Warrior, I beg you, can we stop torturing this creature with its groin?]

"Kkeereuk," the monster croaked.

[Look. That monster's voice, which used to sound grotesque before, now sounds pitiful!]

"Okay. Let's test it out just a little more."

[You said the same thing an hour ago.]

I was in the middle of a series of experiments with Ahbooboo when the door of the room opened. A man walked in and exclaimed, "Oh, my God, this is crazy. What am I looking at?"

"Oh, the search for the source has started."

The man who came in through the door was a giant warrior, over two meters tall and muscular. He seemed like the typical warrior in a game. That man had come into the spire less than ten minutes ago. I stopped my experiments and waited, but I guessed he wouldn't leave so easily.

The man had strode in with quite a pompous attitude. "Hey, you crazy m*therf*cker, what if you die? It's popular among bounty hunters, but do you know how much the monster is worth?"

He thought I was a bounty hunter?

"If you leave the monster behind now, I will spare your life." The man

waved his hand, acting as if he were being kind to me.

This was interesting. It took so long for a man to come up to the room that I thought someone with a cautious personality would arrive. But now that I saw him, it doesn't seem to be a personality problem, it just took him a long time to climb the stairs of the tall spire.

“Are you a bounty hunter, too?”

The man nodded at my question. It appeared that the first of countless people to search for their source was this bounty hunter. I couldn't believe he came to this monster faster than the native gods. Maybe it was because bounty hunters were professionals who usually worked in the front line of this field, so the man had the ability. I was sure that he had the skills, and he knew a lot of information.

[Whew, tsk tsk.]

* * *

“Yes. The ancient demon was known to have been sealed by the founder of the kingdom, but in fact, the founder of the kingdom built a new kingdom with the help of the demon. The royal family had kept and maintained ancient demons deep underground for generations.”

“Why didn't he kill the demon before?” I questioned.

To answer my question, the man speculated, “It's rumored that the demon and the kingdom's founder signed a contract. But I think the royal family was hoping that one day it would use the power of the demon again. Back then, the kingdom lost the war and its influence was greatly diminished.”

“Maybe so.”

The man was a better storyteller than I thought. He was kneeling next to the monster, talking to me without any interruptions.

“Then what?”

“Because of the incident I mentioned earlier, the ancient demon was released from the seal, and the royal family and the knights were exterminated. At that time, there was a famous sorcerer in the capital of the kingdom. Maybe that monster is him.”

The sorcerer was a kind of wizard who accepted the spirituality of God and spread his teachings to the world. Although he was similar to priests who used sacred spells, there was a noticeable difference. The native gods here had many of the characteristics of primitive religions, unlike those seen on other stages. The sorcerer took advantage of the power of God present in nature, but it was hard to say that he was a believer who supported the gods directly.

Anyway, such a sorcerer stopped the demon. His reputation in the capital city skyrocketed, so he must have drawn people’s attention.

“Yes. All the people in the capital looked up to him. It is said that there was a bond between the people and the sorcerer. An observer who was at the capital said that everyone in the capital cheered for the sorcerer. And...”

It was a story I knew better than this guy, who must have been overwhelmed by the people’s power. Unlike the 57th floor, where work was carried out on a planetary scale due to the well-developed technology, it was limited to the capital of the kingdom, but that alone contained too much power. The sorcerer eventually became a monster, not a hero, and the native gods that appeared belatedly made the surroundings a mess while fighting for the power of the monster’s source. In the mess, the monster disappeared somewhere and must have found its way all the way over here.

The source was certainly an unusual power: a kind of power that could only be found in cartoons. The power that might remind you of Dragon Ball Z, the famous anime.

Holy power was given rise through religion. On the other hand, the source was made unexpectedly by people under unknown circumstances. Rather than divine entities, the power was passed on to their representatives and heroes. Finally, it was influenced by the people’s level of civilization and history.

Recently, I learned a lot of information that I hadn’t known through

the stages. Every time I cleared the stage, the Dragon gave me a lot of information, but there were still about two things I wasn't sure about.

Many of the sources that appeared on the 40th floor were relatively small and weak. After killing them, a piece of rock called root debris could be found, but I didn't know how they were created. At first, I thought there would be a parent source for such monsters, but the only source I faced were the ones who had lost their minds. It was unlikely that they would be able to reproduce strategically to increase their numbers.

The second was about me. How was I capable of using the source? Of course there was the power of the source from the God of Remorse, but I was not aware how I had used it back then, and the Dragon had refused to answer. This was the question I had to ask as soon as I met with Kirikiri.

"May I go now?" the bounty hunter begged.

"No."

Tears welled up in the man's eyes at my answer, making me feel bad for making a tall man sit on his knees, his head facing my chest. Why was this man so afraid of me? I didn't even hit him. I just suppressed him with mana and told him to talk.

[You're not really asking because you don't know, are you, Warrior?]

"I'll do anything. Please don't kill me..."

I turned my head away from the man who was begging in a desperate voice and looked into the monster that was spread out on the test bed.

After checking its muscle condition, vascular structure, and location of the internal organs, I found that it had a weird flow pattern of mana. I also found out that the position of the source's power was consistent with the place where I kept mine, and took note of what order it flowed in.

What do we do now? I had been experimenting for so long that my neck felt stiff.

Before reaching the 13th floor, I had routinely dissected enemies. Upon entering the 13th floor, I began to feel skeptical and refrained from dissection. From then on, people who could talk, and not monsters, came out as enemies. Since the human body structure was well known, I didn't have to bother to dissect it. After that, I stopped experimenting. But whenever necessary, I would capture enemies alive and conduct experiments. After all, anatomical knowledge greatly helped in combat.

Either way, the number of times had decreased significantly, and now it felt awkward to dissect and experiment with the enemy. I didn't know what to do with such a great experimental subject in front of me.

I needed insight.

"I need more insight on the monster. Is there any way to further study it?"

"What?" The man didn't understand what I was saying and showed a confused expression, so I promised I'd let him live if he came up with a useful idea.

"Well... uhh, sorcery maybe? There are some who have mastered sorcery just for torture purposes. That monster used to be a great sorcerer, so maybe this'll help."

The man's idea was excellent, and I replied in a pleased voice, "Very good. It's a great idea. Maybe we should invite a sorcerer."

"Oh, how?" he asked in an uneasy voice, sweat dripping off his face. I didn't think he was going to get me a sorcerer.

I raised my hand to the window instead of answering. From the window, I could see the fireballs flying towards the spire. Dozens of fireballs crashed into the wall of the mana I had made, and dissipated.

"Magic? Ah, no, gunfire boosted by magic," I noticed

Outside the spire, shouting was heard, followed by a second roar. I murmured as I looked at the shells that were fired, "That unit will

include a sorcerer, right?”

[Warrior’s theory sounds very probable.]

* * *

There was no sorcerer, and unfortunately, I only captured a commander of a useless unit.

“Damn it. How can there be no sorcerer?” I groaned.

“Eh... well, there was no sorcerer in the original unit,” the commander replied.

Wasn’t there supposed to be a sorcerer? What the heck? I had no choice but to inquire more from the commander.

The commander introduced himself as an officer of a country, in pursuit of the source, but I forgot the name of the country as soon as I heard it. In addition, he was commanding the vanguard of the great army, which was still running hard here.

“What kind of vanguard shoots a cannon?”

On hearing my words, the commander showed their equipment, which was smaller than I thought and looked more like a mortar than a cannon. It seemed quite useful to me, too, but this must be a military secret, and yet, they were willingly sharing with me.

“What’s the total number of troops?”

“A little over forty thousand.”

Forty? I thought I heard wrong. After all, why would you send 40,000 people to catch a powerless monster? Even if the monster regained its strength, it was wise to deal with it with a small number of elite soldiers rather than sending a great army. The average soldier was just a scarecrow in front of a certain level of strength.

“It was an inevitable mobilization since the armies of other countries are also looking for the source.”

“Well... you did say you were aiming for a number of countries. Commander, how many soldiers are running this way now? Irrespective of their nationality.”

“Eh... I think it'll be two hundred thousand if I round it off. Not only soldiers, but also hunters, adventurers, mercenaries, wanderers, and traders.”

Two hundred thousand if rounded off? According to the explanation of the stage, the native gods would soon also begin to seek their source. If the gods began to quarrel over monsters, this area would naturally be destroyed like the capital of a kingdom that had already been blown to bits.

How many of the 200,000 people would survive? I could bet that most of them wouldn't.

What should I do?

Chapter 268

Tutorial 59th floor (3)

It was so noisy outside. Looking from out the small window, I could see that the uproar had yet to simmer down.

Just like the bounty hunter, countless people had come to visit the spire in search of the source. The first ones to arrive were hunters and mercenaries, but they didn't matter much. It was enough to scold and send them back.

The military unit that came after that was the problem. Following the team, the troop numbers reached 100,000 units. Instead of meaninglessly beating them to death or burning them, I chose to kidnap only the commanders.

The kidnapping was not difficult. We could just go and capture them. It was effective, and I could get information from the kidnapped commanders.

Of course, the soldiers who occasionally opened fire or tried to get their commanders back were very annoying, but it was still tolerable though. In addition, we were able to extract information from them.

If you looked inside the room, your eyes would fall on the sorcerers kneeling before the source. It was a sight that truly comforted me.

It looked as though they were taking a test on the past of the Joseon Dynasty, as they were scribbling furiously on paper.

[Everyone's writing hard.]

Of course.

The commander, who had been captured for the first time, said that

there was no such thing as a sorcerer in the unit, but it was not true. When the number of troops gathered near the spire exceeded 200,000, we were able to find a good army sorcerer. In addition, I gathered hunters, mercenaries, and sorcerers who were wandering around for investigation, and was able to acquire as many as a hundred sorcerers.

After catching a hundred or so sorcerers one by one, I had a simple request: to write down all they knew about sorcery on paper.

[But if it's like this, there won't really be any important sorcery facts.]

I didn't know how to answer that. If I knew a little bit about sorcery, I could just ask for some information, but I didn't know anything about sorcery, and it was in vain to ask for only important information. I didn't have the ability to tell the difference between what was important and what was not important.

I peered over the shoulders of some sorcerers to see what they were writing. I felt as if I were an investigator at a test site. As I was walking slowly, making sure they were writing well, a sorcerer made me halt.

"You're really going to send me back when I fill up this paper, right?" The shivering sorcerer who was filling up his paper asked me.

He was the only young sorcerer among the other elderly-looking sorcerers.

"Of course I will. You've finished writing already. Isn't that right?"

I asked back in a soft voice, but the sorcerer first shook his head like an Aspen tree, then proceeded to nod his head up and down. Initially, he spoke to me with courage, but when I was talking about the paper, he seemed to be scared. I glanced at the piece of paper that the scared little sorcerer was writing down. It seemed flawless, but a closer look showed that there was a font size difference between the letters on the top and the ones on the bottom.

"But if you make the font size like this... Did you really think I wouldn't notice?"

“I’ll reduce it! I’ll reduce it!”

“Yes. The letters should be as small as possible. Least amount of spacing. Make the lines shorter. Don’t repeat the same things in all thirty-five pages. Okay?”

The little sorcerer started to fill up the paper again, hastily replying, “Yes, yes!”

I shook my head and kept walking. Something was a little strange. I thought that they were too afraid of me.

Of course, I made some threats, arrested them, and punished them for resisting, but even considering that these sorcerers were a bit too afraid of me.

[Is that a joke? You’ve done all sorts of things and you don’t know why they’re scared.] Ahbooboo reprimanded.

No, listen. It was not my first time threatening someone.

[Very proud, aren’t you?]

Anyway, I’m an artist, if not a specialist of intimidation. With this view of mine, these sorcerers were overly afraid of me. It was to such an extent that I didn’t think there was any need to threaten them.

[Maybe it’s because of that.]

‘That’ referred to the source that was nailed to the wall of the spare room. Surely the condition of the source was quite appalling. Its upper body was cut open and its insides were visible. Blood was pouring out from the small cuts and incisions made, and a pool of blood was collecting under its feet. Looking at it, I felt a little sick. It sometimes let out weak groans, as if it was still alive.

Ahbooboo’s opinion was plausible. As an experimental subject, it had been a major sorcerer who was capable and famous enough to be a source. For people, it may have been a monster that blew up a country’s capital, but it might feel different from other sorcerers.

[No... I think they were just scared to see something horrible in front of them.]

Is that so? Well, maybe.

I glanced at the sorcerers and kept walking forward. A hundred or so sorcerers were kneeling in front of the wall at which the source was hung. Beyond that, the commanders of each unit were kneeling in a cramped area.

Because they were neatly kidnapped without any resistance, there were no signs of injuries. Nevertheless, fear was evident on their faces. The commanders, who whispered among themselves, closed their mouths as if nothing had happened, as soon as I came near. It was obvious what they were talking about.

They were secretly talking about who I was, and how to escape. Or maybe they were looking for a chance to fight back. I was wondering what to do with them, when one of them asked me in a slightly trembling voice, "What do you want from us?"

"What do I want?"

The primary reason for capturing them was to gather sorcerers. I wanted to get some information before this stage got over. It would be better if I could hear about this world.

Come to think of it, that was all I wanted. I had captured commanders who led 200,000 soldiers under them, but I didn't care much about them. They were all ordinary human beings, even if they were soldiers. Whether the number was 100,000 or a million had little to do with me. No matter how many they were in number, they were neither helpful nor dangerous to me.

"It's not like you've kidnapped all the commanders of the armed forces of each country for nothing at all. Say it. I'm in the army, but I'm also a member of the royal family," the commander said.

"The royal family? So you're a prince?"

"I am. For ransom, I can give as much as you want, even more than

that. Be it gold or something else.”

Something else? Not gold? I wondered what he was thinking of giving.

“You seem to have no affiliation. I can provide you with a title, territory, wealth and honour, a whole new status. I can give you anything. As long as you free us,” the prince explained frantically, thinking I was interested in his words, but it wasn’t a tempting offer for me. Not at all. Not taking notice of whether I was pleased or not, the prince continued quickly.

“Of course if you want something else, I can give it to you. Come to think of it, I know so little about you. This is the only way to make a proper proposal. Can’t you tell me what you are and what you want? So that I can make a better offer.”

It was interesting. The prince was obviously afraid, but in the midst of that, he still held a bit of hope and composure. I wondered what this weird rationale was.

Was it confidence? Confidence in his noble status and power, that made him assume that I won’t hurt him rashly.

Or was it optimism? He may not be able to judge a crisis because he had never really been in such a f*cked up situation in his life, so he was negotiating with the idea that it would work out somehow.

“Well, mind telling me what you know about me?” I asked him.

“Yes. What I know about you is that you’ve got your hands on that monster that blew up the capital of the Kingdom of Rossina. And a very, very powerful sorcerer, warrior, and an assassin.”

Well... you might think so.

I had only kidnapped commanders and sorcerers without fighting.

I was wondering what to say to the prince when I heard a loud laugh from behind me. It was a mocking laugh, that sounded half maniacal.

“Strong sorcerer? Do you want me to tell you who he is? Hahahaha!”

The man who spoke was one of the commanders who had been quietly bound. The prince, who was talking to me, looked back at the third party with an unpleasant look and asked, “Can you tell me what’s so funny? Lord Jengent?”

The commander, who was giggling like a madman, seemed to be called Jengent. Jengent once again laughed at the prince and suddenly said, “Who’s he? You want me to tell you who he is? You’re going to give him a title? You idiot! Can’t you recognize the ancient demon right before you!”

The ancient demon. What an absurd misunderstanding.

“Can’t you see the terrible sight of the archmage hanging over there on the wall!? Look at those surgical instruments and grotesque experimental tools that we’ve never seen before. He wants to gain knowledge of sorcery, and in less than a day, he kidnapped us all. He was surrounded by 200,000 soldiers, but he talked peacefully without any sign of panic. No tension, no fear, no sense of accomplishment. As natural as ever. I feel like my nose will go crooked from fear any moment now. Do you think humans can do that? That man is the ancient evil demon that had been sealed under the royal castle!”

[You’re absolutely right, I can’t argue with you.]

I told the teasing Ahbooboo to shut up. Unconsciously, I made eye contact with the prince, who backed away with a frightened face upon seeing my gaze. There seemed to be nothing more to talk with the prince. I turned my head to Jengent, who was still screaming.

“Well, let’s just say I am.”

I didn’t think he’d believe it if I said that I wasn’t the devil. It didn’t really matter to me even if he believed me or not.

The commanders were momentarily tense, stiffening their faces as I seemed to accept that I was the demon. There was also a weak roar coming from the source behind me.

“If I were the demon, what would you do?” I questioned.

What are you going to do, get excited and talk about it?

It was easy to see from the way that the Jengent was talking about it. Still, I asked in a half curious, half bored manner. “What are you going to do? Announce that I’m the devil?”

I slowly approached him and asked, making him shift backwards nervously. Jengent, though distressed by my question, slowly gave his answer. “I have come... I’ve come to see you.”

“You came to see me?”

“Yes... I came here to find you, ancient demon.”

What came out of Jengent’s mouth was a totally unexpected answer. So he thought I was an ancient demon? He came to me even though he knew that?

“I want to make a deal. In exchange for my soul.”

What a nut job.

[He really has an eye for people. Oh, wait no, he has a keen eye for demons.] Ahbooboo snickered.

Chapter 269

Tutorial 59th floor (4)

“I offer my soul!”

I don’t need it. I almost said my thoughts aloud without thinking. Why would you dedicate your soul to me in the first place?

Ordinary human souls were not very useful, even if you collected billions of them. They could be considered a toy at best. If you had the power to handle souls, human souls would make an efficient fuel. I, for one, was able to do and use the power of the soul and the soul sword, but using souls did not have much effect and was not that efficient.

The only useful power involving souls that the god of death gave me was the exploitation of the soul. The rest only granted me with a title, and their utility value was low. Compared to the power given by other gods, it was seriously useless.

[The God of Death is perplexed.]

[The God of Adventure is in high spirits.]

The number of souls that were sealed in the soul sword right now... Wait, hold on.

[What’s wrong with you?] Ahbooboo asked when I stopped thinking. There was one thing that I had missed: I had never extracted a soul from a living human.

[Do you really want to be a demon? Why don't you go ahead and sign a contract?]

A contract? That doesn't sound too bad. If a contract was established, I could sacrifice something in order to harvest souls.

The Demon King, who I met on the 25th and 34th floor, had been summoned beyond the dimension due to the personal appeal of the people. He was brought by offering something to the God of Sowing.

If somehow I could make a contract with a soul like a demon, this could be a new direction of development.

[Whew...]

Of course, I didn't know how to. I was oblivious of how to make a contract with a soul, or what to sacrifice in the contract.

I should ask Kirikiri about this later. Was there any way I could get that kind of power?

“Oh, demon,” Jengent called me with a slightly uneasy look. During the conversation, I had dazed off, leaving him perplexed.

I put on a serious face and said, “Oh, yeah. Contract. You're betting your soul on it? Can you guarantee that?”

Jengent looked stiff, but nodded his head. His determination was great. He looked so satisfied, that the corners of his lips were tugging up in a smile. If I had some time before the end of this stage, it wouldn't be a bad idea to take him back to experiment with soul-related powers.

[Sir, please don't act like a real devil. I'm the Holy Sword...]

And? So what if you're a Holy Sword? Don't sell drugs in the name of holiness. [1]

[...]

“I know very well that you have the courage to stake your soul. Then it’s time to hear what you want.”

Whatever Jengent wanted, I had the ability to achieve it. Of course there was a stage limitation, so I wouldn’t be able to listen to it all. I could only assure him that his wish would be fulfilled.

I made my voice low, so that I seemed a little bit more evil. Increasing the pressure on him, I slowly let out a bit of my power. For Jengent, this wouldn’t just be felt as pressure of mana, but as a supernatural element.

“Jengent. Say what you want in return for your soul.”

Upon hearing my words, Jengent gulped down his saliva and said in a determined voice, “What I want is destruction of the gods that have destroyed the kingdom of Rossina. I would like to take revenge on the cruel gods who have pushed their worshippers and thrown them away as if they were just weeds in the fields. I want their annihilation!”

What Jengent asked me for was neither wealth, honor or strength. He wanted the fall of these native gods. Luckily for him, we shared the same wish.

Hence, I shouted with joy, “The contract has been made. Your wishes will come true!”

* * *

The goal of the 59th floor stage was to protect the source from the numerous people who coveted the power of the source. If this was all, the stage was too easy. In this case, it wouldn’t have been called the 59th floor for nothing, and could have very well been a stage that might appear on the 9th floor.

But the stage had a level of difficulty that matched the 59th floor because of the existence of two native gods that would appear at the end.

The two gods were clearly aiming for the power of the source, and they were at odds with each other. If one got in the way of this event,

they'd sweep everything away with force.

The challenger must protect the source from the two native gods from the gods who, if necessary, would not hesitate to exercise their powers and could even step on their own believers without any second thoughts.

In this way, I thought the difficulty level was set too high. All the gods that had appeared on the Tutorial stage had rewarded me after the stage was over. But this time the gods were directly related to the stage, and I had to collide head-on with them.

Perhaps I could utilize the time before the gods came to persuade the people who sought the source out faster than the gods. I could find a way to hide from them or persuade them. Anyway, most of the people who were gathered here were followers of native gods, but I didn't try to find that way even though I thought so.

This was an opportunity. A chance to kill a god at least once.

[What kind of chance is this?] Ahbooboo grumbled.

It was a great chance. The presence of native gods, who were on bad terms compared to the gods from the temple, was definitely a message that suggested a clash with the gods, a delightful opportunity.

[There was no message anywhere telling you to kill the gods, Warrior. It's really dangerous. You could die here, really.]

I won't die.

Even in the midst of my talking to Ahbooboo, Jengent was talking about himself. He didn't even notice that I wasn't listening to him, and seemed to be absorbed in narrating the story.

"That's when the gods appeared. We all cheered. The archmage, who was confronting the demon, was in a strange state, and I thought the gods had finally come forward. I thought it was to bless the struggle of the archmage. But the two gods collided over the capital, and in the aftermath, the capital was literally swept away."

Jengent continued his story. He said he was in the capital of the Rosina Kingdom when it had been ruined.

“I realized the situation was strange and tried to evacuate people somehow. But evacuating the crowded people of the capital without any preparation... I still remember the scene clearly whenever I close my eyes. People trampled each other and ran like crazy cows. The fireballs that fell on their heads... And those who prayed to the gods who were killing them... And-”

Jengent paused for a moment, and his voice choked for an obvious reason.

If you were a god that cared about your believers, you wouldn't fight over people's capital. No matter how hard you prayed in the mess, the gods wouldn't care. The people of the capital city continued to die, and the misery would only become more and more horrendous.

It was a tragic accident, but it was also betrayal: betrayal to a man who believed in God. God had no interest in him, and the man couldn't curse out at God because God could always cut the man's head off. You could say that gods didn't really love their believers, and they just wanted power from faith. That was the reality.

“The doctrines were all lies. Everything I had believed in had been a deception. The gods didn't care for their believers at all.”

I felt that this commander, Jengent, was originally a very faithful man. When he was disappointed by the gods, he wasn't just devastated. The thought of revenge burned in him. It was unusual. Seeing God as the object of revenge was as reckless as wielding a sword to stop a typhoon. In fact, Jengent may not have wanted to tear the gods to death, but instead, only wanted to tear down his past.

“I cannot tolerate or forgive the gods. I want revenge, demon. I'll achieve it even if I have to burn my soul.”

Yeah, yeah. I'd heard that before. Now that I listened to him, it was my turn to speak.

“How?”

“Yes?” Jengent made a dumb face at my question. He wasn’t that smart. Haah. And I even thought of signing a contract with him.

“How did you intend to kill gods? Your plan wasn’t to only ask the demon, was it?”

“The soldiers under my command.”

Soldiers? He didn’t mean to order soldiers to attack the gods, did he?

“They’re all ordinary human beings.”

“There’s about 40,000 of them. And some of them were with me from the capital. Most importantly, we have a large fleet of artillery.”

Guns? You’re going to fire cannon at the gods?

“The shooting itself doesn’t mean anything, but we’ve already cast a spell on the shells. There will be damage. Definitely,” Jengent said with an earnest look.

“Can magic do harm to the gods?” I asked Jengent.

He replied that he was confident, which was ridiculous. As far as I knew, the sorcery of this world came from the power of the native gods, but he was saying that the native gods would be harmed? That was another thing to study later.

[What are you going to do now?] asked Ahbooboo.

Somehow, I couldn’t let this idiot run against the gods. It was meaningless. He had to be told to give up.

“Looking at you reminds me of a man I met a long time ago,” I said.

“Do you mean the founding king?”

“Well, do you call the man the king of the place where I was sealed?”

The hunter whom I met on the first day had told me the behind story of the kingdom. In fact, the kingdom was founded by the power of the ancient demon, and the royal family has sealed it for generations. I didn't know if it was true, but the mere fact that such a theory was circulating was enough. Actually, Jengent was an idiot to believe I was an ancient demon.

"Don't you want to be like him? Don't you want to be a new king?"

"But revenge on the gods..."

"Oh, of course that'll be there too. I'll take care of the revenge, so you don't have to worry. It's a story for the future."

"Then..."

It was not like he was not greedy. He was quite an interesting human being.

"There's something you have to do."

"What's the matter?" asked Jengent, tensely.

I said, looking at his face that seemed worried, "Collect faith."

* * *

I led Jengent back to the spire room where the commanders were still whispering, and the sorcerers were still busy writing. First I put the commanders together.

"Is there still any lingering fear from that monster?" I asked, pointing to the source hanging from the wall.

There was no answer.

"I have one suggestion for you." When I said that, hope shone on the faces of the commanders, who were previously terrified. Would they bargain for a ransom?

“Run away.”

“Save me!”

A commander suddenly knelt down and shouted in a desperate voice. That was the prince I had talked to.

“Save me!” After the prince, all the other commanders knelt down and shouted to me. It was absurd. I was going to let them run away, but they wanted me to save them.

“No. Run by yourself.”

“I know no matter how many times I run away, I will never get away from you. Please, please. Just my life. Or the soldiers...”

What are you talking about?

“Hey, I’ll let you go. Run away,” I said.

“Please, please.”

[Warrior, the demon tells his most hated enemy to run away. After he says so, he will soon follow and kill them in the most terrible way, so they’re scared.]

Note from Imagine:

[1]: The reason Hojae stated that is because usually if a normal person were to use ahbooboo he eventually corrupts your mind with his power to the point you become his doll.

Chapter 270

Tutorial 59th floor (5)

“Save me!”

“Please. Please, spare me...”

“Demon, I have already filled in 35 sheets of paper and am writing two more. Please...”

Everyone who was told to run began to beg for their lives. From the other side came all the sorcerers who were waving their filled papers and begging for my mercy.

No, I was just telling you to run away.

[It sounded like you were going to hunt them down.] Ahbooboo gave his opinion.

I just said it normally, though. Ahbooboo, if I could explain in detail that this place was dangerous and to run away, these people would be scared, right?

[Yes, they’ll think you let them run away only to chase them down.]

Damn it.

These people were really scared of the demon. The archmage who fought against the demon was considered great. To them, I was a monster.

[Well, I’m afraid of the demon too, but maybe I’m just more afraid of the Warrior in front of me.]

Tch. Anyway, if I wanted to keep them away from the spire, I couldn’t

just say run away. I was called evil, so I should talk like a devil.

“If your life is so precious to you, I will spare you. But only if you pay enough for it.”

“I’ll give everything to save them.”

“If you let me live, I’ll do anything.”

“I’ll gladly give you anything.”

“Then give your soul.”

* * *

Those who were told to offer their souls quickly shut their mouths. I informed the frozen people that if they didn’t want to dedicate their soul, then they’d have to obey my command. Some of them were unusual lunatics who offered their souls, but most vowed allegiance. Of course, it was an unbinding and untrustworthy loyalty, but that was enough. I just wanted to send them away.

The kidnapped commanders returned to the troops stationed near the spire and began to retreat one after another. Outside the window, the air was filled with dust caused by the 200,000 soldiers preparing to withdraw.

“That’s the spell that protects you from the cold?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

Unlike the commanders who were preparing to withdraw, the sorcerers clung to me and were practicing sorcery. Now that I had a written down version of all the theories, I’d been experimenting by applying the spells one by one to my body. If there was anything useful, it may also help in the fight against the native gods. I was told that sorcery could damage gods after all.

“Next is a magic trick that makes your body fluffy.”

Why do I feel weird?

“That’s strange,” I remarked.

“What do you mean?”

“Why do I have a spell that makes me feel trapped. No, it feels like a spell with tracking.”

I was a total stranger to sorcery, but I knew quite a bit of magic. Ahbooboo always said that I was like a primitive man that carried a stone ax in regards to magic, but in fact, it was enough to say that I was a wizard even on a magical stage. That was why I felt that the spell I just put on my body was used for tracking purposes.

“Well, I don’t think it is.”

“Strike your head,” I commanded.

“Yes.”

The sorcerer, who was tricking me, hit his head and fell over, and the sorcerer standing behind him came forward.

“Let’s start. If you play tricks like the one before you, you’ll die.”

“Yes.”

The sorcerer took out the strange props before me, and began to chant out spells. As I was looking at the figure before me calmly, the air suddenly became heavy.

“Stop.”

“What? I still haven’t done anything.”

It wasn’t because of the sorcerer. The atmosphere was strange.

“You should go down now and join the army.”

It was time to send off the sorcerers.

“What are you doing? Get out quickly.”

Hearing me, the sorcerer began to creep back, as if he was wary of me. As soon as they left the room, they ran down the stairs of the spire like mad, and the room at the top of the spire became quiet again.

[Kkeureuk.] A cry from the source was heard, perhaps because of the sudden silence.

Ignoring it, I turned back to the window. The outside could not be seen properly because of the dust, but I closed my eyes and expanded my sensing range.

Beyond the spire, even beyond the vicinity of the army. The sensing power, which had continued to expand, stopped at some point as if it had been blocked by a wall. And the walls were slowly approaching the spire. As the walls approached, my sensing power was quickly pushed out.

I was certain the gods were coming.

[Are you really going to do it?]

“Of course.”

I needed experience. The experience of killing a god. No matter how much I fell off compared to the gods of the Temple, even if it was just a boss on the stage, I needed the experience.

I went closer to the source lying on the wall. The source shook his head with an open mouth as I approached.

What was it saying? I thought it was saying ‘Don’t come near’. Did its consciousness come back? It was interesting. Could torture restore the mind of a source that had been previously lost? It was a pity that there was no more time to experiment.

I put my hand into the open chest of the source. After a moment of rummaging around, I was able to find the core of the source: a nucleus that was a little larger than a pebble. I pulled it out.

When the core was pulled out, the source shook and died without making a sound, but the stage didn't end there. The source that needed to be protected was not the horrible-looking monster, but the core in my hand. If the core was taken away, and not protected, the stage would never end.

[May the deceased rest in peace. Please don't face a demon like Warrior in your next life.]

Ignoring what Ahbooboo next to me said, I threw the core into my mouth and gulped it down. It was a little too big to pass through my throat, but it didn't get caught on the way.

[Why would you eat it like that? If you're hungry, go eat, Warrior.]

Who's hungry?

I couldn't fight with the core, so I had to put it in my stomach. Come to think of it, it was kind of weird. My way of thinking had become like Piccolo. [1]

No power was absorbed from the core of the source, since the source was just an imitation of the stage. It was a Tutorial stage where everything seemed real, but it didn't have any power. The only explanation was that the core of this source was a fake.

Of course, the two native gods anxiously seeking the core of this source were not even aware of that. In that sense, the core of the source in my stomach would also serve to protect me because it would be hard to attack me with the idea that the core might break.

Now the gods were close enough to be seen in my sight. I was sure the sorcerers downstairs noticed. In a little while, even ordinary soldiers would be able to see the existence of the gods.

The gods, who were approaching the spire, suddenly stopped. With the spire in the center, the two native gods, who stopped, began to

throw their attacks on each other. That was how the fight between the gods began.

* * *

Bang!

Like flowers in the sky, a huge block of ice that was floating, blew up. The world was covered with pitch-black darkness, followed by a blinding light. Every second, every minute, all kinds of disasters that a man could imagine would appear and disappear, repeatedly. Water spurted out of the ground and dived into the sky, and the moisture evaporated in a moment. The evaporated water froze in the air, and the air exploded, giving rise to flames.

The power of gravity was also strange. Some soldiers were crushed to death by the strong pressure, and some slowly rose into the air from zero gravity, then fell again to their death. It was difficult to take even one step ahead. Some soldiers moved more than a hundred meters in a single step, but even then, they fell to the floor and died because of their own speed. As the space split, all sorts of bizarre things rushed out, and a soldier turned into a strange monster. There was a soldier for whom, the time got too slow, hence his heart stopped beating. There was another whose time had become too fast to recognize anything in the world.

The fight between the gods could not simply be defined as who attacked and who defended. It was collapsing the world.

The soldiers begged the gods for mercy while fleeing desperately, but the gods didn't even care about them. In a way, that power wielded by the gods came from those soldiers. The power of the gods was from the faith of the people. People were being massacred by such power, and it wasn't a good sight to see.

"This is pretty bad too, compared to something," I said.

[Something?]

"Neither of the two native gods are interested in me."

I felt like a trophy on the podium. The trophy that the winner would finally get.

“I feel bad. Very bad.”

I shook my hand in the air, and the ceiling of the spire and the wall of the room burst with a bang. I could finally see the whole scene outside.

All the laws of the world were distorted and half the things were destroyed, but they didn't affect me. The gods were not considerate of me.

It was the power of the gods that could apply the power of twisting the laws of the world, without any interference. I called this power 'control'. The power to make a person's brain melt, and could freeze the heart. I could handle that power, too.

It was only a tiny fraction of what the gods were wielding. This power acted as an interference when used by others, but when used by me, it served as a defense against interference. As long as I had control, the gods could not interfere with me directly and physically.

It may be because of that. I couldn't believe the gods' fight was causing so much damage. They couldn't blow each other up. Instead, they were causing an explosion and delivering the shock indirectly. They were unable to interfere with each other.

That was the divine power. To interfere directly with others, and to prevent themselves, the gods, from interfering. This was why there was a huge gap between a person who had power and a person who did not. I was no match for them in the first place. We were playing a completely different game.

However, there was a way to exercise one's power without achieving prestige, and that was the source. I could see why the Gods of the Temple clinged to the source. The source would not only raise the level of the gods, but also to make it possible for the unclassified to kill them.

[Hahaha!]

About four meters long, something big flew towards the spire: a charred-black body and bat wings. It was a recognizable appearance. It was the ancient demon who competed with the archmage, who had been sealed before.

[Hahaha! Give it to me, human! Give up that power! Only if there is any left.]

Finally.

I snapped my fingers lightly, and a blazing blue flame sparked in the devil's head. The devil was tormented by the bluish flame that burned his eyes, nose and mouth. He soon lost his breath.

This was all I had. The degree to which a small spark is generated inside a person's body. On the 57th floor, there was a bigger amount of power, but that was because on the 57th floor I was able to gather faith with a larger base. My power was still limited. Compared to the two native gods who were overturning the world and releasing all kinds of powers, it was no different from shining lanterns in front of the sun.

Help was needed to counter the two native gods. It was not my cup of tea to take others' help, but it was worth it this time.

[The God of Slowness watches over you.]

[God of Adventure gets up in excitement.]

[God of Fight...]

[Ninety-nine gods of the Temple are watching you.]

The gods of the vaccine war began to watch me, but it didn't bother me much. It wasn't a day or two. Instead of wasting time worrying about it, I decided to go ahead with the plan I had prepared.

“Ahbooboo.”

“Yes.”

Ahbooboo’s core, the blue bead, fluttered in the air. The clouds, which were floating and producing bizarre colors, shifted and bright lights shone through, falling on Ahbooboo and me

[Voting begins]

[Yes: 96 No: 3]

The voting session was held. I was sure it was a vote to sanction Ahbooboo. If not that, then it was the God of the Sky. Of course, measures had to be taken.

[God of the Sky designates his new object, Aubutz, as an apostle.]

[The result of the vote will be nullified as the god of the sky had appointed Aubutz as an apostle.]

[Thank you for the meal.]

Note from Imagine:

[1]: The reason Hojae states he’s starting to think like Piccolo is because during Dragon Ball (Not Z) when Piccolo defeated Kami in the world tournament he sealed Kami in a bottle and swallowed him.

Chapter 271

Tutorial 59th floor (6)

At the time of the last Tournament, I had learned that Ahbooboo was directly linked to the God of the Sky. Furthermore, the God of the Sky and Ahbooboo could communicate with each other. It turned out that the God of the Sky tried to find out about me through Ahbooboo. After I found out about it, he spoke to me himself.

It wasn't very pleasant for me or Ahbooboo, whose friendship had been exploited to collect information on me. The God of the Sky acknowledged it, and promised to pay a good price. He was a deity that spoke quite well.

[God of the Sky designates his new object, Aubutz, as an apostle.]

[The result of the vote will be nullified as the God of the Sky has appointed Aubutz as an apostle.]

In the Tutorial, the apostles covered a very large base. There may be many reasons why this was the case, but I think the primary reason was that apostles were somewhat free from restrictions.

Even the gods of the Temple couldn't do what they wanted unless they voted. The only exception would be the level of events within one's new area, as the God of Hope did.

But the apostles who had made a contract with a God were relatively free to move. It was revealed several times through stages. When the gods had to intervene, the challenger was always acting as an apostle, or an actual apostle was summoned.

Perhaps the restrictions were not applied to the gods in their own domain, or to their own believers and their direct subordinates. From a god's point of view, the apostles were not constrained, and at the same time a lot of power could be deployed anywhere. It was what the gods wanted. They wished for the apostles to intervene in what happened outside their sphere of influence: to eradicate the monster of source, and to collect its core.

So, one of the goals of the Tutorial was to foster the apostles. I'd been looking at the challengers the gods may be using as apostles for a long time.

[Oh, my God! I'll now be called Apostle Aubutz of the Sky!] Ahbooboo screamed with excitement.

He must be in a good mood. Well, he didn't seem sincere, but he had positive views on the God of the Sky, the Order, and was quite proud of himself. Even though his appointment as an apostle was a reluctant promotion.

"You know it's all thanks to me, right?"

[Of course, of course. Do you want me to act cute? Hmm?]

I almost swore out loud, but somehow put up with it. Now that he had just become an apostle, even the God of the Sky was staring at him. It was a bit of a shame to call him a bad name and give a slap on his face.

"Then let's go on to the next job."

At this moment, 200,000 humans were being trampled to death like ants, and half of them were already dead.

The battle between the two native gods, who couldn't be seen properly, was fierce. I was worried that the world would really collapse. Half of the humans still survived because the gods had no interest in them. If they decided to deal neatly with the humans and keep fighting, it would take less than a minute for all the remaining humans to be wiped out.

[By the way, are you really going to do that? It's okay to keep it this way. I can assist you.]

How could that be called an aid? If I just jumped into the battle with the gods, it was obvious I could only aid Ahbooboo and not the other way around. *Could the terms be changed?*

[But it's still a waste. Again, this is a deal. Your arm won't recover no matter how many times you use elixirs.]

"It's alright."

[Still...]

"It's alright." I said it was alright repeatedly, but Ahbooboo was hesitant. I was thinking about how to persuade him, when Seregia, who had been silent, stepped up.

[Quick. I don't want to wait any longer.]

[But Lady Seregia, this is Warrior's arm. His arm is important...]

[It's not my arm, it doesn't matter.] Seregia was indifferent, which was a bit disappointing. [And as Warrior said, it's worth losing an arm.]

That's right.

Clearly, Seregia had a similar way of thinking with me. The cost of consumption was high, but the result was more than enough.

Pain? I didn't care about pain. Inconvenience? It would be withstandable.

[Yes. Well then.] Ahbooboo hardened his mind, and murmured the spell and paid attention to his words. I didn't understand yet, but that was the order of the spell. It was a spell I could learn someday.

[Thank you for the meal, then.]

I was worried about myself, but I didn't think much. At the end of Ahbooboo's words, red solid lines like cobwebs spread on my left arm. My arms quickly turned red, followed by the ever-tightening red lines. A force that seemed to consume the flesh inside, followed by hellish pain gradually consumed my arm, which quickly vanished into thin air. My left arm had been sacrificed in a short time that one would take to get a glass of water.

[Thank you for the meal!!!]

You're very excited.

My arm had been cut to the part adjacent to the shoulder. Blood oozed from the cross section, but thanks to the resilience accumulated so far, the bleeding stopped and the flesh healed quickly. My arm did not regenerate, but the wound did not cause further damage.

I once thought that if I grew up like this, I would become a troll. When I was targeting the first and second floors, I kept thinking of rolling and breaking every time. But before I knew it, I had become a monster that was hard to compare with a troll. It was an interesting appreciation.

Ahbooboo's core, which used to be blue, was now red. In addition to being appointed an apostle, his power had grown beyond comparison, perhaps because of consuming my arm. More importantly, Ahbooboo, I, and the God of the Sky were connected.

A huge shout from the native gods came from afar. I had not seen the native gods before. The aftermath of the power they wielded was the only thing I saw, but now, they were showing themselves.

The images of the two gods were reminiscent of the dragon of the East and the dragon of the West, just with less power and half their size. Now, I could clearly see them fighting.

The native gods were not even interested in me. To them, I was the same as all the other humans that were quickly dying off. Even if I exploded a Zit Pop or turned this area into a sea of fire, there would be no harm to them.

There was that big of a difference between having prestige and being below it. If someone shot me now, I'd be able to stop the bullet without much damage. However, the consumption value was not a complete zero. It was a very small number, about 0.001, if you had to quantify it, but it was safe to round it off to zero.

But those gods could make the blow completely zero. They could interfere with bullets and twist the law. Therefore, in order to attack a divine being, it was necessary to achieve the same level first.

[Challenger, the contract has been made.] the God of the Sky told me through Ahbooboo. Now, I was just waiting for the mana.

Through Ahbooboo, the divine power flowed into my body and I felt overwhelming, unimaginable pleasure. Power that came from outside; not mine. This had raised my standard to the next level.

At the moment when I felt the power that had flowed in, I forgot what I had to do. Now, I could understand why the sources lost themselves and became monsters as soon as they got their power. This was what real power was. One could put away all the missions, anguish, joy, and sorrow they had before. The curtain of power above one's head was so beautiful that it made them abandon their previous lives without hesitation.

No matter what, the past was useless.

As such, the past was meant to be abandoned and get eroded into the present. That's how they were eaten away in the present. They gave up the past and abandoned themselves, and hence, they gave themselves up to power. Strength was always priority. Power, not one's own strength, becomes one's self. The sources were monsters that were consumed by such power.

[Don't confuse purpose and your means.]

[You shouldn't be swayed by a weapon if you don't want to become one.]

It was the advice of the two gods that I had heard under completely different circumstances. Somehow, however, it sounded like advice

considering this situation. The two sentences kept ringing in my head, with the sound of a loud bell ringing in the distance, over and over again.

You must not be tempted by this temptation, you must wake up. This... Did I leave a message in my head in case this happened?

I laughed. *I shouldn't worry about it.*

[Warrior?]

“Yeah?”

[You weren't answering. Are you alright?]

“Of course.” I didn't mean to be eaten up by power, and it was not a matter of mental strength. I would consume and throw it away if necessary, no matter how precious, powerful and great the power may be. I was prepared for that. Power was my weapon, and not the opposite. My goal was too precious to be eaten by power.

[Funny, funny! As you said, you will never be eaten by power. You've already been eaten up by your goal!] exclaimed the God of the Sky.

Either way, I turned my attention back to the native gods.

The two gods were still fighting each other, but now they acknowledged me because of the sudden emergence of power. I was sure they'd find it embarrassing, but instead of paying attention to me, the two gods were continuing to fight, and I didn't like it.

[Go, Contractor. The power of the sky is with you.]

With my right arm, I grabbed the soul sword and swung it sideways. My power spread out along the length of the sword, and it glowed, making a sphere to protect humans from the fighting. The fireballs and ice falling from the sky were blocked. The distortion of space and time that occurred also disappeared.

This time, using a light sword, I threw the sword at the sky. A thin,

but extremely hot fire penetrated the sky, landing precisely between the two native gods. The gods finally stopped fighting because of the luminous pillar that stood between them, and glanced at me.

Yeah, that's right.

This was not a time for them to fight with each other. I made this opportunity for myself at the expense of my arm. The two gods had to come at me with full strength.

[Human?]

[Is it a human?]

[Sounds like one.]

The two gods spoke in bewildered voices. There was a huge echo, but there was neither dignity nor pressure in their voice.

[Demon, do not use up power unnecessarily. If you hand it over to me, I will give you everything on this continent.]

[Human, don't listen to him. He will surely kill you as soon as he gains strength. I'm not the one who can't be trusted.]

The native gods began to say something. Somehow, I felt like a lady who was being courted desperately by two people. They treated me as a trophy. Of course, the courtship of the two gods did not bother me at all.

"Sure. Zit Pop." Instead of answering them, I used the technique. Huge light columns pierced the sky, and made everything explode, lighting up the world.

Chapter 272

Tutorial 59th floor (7)

I was out of my mind. The air that had been excessively hot with the heat caused by the Zit Pop already cooled down and the ever-changing weather change caused dizzying gusts of wind.

[Warrior! I have to come forward now.]

“Shut up! No!” I cried out to Ahbooboo, who said he wanted to aid me. Ahbooboo’s words in themselves told me how difficult the situation was.

[You’re going to die!]

I ignored Ahbooboo’s words, even though it was true that things were not going well. It was a battle between the native gods, who had been around for hundreds of thousands of years, and me. Of course, I was at a disadvantage.

The sphere of energy that had appeared in the air continued to move forward. To win this fight, I had to decrease the distance between the gods and me, since there was no chance of winning a long-distance battle.

And as soon as those damn indigenous gods knew that I was a threat, they held hands and attacked together. The two of them had been at each other’s throats just moments before, and now they were in perfect harmony.

Suddenly, the air before me distorted, and a mysterious force grasped my body. I tried to wriggle out using force, but the arm-like power wrapped around me didn’t budge. My left shoulder, which no longer had an arm, felt like it was burning.

The invisible force was unrecognizable to me. Although I risked

tearing Talaria's wings, I attempted to fly with them, but the binding didn't unravel. It seemed that it was not physical force, but some kind of barrier.

[Yes! It's a barrier!]

A barrier was most definitely something out of my reach. I always wanted to learn more about barriers, but I had been told that it would not be enough. However, thanks to such an inquiring attitude, there was a straightforward rule that I knew about barriers: the overlapping of multiple barriers created a barrier that functioned in various directions.

Currently, there was only one recently formed barrier holding my body right now. Before the barriers overlapped, it had to be destroyed. The concept of a barrier was probably to restrict my movements with my arm as a medium.

As soon as I finished thinking, I gathered my strength, and a red sphere was placed on my right fist and shoulders.

Damn, I had never used this technique with my shoulders. In this case, I hadn't ever practiced.

“Zit Pop!”

An explosion broke out on both sides. Initially, light and heat should have been generated to cover the whole area, but the surrounding area was just as affected since the explosion was trapped in a space.

Of course, my right arm and my left shoulder burst. If I had formed a Zit Pop on my fingertips and exploded it, I could have minimized or not suffered any damage. However, in the case of my right hand and shoulder, I had formed a Zit Pop on the flesh. It was impossible for there to be no damage.

[Time suspended]

When I was about to break down and finally get out of it, a new difficulty appeared. The space where the barrier had been was strangely disturbed, and a powerful force emerged. I didn't know what the hell it was, nor did I dare even to think to look directly into the space. I could sense a little hole in the air that sucked everything in.

What is that?

The force pulling me from both sides made me feel like my body was in the midst of being torn apart.

How many seconds can I hold out? No, it probably won't be in seconds.

Suddenly, I felt a layer of power over my body. I assumed it was Ahbooboo's, but it ended up being the God of the Sky's power. Thanks to this, I relaxed in a situation where I was about to be torn to death.

[Contractor, we must get out of this quickly.]

[Twist the space!]

[Not possible. That degree of intervention-]

[No. Not that one. The space on my side. Don't twist both sides, just one! To reverse the rotation of the two areas!]

There was no certainty, and we didn't even know what the mysterious power was. I rambled, but the God of the Sky managed to understand what I wanted.

The next moment, my body shot forward at a speed that was hard for even me to comprehend. Although I was using a time-reducing technique, I broke through the air currents and thought that I might be flying into space. Fortunately, the speed dropped sharply. Without any impact, my body came to a complete standstill, floating in the air. It was the power of the God of the Sky. This time, I couldn't help but say thank you.

[No need! But I'll take your greetings!]

What are you saying?

[Warrior, I did that...]

I could vaguely hear Ahbooboo's voice from a distance.

[It's my power anyway!]

The voice of the God of the Sky was heard, too, and he seemed to be more shameless than I thought.

[Come down slowly. The distorted space has been sealed, but it takes some time to disappear completely. You'd better not come down here until then.] he spoke.

I decided to take a breather for a while, as advised by the God of the Sky. That was a perilous experience. I felt like I came back after shaking hands with the Grim Reaper, and not my great-grandfather, who had passed away over the river of life and death.

[Warrior, if I help a bit, the odds will go up a little.]

No, it's better not to.

I sacrificed one arm for this opportunity, so I had to learn and go through more.

Then two native gods began to rise towards where I was, and I was sure they were thinking of ending me and establishing a bond.

[Warrior...]

I needed more time, and although I was adjusting quickly, if I got a little more used to it, I'd be able to find out more.

[Jengent]

The sky was burning.

Hail as big as rocks poured down and melted in the air, and water flooded in.

The battle between the gods and the ancient demon was phenomenal. While I was watching, I wondered if what I was seeing was all just an illusion. The original plan to attack those gods with cannon fire seemed ridiculous. When he heard my plan, the demon had made a preposterous face because he knew how ridiculous it was. It was evident that my soldiers and I were of no use in the upcoming battle against the gods.

A sense of shame overwhelmed me. When the capital fell, I was stationed in the neighborhood. When I first received a request for assistance about a disturbance in the capital, I was worried about the people. Recently, many had been using explosives to deal a blow to the city capital and the royal palace. Naturally, I predicted such a disturbance. It was all the more so because the radio was soon cut off.

The enemy must have attacked the communication tower first, so I was glad I got the message before that. Thinking so, I led an army to the capital.

When I arrived at the capital, the first thing I saw was the dark sky filled with black smoke. The capital city spewed black smoke like a chimney, and the sky's original color was masked.

People ran out through the gates, pushing each other in order to get home. The sight of tens of thousands of people running out was devastating. Every time ten people escaped out of the gate, a hundred people were crushed to death elsewhere. I didn't even think of getting a unit through the gate and just tried to calm the troops down somehow and reduce casualties.

But soon, I could understand people's feelings, too. Why they were so terrified, and why they had utterly lost their reason. All sorts of things were falling over our heads: flames, ice chunks, liquids that melted flesh, monsters we'd never seen before, and fragments of sharp metal.

People were all scrambling forward so as not to die.

Only then did I realize that it was not just a scream that came out of people's mouths. It was an appeal. They prayed to God as they died. They prayed for mercy and forgiveness.

Some parents gave up escaping and prayed for the safety of their little children. There was a sorcerer who cried, "What in the world is their sin?" Not a moment later, a rock fell over his head, smashing him to pieces.

The popular belief was that all this a heavenly punishment given by the gods was because the people were not faithful enough.

There were many kinds of clans, and the gods were fair to all of them. Fairly indifferent, that is.

It was easy to see that the gods were not punishing people. They were quarreling with each other. Their bodies could not even be seen with the naked eye, but I could sense it. The powers they wielded were directed at each other in the sky. What fell over the capital was nothing but a remnant of their forces.

That was how people died. I couldn't reach where the gods were fighting over the capital, and I couldn't get inside the gate. In that situation, I had no choice but to do my best to rescue people.

I saved people like crazy. I was running around, yelling at soldiers, gathering people, and clearing up the collapsed walls' rubble. Perhaps because I was so stressed, my memories after that were all mixed up.

When I came to my senses, I was in a city many miles away from the capital with less than 2,000 survivors, and more than half the soldiers dead.

Too many people had died. None of the clans in the capital city had survived, and no royalty or noble, who was close to the capital, could escape. The capital, which was the start of the kingdom, was ruined.

Just like that, the kingdom collapsed. Territories along the border had been taken over by other countries. It was clear that the other lands

would soon be claimed, too.

As general commander of the Capital Defense Force, I became a sort of centerpiece. The people who were in a weak position gathered around me. All the royal troops assembled except for the soldiers stationed on the border. The royal family outside the capital stepped up further as they supported me, and the neutral territories came in one by one.

I became increasingly busy, and my sadness and longing faded away. Instead, anger grew in its place.

Many days had passed as I continued to scream at documents and people's faces when a particular piece of news came in. There was a report about the confrontation between the archmage and the demon. The winner of the match, the archmage, was seen turning into a monster. The observing sorcerer said that the reason the gods devastated the capital might have been to take over the monster-turned sorcerer.

I immediately led the whole army that night to the place where the monster had been seen, with all available troops and cannons. People stopped me, saying that instead of searching and capturing monsters, I should gun them down.

I thought the gods might chase the monster.

As we advanced with great force, we also sent a large number of troops from other countries. The competition got fierce, but I thought it wasn't bad. The more troops gathered, the better. I didn't know if I could be done without them.

And then I met an ancient demon. I recognized it at a glance. That was the ancient demon I had only ever heard of.

The devil only kidnapped commanders and sorcerers from each country without any difficulty. Looking at him, I thought he might help me fight against the gods. If I could get the help of the demon, I would offer my soul to him.

That was what had happened, but the gods appeared, and my thoughts changed again. No human could directly face the power of

the gods without being torn down. No matter how powerful the cannons were, no matter how many soldiers there were, they were helpless before the power of the gods.

It was obvious. I had led the soldiers here and killed them by my baseless judgement. I didn't even think of bringing back the number of injured people and just wanted to kill the gods.

Then, an unknown power covered the area. A large sphere blocked all kinds of disasters falling from the sky, and an explosion ripped through the space. The explosion did little to us, perhaps because of the protective sphere.

Only after the dust and light cleared a bit did I notice that a man was flying in the sky. It was him—the ancient demon.

I could see the demon was protecting the people and fighting the gods.

His glimmering wings and attacks against the gods seemed too holy for him to be a demon. Instead, he looked like a hero from all angles much like the Founding King, who, when a great flood covered the continent, destroyed the great monster that caused the flood and established the kingdom.

The demon was just like the king, whose mythical achievements make me believe that he was not human.

“If you don't need my soul, what do you want from me?” Back in the spire, I had asked the demon, but his answer was somewhat unexpected.

“Collect faith,” he said.

“Faith?”

“Uhh... Let people cheer me on.”

Cheer? You want me to cheer for the demon? I couldn't understand.

“It’s better to get people’s support, isn’t it?” was all the demon had said. If he was the demon, could he do that? He protected the people and rushed towards the gods to protect us, but all he wanted in return was the people’s support.

There was a commotion around with the surviving soldiers were shouting at the sky, and some kneeling and praying. I stretched out my neck and grabbed a soldier by his collar unknowingly.

“Do you want to pray to God in this situation? You moron!” I screamed at him.

The soldier looked at me with teary, bloodshot eyes and shouted, “I’m praying for that hero!”

For whom?

“All I can do is pray for him!”

I let go of the soldier’s collar with a muddled mind. The soldier immediately knelt again, closed his eyes, and began to pray.

I picked up the radio with my trembling hands. A message was delivered to all the commanders under my command.

“Cheer and pray for that hero. He is the Founding King, the founder of our kingdom! The Founding King has returned to stop gods who are fascinated with madness and attack humans!”

As the soldier said, the only thing we could do was pray for that demon.

* * *

“It’s the best.” I had no choice but to murmur when I saw the gods approaching me.

The core of the sorcerer’s source was in my stomach, along with the core of the source given by the God of Remorse asleep in my mana circuit.

Massive forces were gathering into these two cores. “This is indeed the power of the source.”

Chapter 273

Tutorial 59th floor (8)

“This is the source.”

[Yes.] The God of the Sky answered my murmur.

The power of the archmage’s core and the God of Remorse’s core converged to form an overwhelming power.

I was flooded with more power than my previous self. It was as if a new force had covered me once again. It was a sensation similar to when I had first accepted the power of the God of the Sky.

The intense pleasure made me dazed, my mind filled with a mixture of gratification, superiority over the past, and enthusiasm created by excitement.

[Warrior!] exclaimed Ahbooboo.

I didn’t answer.

I could feel the desperation through connection with those who were sharing their power. In the whirlwind of emotions, my consciousness was almost swept away. I was able to hold onto myself in the midst of this mess, still feeling as though I were in a washing machine. This was the third experience following the 18th and 57th-floor stages, so I had some experience knowing how to protect myself.

The problem was not the people’s feelings, but mine. I couldn’t control my own feelings.

[Warrior! Can you hear my voice?] Ahbooboo’s voice rang in my head, but I couldn’t answer him. I couldn’t afford to.

[Warrior!]

The man with supernatural powers from the 57th floor came to mind, and I could understand his feelings. With this much power, anyone could have succumbed to greed.

I, who held Ahbooboo in my hand, was swayed by his mighty power. I became arrogant and aggressive. It was the same when I got my powers. The same was true even now when the source was obtained. The problem was that, in the case of the source, power would go beyond the control of its master, and take away their sanity.

When I thought about it, my heart ached, and it suddenly got hot. I could feel something breaking through my bones and ripping through my muscles and flesh. When I looked down, a thin blade pierced my chest, but someone hadn't stabbed me from behind. This blade erupted through my chest from within my body. The power that flowed into my body turned into a blade.

The supernatural being from back then came to mind. My whole body had been covered with tentacles. I was not a tentacle but a blade. I thought it was far better compared to the tentacles.

The next moment, dozens of blades rose, covering my arms, legs, and torso. My veins, as well as tendons, broke open, and blood flowed like a waterfall. But even at this moment, I felt more excited than afraid or anxious about the blade that was piercing through my body.

Even in the process of literally becoming a sword and not being a human, I could feel that I was becoming more powerful and complete.

The blades, sticking out like hedgehogs, began to expand. Blades rose over one another, again and again, making a pattern of sorts. In that instant, the blades were not like a hedgehog's back, but a bird's nest or a fence of barbed wire.

I was unable to move because of pain caused by nerve and muscle damage caused by the blades.

[...!]

I could hear Ahbooboo's voice in the distance. Now I couldn't understand what he was saying. Before, I couldn't comprehend since it felt as if he were shouting from afar. Maybe my connection with Ahbooboo had weakened, or my consciousness had just faded.

What Ahbooboo was saying could be predicted. He was trying to stop this for me, who was being eaten by the source. He'd tell me to either disconnect from the source or force the stage to be cleared somehow.

He shouldn't say so.

[If that's what you want.] said the God of the Sky, and Ahbooboo's presence disappeared. My connection with him had disappeared entirely.

"God of the Sky."

[What's wrong?]

Ahbooboo disappeared. The source was tearing my body to shreds and trying to run towards the world, but I couldn't care more about it. Before that, I had to question the God of the Sky about Ahbooboo.

"What happened to Ahbooboo?"

[Why do you ask that? It looks like you're about to be eaten, so focus on that.]

"Explain."

[He's my apostle. It's none of your business what I do to him.] was what the God of the Sky said.

And I couldn't agree with that.

Ahbooboo was my property. He was my sword and my power. Ahbooboo's disappearance meant that my strength had been lost.

[Aubutz is still by your side. I just held him back for a while.]

It was a relief. I was worried that the God of the Sky might have sent Ahbooboo back to where he was.

[By the way, you're extraordinarily rude. You're like the man who would say that 'Your daughter is mine from now on' in front of your father-in-law.]

Ahbooboo was not my lover, but my sword and he belonged to me. Moreover, a woman like Ahbooboo would be a no-go.

The God of the Sky smiled slowly and said, [You're even playing games with me, so I guess you're rational. I thought so, but honestly, I'm a little surprised.

[Shouldn't we focus on controlling power now? Your power is trying to free itself from your body.]

That was a reasonable remark. I had no intention of letting the power of the source deviate from me. Of course, I didn't mean to let it eat my body and my mind.

* * *

The strength of the source was similar to that of the gods in connecting with people. My sanity and reason were in danger of being eaten by that overwhelming power.

There was also a difference. The source was not the kind of power that twisted the law to create miracles and exercise it on others. Instead, it literally ate and destroyed a being. It was that kind of power.

"Move."

The blade shook, and I felt it. It was just a dull move, but I felt it. It was amazing. I could feel the blade just like any other part of my body. I could even sense the fluctuating feelings of the blade.

[More power is needed.]

[You have to eat more.]

[You must protect me from my enemies.]

[All enemies must be killed and destroyed.]

[I am imperfect.]

[I need more to be complete.]

*Shut up, you little b*tch.*

I agreed that higher power was needed, but it could not beat the native gods with the form of a huge wire fence. So, be under my control quietly.

Sometimes you want to do the opposite of what your mind says. I wanted to take a run outside, but I had to sit at my desk for hours to study. I wanted to fall asleep, but I had to practice an extra hour for tomorrow. I wanted to faint right away, but it was time to endure the pain and continue the battle.

This was a similar situation. The desire for expansion of power rises, but I only had to control it well to defeat the enemy. The blade, the source, was only part of my power.

The blades stretched all over the place were gathered together. The blade soon clumped together to form a huge mass that made a giant blade.

I shot off at one of the native gods who was watching me stupidly. The gods had watched me quietly, and since their purpose was the core of the source in the first place, the birth of a new source was something to be pleased with.

And I didn't want to leave such a gap alone. I'd do a little more flexing of strength, a bit of practice after getting used to it, but I'd definitely not miss a surprise attack.

*Go to hell, you pathetic b*stards!*

The native god, who was my target, hastily formed a shield over his

body to try to defend himself. However, due to the lack of preparation at all, the defense was too weak.

The sound of a huge glass breaking was heard as I broke through the shield, and the blade pierced through the shield and into the body of that god.

“Argh!” A native god, reminiscent of an Asian dragon, howled. It was a chilling scream, but I felt good hearing it.

Finally, I had dealt damage to the native god. It was a bit of a cowardly attack, but it meant a lot to have caused damage. If the damage was accumulated like this, he could be killed.

As soon as I judged so, I moved without delay. I wondered if I could use the Zit Pop technique in a situation where I became a huge blade, and not a human body, but I tried it once.

Bam! Bam!

Quaaaaang!

Contrary to my concerns, it exploded so smoothly. Rather, the explosion was faster and smoother than it was before. If I knew this would happen, I would have made the explosion stronger.

The native god screamed loudly. Since the deeply embedded blade had suddenly exploded, no matter what god he was, the damage was bound to be great.

[Time suspended]

I stopped attacking for a moment. There was something to think about.

The blade that became my body was intact with the fire of Zit Pop. It was obvious that the blade wouldn't melt. Not because the melting point of the blade was high, but the power of the blade and the fire were essentially the same. Both were made up of the power of the source, and at the same time, they were my power.

I had to loosen my body, and make the metal take the same shape as my body.

Soon, I could form a metal body that looked exactly the same as my previous body. There was no need to fine-tune the joints, blood vessels, mana circuit or organs. I could perfectly shape my body just by thinking.

I raised my hand. My face was reflected on the metal palm. This was definitely a silver surface...

Then the other native god's attack flew in. Instead of retorting all kinds of attacks one by one, I just flew again toward the native god, who was struck by a Zit Pop and was unable to come to his senses. The native god didn't even think of stopping me.

I held down the body of the other native god. Instead of attacking, I stopped his movements. If this was the case, he wouldn't be able to attack.

Blood spewed out continuously, and the native god shook himself, making it difficult to keep his body down. I managed to hold on to something. I didn't know what it was exactly, but I had probably grabbed one of the ribs of the native god and hung on.

I had sorted out what I was thinking. Obviously, I was poor at controlling the source. But more than anything, if it was something I could get used to, I knew I could do it. The question that remained was whether it was possible to get used to this.

[Of course, it's possible. It's another matter whether you can do it or not.] replied the God of the Sky.

Since he had guaranteed, now it had to be tried.

A metal hand came forward, with a flame hovering above it. This hand was not a human body's. It was unlike the human body, which was made of blood and flesh, and an average temperature of 36.5 degrees. But it couldn't be termed metal either. It was an entity made from the source's power.

The source could be in the form of metal. If it could take the form of metal, wouldn't it be possible for it to take the form of fire? As soon as I thought so, my hands, which were in the form of cold metal, started burning. To be exact, it became a burning flame itself. Soon, not just my hands, but also my entire body got covered with fire.

I recited quietly, feeling a sense of accomplishment. "Burn."

My body was set on fire, and the brilliant flames held on to every part of my body.

Chapter 274

Tutorial 59th floor (9)

[The God of Light is excited!]

[The God of Light is excited!]

[The God of Light cheers!]

[The God of Light is on someone's head...]

[Voting begins]

[Yes: 61 votes No: 1 vote]

“It’s the best.” As I said a little while ago, I mumbled once more because this was really the best.

The explanation of the Spirit King, who mentioned that the source could raise the level, was on spot. It really was.

From below, a dull thud resounded. It was the sound of the native god falling down. No matter what kind of god he was, he wouldn’t be able to handle the explosion within his body. The native god fell without even screaming.

Now, there was only one native god left, who seemed to have lost his fighting spirit. The battle did not seem to carry on. Meanwhile, I thought it was good that he didn’t run away.

[I can't run away. I might lose something more precious than my life.]

“What do you mean by that?”

[There's a lot of people watching from down there. If I show defeat, their respect for me as a god will plunge. The supply of faith will get blocked, and as a result, we may lose our dignity.]

You had no qualms about slaughtering tens of thousands of believers, but you can't run away in front of them? All for reputation?

It didn't make sense.

[That's how it works. Even if there was a massacre, in a hundred years or so, it will be glorified and recorded for the victor. No, maybe even in just ten years.]

I didn't know that. But, I didn't really care. I cared more about my condition than whatever that might happen to the native god.

My body had become a burning flame itself. I raised my hand and looked at the slowly swaying flame. It turned into a blade, and then a flame. On the 57th floor, the source had tentacles as opposed to a blade.

Then, of course, other forms other than fire would be possible. I felt like I shouldn't do anything right now.

[Because you're not familiar with it.]

For example, if you wanted to use other attributes, you needed more skill. It was more comfortable to understand it through the example of a game.

The next thing that bothered me was my left arm, which was attached to my body when it was on fire.

[I'll let you know about that. There won't be anyone to tell you.]

Originally I was going to ask Kirikiri, but I kept my mouth shut. I wanted answers, after all.

[This is because the spirit body, when apart from the body, is in that form.]

Spirit body?

[It's a container for the soul. Since you have shed away the shell of your body, getting control of the spirit body would be the next step.]

Spirit body... Should I instinctively think of this form as my body and my own consciousness? I didn't know yet.

It was reasonable to say that I had taken off my human shell. I had turned into a fire and no longer had a human body.

[For a human being, it wouldn't have been easy. In your case, there was no trigger, but I think you were ready to throw it away. Amazing, amazing. This is new.] the God of the Sky muttered.

What are you talking about?

Hell difficulty was a level where you can't proceed if you're attached to your body in the first place. It was beneficial in many ways to think of it as a properly stocked consumable product.

Come to think of it, that native god was still in shape.

He had a monster-like appearance similar to that of the Eastern Dragon in its ferocious evolution. He remained in the same form when he fired at me with numerous powers and when he was hit back by me. Obviously it was a huge, powerful, and dignified form, but that form was their frame and limit.

That was what I'd been thinking about when I felt the remaining native god moving again. It seemed to me that he had enough defenses, and now he was looking for a means to attack me again.

Was it a barrier? It was similar to the power I had experienced earlier.

I'd been thinking for a while, so I was sure I had plenty of time to prepare.

I decided to put aside my worries for the moment and subdue the god first. *What would it be like if I let my guard down and let him turn the tables on me?*

I walked slowly toward the native god. With every step, the fire spread around with a roar.

As I approached him, I gradually picked up speed, from walking to running. When I was close enough, I jumped, moving my body forward at the same time. Then, I leaned down slightly and curled myself into a ball, and with all my might, I flung myself towards him. My body, which flew like a bullet, broke through the numerous defenses set up by the native god and even penetrated his body.

Quaaaaaang!

I penetrated his body and stopped. Looking back, fragments of the shield, flesh, and blood of that god were spread out where I was. It was as if a firecracker of blood and flesh had burst before my eyes. It wasn't a very good sight.

The body of the native god had a huge hole in it, and it wasn't just a bullet hole. I wondered if he would die like that. Fortunately, he didn't.

As expected, he was strong enough, but this was the best when I was still testing things out. A simple headbutt had done this. It was tantamount to suicide for normal people, but if they had the perfect combo, they would not lose anytime, anywhere. Just like how I used to use Talaria's wings and Blink combo all the time.

The native god began to shiver like the other god who had fallen to the fire earlier. I laughed to myself at the sight.

[Are you having fun? Unexpectedly, I thought you'd be sad that you stopped your fight too soon.] said the God of the Sky.

Come to think of it, the gods thought my biggest feature was

struggling, which was not really the case.

“There are two subjects that are not actually dead, so I’m not disappointed.”

There was nothing fixed. Just checking each and every thing that popped into my head would give me enough results.

Damn, I’m so happy.

[I’m very sorry about this.]

“What?” When I asked back, a strange thing happened to the world. The empty air above cracked, and someone walked out: a divine figure.

[The Tutorial intervenes]

It had also happened on the 57th floor. The gods dispatched a divine figure and the stage was terminated.

I had defeated the native gods just some moments before, yet it was a colorless victory. My power shrank. The divine figure, who walked through the crack, exuded an incomparable presence compared to the two native gods.

But the problem was not that. With the entry of a new character, the stage would end.

[You’ve cleared floor 59th of the Tutorial’s Hell Difficulty.]

[The 98 gods of the Temple are watching over you.]

[God of Light pouts his lips.]

*No, you wicked b*stards. You're gonna end it here? Are you out of your mind?*

I didn't even want much. I admitted that I was greedy, and wanted a week's time. If not, then one day. No, even half a day.

A portal appeared under my feet and began to emit white light. *What bullsh*t! Just another hour. Hey, just one hour!!*

There were native gods over there, and humans were connected to me. I wanted to see the archbishop again and test my powers more.

I'd never know whether my desperation was heard or not as the portal began to spin slowly.

*Wow, isn't this too much? You son of a b*tch!*

I can't go! No, I'm not going! I managed to hold out so as to not be teleported, somehow using my powers. The portal can fail if the user operates the mana. No matter what god it was, it should be enough for me to hold on with the power of the God the Sky and the source.

* * *

I couldn't stand it. *Damn it.*

The place where I was teleported to was full of darkness. It was a strange place.

It was a place where there was not even a handful of light. Nothing was visible, and most probably, nothing was there. It was similar to the temple of the God of Slowness, full of emptiness, but there was something else. A part of the darkness was moving. Darkness, which at first glance seemed like a speck, was trying to penetrate my body. It was trying to draw my powers.

[Give up.]

[Give up!]

*Don't f*ck with me. I won't give up anything! This is my power! You can't take this away from me!*

“It's my power!” I urged.

I couldn't figure out the situation, but I understood well that someone was trying to take away my power.

I held on desperately. But soon, I felt something rip off.

“God of the Sky! Help! Help!”

[Sorry, Contractor, I can't help you, or my power would be crushed.]

I heard the words of the God of the Sky and felt something slipping out of my body. The next moment, I was moved from a dark space to a bright place.

A cool breeze blew in the sunny weather. There were small hills and half-hidden in the grass, and rabbit ears were seen poking out.

It was Kirikiri's field.

“Long!”

“...Long?”

“Long time no see!” Kirikiri welcomed me with a naive smile.

Certainly, it'd been a long time.

“...yes.”

“Hehe.” Kirikiri was laughing cheerfully, hopping around, but I was too distracted by my mixed feelings.

The fact that I was upset by the opportunity I had missed to experiment wasn’t the main problem. Rather, I felt a sense of exhaustion due to the power of the God of the Sky and the power of the source. And the inconvenience of having my left arm missing from my recovered body. It wasn’t just my left arm though.

Every little movement and each breath was uncomfortable.

“C’mon!”

Even so, the power of the source from the 59th floor was clearly my strength. Damn it. A fit of anger overtook me. In a rage, I kicked the dirt floor. A hollow hole appeared where I had kicked it.

Kirikiri approached with a surprised look. Then she grumbled and began to fill out the hole with her hands. I felt sorry for no reason and squatted down with Kirikiri.

* * *

“Have you calmed down now?”

“A little.”

Lying on the floor and looking at the sky, I seemed to have calmed down a little. I thought I’d be calmer if Kirikiri hadn’t been sitting on my stomach with her legs crossed.

“You said there was a difference between the gods.”

“Yes, I did.”

I could feel it this time. The two native gods on the 59th floor really felt like gods to me. However, I realized that they were much weaker than the God of the Sky or the divine being that had appeared at the last minute.

“It may all look the same to people, but the gods have their own complicated relationships. There are lower gods, upper gods, mixed hostilities and friendships. There are times when the hierarchy is too much.”

It was over a wall that looked the same to all from the bottom, but it wasn't the same. There was a long way to go. I liked that.

“Heh.”

Well, I was still growing. I wouldn't stop, and my hardships would continue, but I was confident that I could somehow endure and move on.

“About the gods.” Kirikiri was talking to me. It was unusual for Kirikiri to start talking about information first. Even more so, since it was expensive information about the gods.

“There's a lot of information left. Anyway, getting help directly from the gods isn't very good in the long run.”

I suppose so.

This time, I went a little too far because I thought I would have a chance to fight against the native gods.

Enough to bear with the loss of giving my left arm to Ahbooboo.

“Especially the God of the Sky.” Kirikiri poked at the sky god. “He's a god who looks down at everything.”

[God of the Sky expresses discontent.]

“I know.”

Chapter 275

Tutorial 60th Floor (0-1)

“I know.” I knew the reason why the God of the Sky was doing me a favor. I couldn’t get a favor without knowing it. I came into contact with him after I fully knew about him.

“Don’t get too close to the God of the Sky. He is a god who looks down on everything. On the contrary, everyone has to look up to him,” Kirikiri explained, ignoring my words. “If he likes you, you...”

“I have to look up at him.”

Kirikiri nodded at my words. “It may be taken for granted to look up to God, but it is not. Some need to be aware of it.”

In a way, it was natural. How many believers had never doubted the existence of God? If there was anyone who had never doubted a single thing in his life, that person would be even more strange.

“And the God of the Sky knows that you’re aware of the meaning of struggle, overthrow, and challenge. I know that and I like you.”

[The God of the Sky expresses his discontent.]

“I know you do. After all, you’re telling me not to trust the God of the Sky because he’s insane,” I said.

You can tell he’s crazy just by looking at the new Ahbooboo. In fact, how many of the gods were sane? They were all idiots.

The sane ones included the God of Devotion, the God of Devotion, and the God of Devotion. *Damn, there's only the God of devotion.*

Kirikiri pouted out her mouth. "Heng. No, that's not true."

"What do you mean no? Have some cake." I bought a cake from the store window.

"Yes, I'll eat!"

It'd been a long time, so I left the Kirikiri with the cake, seeing her unusually fierce behavior. I had a lot of thoughts to clear up. Perhaps the first thing to sort out was the information about the source.

The core of the source, obtained from the archmage, that appeared in the stage was not just an imitation. The beings in the stage felt that the fake core was full of source power, but I couldn't feel any power, so I thought the core was a fake made for stage use. But while fighting with the native gods, the power of the source that had gathered in the core, which showed that it was not.

The core of the archmage was thought to be just an empty vessel, not an imitation. Indeed, when the forces of sources gathered together, the core of the archmage faithfully served the role of the vessel, and the beings on the stage just didn't know that the core was empty. It was an interesting fact.

On the 57th floor, a monster of the source had emerged from the stage where superhumans appeared. I had seen it with my own eyes: the process of the superhuman becoming the source. It occurred to me that perhaps there was a real core inside the monster which was full of source power. If so, it was understandable that as soon as I got rid of the monster, the stage ended in a hurry. It may not be the case, but it was a topic to think about.

Something had taken away the core after I cleared the 59th-floor stage. If it was a significant power outside the stage, then the Tutorial could in fact be a fishing farm of sources. In this case, a new point was added to the design purpose of the Tutorial, the training of apostles and the eradication of monsters.

“There are many purposes. There are hundreds of gods, so there are a hundreds of purposes,” said Kirikiri while digging into the cake.

A hundred purposes. That was something I had been thinking about before. Perhaps the 100th-floor stage of the Tutorial was designed by all the gods.

Each stage had very different themes, and its goals had changed little by little. Above all, certain gods showed great interest in only one stage, and little interest in others.

“Yes. That’s right.”

If all the gods had designed the 100th-floor Tutorial stage, as Kirikiri said, they had multiple purposes. The gods, who were interested in the training of apostles, designed a stage that would help them. The god who liked the Tutorial would design a stage such that the challenger would get as much from the Tutorial as possible. On the contrary, a cruel god may design a stage as difficult as possible for a challenger to clear. The gods who weren’t very interested would have taken charge of the residential area, and the gods who weren’t even interested in that would give guidance to the Dragon. They’d divide based on source-collecting and handling the normal stages.

“Is what I thought right?”

“Uh-huh. Except we have to match the theme and the difficulty.”

If the difficulty level was not high enough, it seemed that it could be adjusted according to the theme to a certain extent.

“If I had known this in advance, it would have been very helpful.”

Just knowing which god had designed the stage would help me predict some of their goals and orientations.

“Heng, I can’t tell you that,” said Kirikiri, raising her finger. She wanted to look stern, but she didn’t look like that at all because of the whipped cream she had all over her fingers and face.

It was new information, but it wouldn't help right now. Whether the source I collected from the 59th floor was significant outside the stage or not was what I wanted to know. I didn't ask if making the source was possible only through the tutorial stages. She wouldn't be able to answer me anyway. It was a matter for me to think about alone.

"Please answer me"

The nucleus of the archmage was gone, but the nucleus that the God of Remorse had given remained. Of course, all the power gained from the 59th floor was gone.

I'd been trying to deal with this power for a long time. My lack of ability had not prevented me from dealing with this nuclear power. The core given by the God of Remorse had only a tiny amount of power. It had only a small amount of power to be swayed by, so I couldn't use it. Of course, I was able to easily adapt to the source on the 59th floor thanks to that, but I didn't know if it was worth the punishment of the God of Remorse himself.

Next, the existence that took away my source.

"I can't tell you about that either."

I guessed so. Thanks to that, I had added yet another goal to accomplish. I didn't know who or what it was, but I'd be looking forward to meeting it later.

"How innocent and reckless."

It was not a very reckless plan compared to the original plan. It was such a reckless plan to free the world of the Tutorial stages.

"Oh, so you do know."

Of course I knew. I set a goal while thinking about the possibility of success and the risks. I knew how tough my goal was.

"Ahem, ahem," Kirikiri coughed. When I came out of my thoughts, Kirikiri had already eaten up the whole cake, and was standing up

from her seat.

“Do you have something to say?”

“Yes,” Kirikiri spoke with a serious face.

Whenever Kirikiri, who was always smiling, looked serious, I always got nervous about what was going on.

“It’s about the next stage.”

Next stage? The 60th floor was just a residential area, right?

* * *

Oh, come to think of it, the store window would be updated on the 60th floor. I once asked if there were any items that could restore Ahbooboo. Kirikiri only answered that it was possible, but she didn’t tell me exactly what was needed.

“No, no. That’s not it.”

“What do you want to say then?”

Was there anything new to celebrate going up to the 60th floor? Like a new system window? I’d like to have liked a personal skill window. There was a stat window that didn’t help, but the skills on the bottom were so long that it was uncomfortable to read.

“Uh... it does change. First of all, after the 60th floor, the level of difficulty will increase significantly.”

That was good news. Very good news.

“There’s going to be a stage with 50 people and not just 10 people.”

That wouldn’t be a party stage, but a raid stage. A raid boss worthy of fifty men’s strength. I was already excited.

“The stage concept will change a lot too.”

“How?”

Kirikiri scratched her chin. “The 40th floor had a lot of stages about the role of apostles, and the 50th floor was about apostles, gods, and sources, right?”

“Yeah,” I confirmed.

“So, the combat difficulty wouldn’t have been so high. From the 60th floor, the concept changes back to what it used to be.”

What it used to be?

“Any kind of information you needed to get through the stage, will be gone. You’ll have to struggle to survive the moment you enter the stage. Instead of having to just follow the story of the stage, the difficulty of attack and survival will be greatly increased.”

It sounded great. I wanted to get more information, and there were still a lot of new things that I could get with the information. However, I had a greater desire to be stronger.

“The problem is... the 61st floor after that comes after the 60th floor.”

“The 61st floor is a different sort of stage.”

Honestly, I was confident. Confident that I could clear the 61st floor. It wasn’t that Kirikiri had never been anxious. Every time I had a hard time, I did not fail to clear the stage.

“Heng...” Kirikiri wriggled her fingers.

What kind of stage was that? My curiosity and enthusiasm surged.

“That’s... a stage that needs more than two challengers...”

“Two-Party Stage?”

“No. It’s a stage for 50 people, but we need at least two people to proceed.”

My body suddenly got cold. It was as if someone poured cold water on me.

“How can I clear it alone?”

“Not possible. The progress itself is blocked.”

Ah, God damn it. I couldn’t help but swear.

“What makes you think that?”

“As I’ve told you before, we didn’t know a human being would come all this way alone. And when someone reaches a floor, naturally more latecomers follow. Usually, the 30th and 60th floors are the same residential areas where those latecomers pile up... So...”

Are you talking about stagnant challengers? Certainly, there was such a section for Normal difficulty and Hard difficulty. In a residential area, or just before a particularly difficult stage, a section of challengers huddled together.

In Hell difficulty level, the 60th floor was like that. In the second half of the 50th floor, the Dragon designated the right stage for each, so the attack itself wasn’t difficult. From the 61st floor, the level of difficulty was rapidly rising. Of course, it was expected for stagnant challengers to gather on the 60th floor, and for the 61st floor to have a theme.

“That’s how it is.”

Only me and Hyung-jin were seriously targeting the stage in Hell Difficulty, but the difference in our stage levels was huge. I knew the Hell difficulty wasn’t designed to be expected for humans to clear it even more so just one human alone, but this was too much.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: Hyung-jin, what floor are you on?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 13th floor: 13th floor, Hyung.]

Why was he still on the 13th floor? *Damn it.*

[Lee Hyung-jin, 13th floor: As you said, the 13th floor is good, so I challenged it many times. I can get to know the monks quickly. They like to teach and study together, so I'm learning hard.]

Hyung-jin was growing steadily. He was steady but very slow, so it was hard to complain. I was the one who told him to practice because the 13th floor would be a great help for growth.

Anyway, if what Kirikiri said is true, Hyung-jin was actually needed to clear the 61st floor. Damn it, the more I thought about it, the angrier I grew. It may take a few more years for Hyung-jin to come up to the 60th floor. A year? It was obvious that two years would be enough. I could just train myself to death for the rest of the time.

I let out a deep sigh. I should sort it out right now. Going up to the 60th floor, settling down in the residential area, and training will be my only daily routine. In my spare time, I should focus on Hyung-jin's growth. I should not only give advice from time to time but also raise Hyung-jin. I needed to make sure he could get to the 60th floor safely as soon as possible.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: Hyung-jin, are you free now? I have to talk to you...]

I tried to send a message to Hyung-jin, but Kirikiri grabbed me by the arm.

"I'm not done yet. Don't send that message."

Once again, I felt my heart pounding. It was very rare for Kirikiri to go beyond advising and restrain my actions.

"...What is it? What else is there?"

"First of all, I'll explain more about the 61st floor."

“Does that explanation have to be heard before sending a message?”

“Yes,” Kirikiri answered firmly. “You need to know about the 61st floor before you send the message.”

“Tell me.”

“The theme on the 61st floor is sacrifice.”

Chapter 276

Tutorial 60th Floor (0-2)

Sacrifice

I had only heard one thing, yet I could clearly feel the difficulty of the 61st floor stage. The concept of sacrifice where two or more people must challenge the stage. *Are you out of your mind, god who designed the 61st floor?*

At this point, rather than panicking, I was calm. It was just a crisis that needed to be overcome. It couldn't be compared to facing an enemy with a huge power gap. It was even more so because there was no room for a detour.

Depending on how powerful the enemy is, we could gain the upper hand in many ways: surprise, conciliatory, escape, ambush, etc. However, stages with a sacrifice concept for a two-man attack had no way of doing anything. It's hard to find a person at the same level, and even if he does reach that level, he must be sacrificed.

“For now, tell me more about the stage.”

Kirikiri nodded. Come to think of it, Kirikiri also needed to rob the information this time. I didn't ask, but she told them about gods and sources. She must have been confident that I would not be able to clear the 61st floor soon.

“Yes... Let me explain the stage first.”

I silently agreed. *Let's hear it first.* There might be some leads.

“The 61st-floor stage is divided into two sections. Each section can be chosen from its starting point.”

“And two or more challengers have to target both sections, right? I can’t help the other side.”

“Yes.”

So far, it was understandable. Dungeons that were split into two often appeared in games.

“The problem is the difficulty level of the 61st-floor stage.”

“Difficulty level?”

“Yes. It’s very, very difficult.”

What was with that adjective?

There were so many stages that Kirikiri said were so difficult, but only the 6th and 35th floors came to mind.

“In fact, the 61st-floor challenger can’t clear it usually.”

“That’s pretty rough.”

“On the 26th floor alone, it is necessary to defeat the Demon King without anyone’s help, except for the Holy sword.”

That had been crazy. The 26th floor, I remembered, was a fairly large party stage. On top of that, it was a stage where soldiers, knights, and wizards of the Imperial Army carried swords. The soldiers stationed at the front line fortress serve as a deterrent to the demons until they reach the Demon King

“Are we dealing with a big party of more than 50 people?”

“No, this is just measuring the level of difficulty considering 50 people. Instead, we can weaken the enemy at the expense of the challengers.”

It was going well and suddenly it became too much. *Sacrificing to*

weaken the enemy? Is this Yu-Gi-Oh?

“It’s not dangerous even if they’re offered as a sacrifice. It’s just that the victim challenger gets moved from the stage to the 60th-floor residential area.”

Mmm. If it was just a problem with this difficulty, I think I could manage it with my ability. Of course, if I were to attack both sections without a sacrificial sheep, I wouldn’t be able to do it by myself. If I raised Hyung-jin well...

“And once you get rid of the bosses in each section, a new place opens, where the challengers from both sides gather again...”

I had to fight him. *Damn it.*

“What about the rules?”

“Clear or surrender.”

It was fortunate that the surrender was an option.

“Why did you put this stage in? Sacrifice is no joke. It’s not a mafia game. Throwing away your colleagues one by one... So what are we supposed to do?”

Was it a stage where they wanted to break the trust between human beings?

It could be called excellent if it was intended to instill distrust and ill feelings toward each other. But what about the Hell Difficulty Challenger, who might be considered an apostle candidate?

“Heng. Not really.”

“Then?”

“The number of Hell difficulty challengers are low. The challengers have no choice but to go with as little loss as possible. In the end, one

team has to give up.”

As little loss as possible. The main forces gather on one side, and the rest should be filled with those who were ready to sacrifice from the beginning.

“But if one side is too weak, the stage itself will fail. We need someone to sacrifice while another approaches the end.”

It was a ridiculous game, and political elements were also enforced.

“There aren’t as many forced situations as I thought. If you’re a 60th floor Hell level challenger, you’re all in a hurry. Even if the majority of the group clears out, then the rest get ready for the next challenge.”

There could be many situations. We could choose a rider and complete it peacefully in turn, if there were more than a hundred people in Hell difficulty. But if there was a shortage of numbers, there’d be a real bloodthirsty competition and political strife.

“We conciliate each other, form groups and factions, confront each other, and intervene again. It’s a stage where you have to come up with some sort of agreement after arguing.”

What a tricky stage. At this rate, a new society will be formed between the 60th and 61st floors. Some will be sitting on the 60th floor while you’re relaxing in your area.

The case was different from the 30th floor of Normal, where Kim Min-hyuk was located. There were people who didn’t want to risk their lives because it’s a good place to live and could maintain a decent life even if they didn’t have to go outside. But in this case, it would become a society created by the concept of the 61st-floor stage.

“The 61st floor, in fact, is well-received... Heng. Sorry.”

As I stared, Kirikiri quickly apologized. I couldn’t believe that the rating was good. Maybe because there were only crazy gods, the evaluation criteria were very crazy.

“Tch. This is a disaster.”

At this rate, helping Lee Hyung-jin grow was not enough. Lee Hyung-jin would definitely not come up in fear of dying if I told him the details.

First of all, there was a risk that two people had to solve a 50-person stage. Besides, there was a suspicion that the sacrifice could actually die.

Even if Kirikiri kept that part to herself, Lee Hyung-jin won't come up because of the last criteria. There were only two results that Lee Hyung-jin would face in that section.

Being left behind on the 60th floor or dying to me. Either way, it was like death. If you were as timid as Lee Hyung-jin, you might be consumed with fear that I might neatly kill you and leave.

Perhaps, as soon as Lee Hyung-jin gets the information about the 61st floor, he would seat himself on the right stage. If he had enough ability, there were some stages that were better to stay at, than the residential area. There were already other challengers who spent their time challenging the stage, which was easy to attack, enjoyable, easy to live on, and more. Lee Hyung-jin would take that path, too, instead of coming up to the 61st floor and taking risks.

The conclusion was that Lee Hyung-jin should not know the information on the 61st floor. No matter how much I lied, Lee Hyung-jin would be curious about the information on the 61st floor that I cannot clear.

I'll ask Kirikiri separately.

Naturally I looked at Kirikiri. Kirikiri crossed her fingers over her lips.

It seemed like a gesture of not telling, but it wasn't. When asked, Kirikiri said that there was a price.

“Privacy.”

“Heng.”

The information value for the 61st-floor stage should be raised so that Kirikiri could not answer Lee Hyung-jin. One of the few elements with abnormally high prices was privacy. Just like how information about the gods was scarce, information related to privacy was difficult to find. Many just made up their own tales.

“I’m the only challenger here to reach the 61st floor of Hell’s difficulty level. The 61st-floor stage where I’m blocked can be a clue to infer my ability. I’d like to designate information about the 61st-floor stage as private to protect my power from others. Is it possible?”

“It’s possible if you pay.”

“The price?”

There was a price for privacy settings?

“Certain amount of information.”

There was plenty of information. It was Kirikiri who’d been giving me any information, but she’d often blocked my questions, saying I had to save money on information. Thanks to this, the amount I had, had been overflowing by now. I didn’t know the exact figures.

“You said before that if you got enough information, you could give me privacy, right?”

“I did.”

It was a long time ago. The first time I met Kirikiri, the second time, or the third time. I didn’t even remember.

“The value of information required to know privacy is proportional to the value of information paid when designated as private.”

“Okay. Then I’ll pay for all the information I have for privacy designation.”

Kirikiri nodded. I wondered if Kirikiri had been managing my information in a frugal manner. Come to think of it, the price of information was not expressed in figures. The only way I could tell was for Kirikiri to tell me the price of the information was just around the corner. If she had collected my information price steadily starting a long time ago.

The dragon, whom I met as a manager, did not say anything about my information. It told me there was no problem with the source, the gods, or any story. If my thoughts were true, the price of the information I had could be much higher than I guessed.

“That part is my privacy. Heng.”

“Whew.”

I decided to put an end to this idea. I didn’t have to worry about what I couldn’t figure out.

“Did you set up my privacy?”

“No, not yet.”

“Not yet?”

“Yes. Not yet,” Kirikiri said again. There was another requirement I didn’t know of.

“Please let me know if there is another way to control information.”

Kirikiri told me not to forget that information costs were being spent on telling me that, but I still asked.

“Unlike privacy that applies to everyone, there is a way to control information about a single person, a specific person.”

“How can I do that?”

“It’s only applicable if the target person says the given keyword

himself.”

Who’s the target person? The one who’s in charge of information control?

“Yes.”

Should we let Hyung-jin tell Kirikiri the keyword himself? It was tricky. *Why do you have this kind of function?* I should only tell Kim Min-hyuk later. There may be people who are already using it.

“None,” answered Kirikiri. As I stared at her, she made an X on her mouth again. It was a little different from before. Oh, she also needs the price of information to tell me this.

“Okay, let’s move on. What’s the keyword? No, I guess I should decide it myself.”

Kirikiri nodded. Of course. Not all keywords were set in one word.

What should be the keyword? I thought about it. Nothing really came to mind. I looked around, and I couldn’t think of anything. All that was here was a blue field, a gentle breeze, and a trembling pair of rabbit ears.

“Terrapin.”

(T/N: It’s a soft-shelled turtle, originally written as Ja-ra or Ja-la, can also mean sleep.)

“What do you mean? Did you mean sleep?” Kirikiri asked back. I guessed she didn’t understand my thoughts because it was so spontaneous.

“No, it’s a reptile. Terrapin.”

“Ew. I hate reptiles,” Kirikiri mumbled. Her face crumpled up as if it were gross. She must really hate it. “Why a reptile?”

“There’s an old story that’s been passed down in our country.

Byeoljubujeon.”

(T/N: Byeoljubujeon literally translates to The Rabbit Exhibition, but I’m using the original term, for originality’s sake ^^)

(Note from Imagine: The former TLs used “turtle” as the keyword but for accuracy sake we are changing it to “terrapin”)

Chapter 277

Tutorial 60th Floor (0-3)

Kirikiri was enchanted by the story Byeoljubujeon. When a Terrapin, ordered by the Dragon King, tricked the rabbit into taking him to the Dragon Palace, she listened with her ears stiff. When the rabbit used his wits to trick the Dragon King and the turtle into escaping to the land, she became so excited. She was more amused than I had expected. Maybe it was because it was a story about a rabbit.

“Then, the keyword is Terrapin?” After enjoying hearing about Byeoljubujeon, Kirikiri asked.

I nodded.

When Kirikiri saw me nodding, she held out her hand to me. Why did she put forward that palm for?

“Now that you’ve decided on a keyword, you’ve got to pay.”

“Information price?”

Kirikiri shook her head to my question.

“No. That’s the price for privacy. This is another thing.”

In the meantime, I had to do business.

I asked again, “What’s the price?”

“Power.”

Kirikiri’s answer was unexpected.

Power. There was no way that she could buy anything by consuming the power of a challenger. This was a Tutorial to foster challengers. Why did I need to pay power?

“Source?”

“Yes.”

The power that had I drew through the contract with the God of the Sky disappeared upon clearing the stage. The power of the source collected from the 59th floor, likewise, was taken away after clearing. There was only one left: the core of the source given by the god of remorse.

I looked up at Kirikiri again. She was still smiling with her palm out.

Let's think about it. It didn't matter exactly why Kirikiri wanted the source. The Spirit King had coveted the core of the source, and he felt that it would greatly help in ascending. What I needed to think about was whether Kirikiri's proposal was reasonable.

Was it a reasonable price to give someone the core of the source in return for constraining information? I had to think about this part.

First of all, I had to consider the danger involved. Although privacy was expensive and cost me many points, it could be recognized anyway. Kirikiri had said privacy was expensive, but it could be found out.

Of course, not many people would try to find out about the 61st-floor stage or my privacy. No one would have that much information. If there had to be someone, it would be the latecomer, Hyung-jin. He was the one who should not get to know. The risks were high.

Next was the proposal itself. It was absurd that the price was the source. This power couldn't be possessed by a Tutorial challenger in the first place. If I alone had not received a gift from the God of Remorse, I would not have got it either.

This was not a system for challengers. They were targeting challengers, but their main clients were gods or at least apostles. Was

this the way to properly coax a challenger who had been nominated as an apostle candidate?

Moreover, Kirikiri was not even trying to explain this information constraint. She repeated only her words and gestures to save information.

“We need a price for privacy settings.”

But until then, information about the gods and their origins had been well explained. There were two possibilities. Was she avoiding answering under the pretext of saving information price? Information beyond the gods or the source was costly.

“What do you want to do?” Kirikiri asked, but I didn’t answer immediately. A little more thought was needed.

“When the trigger* gets activated, I’ll explain to the target* that the 61st floor is a stage where cooperation is needed. It’s a fact. I’m not going to lie, but I can cheat indirectly. The target won’t know that the 61st-floor stage concept is based on sacrifice.”

1* Keyword

2* refers to another Hell Difficulty challenger

Of course, you’ll be able to cheat. Kirikiri was the only informant of the Hell Difficulty challenger. Even if she didn’t lie, it was possible to deceive someone.

Now there was only one thing left to think about. It was about the possibility that information constraints had been applied to myself. Was there any lie in what I had said to Kirikiri so far? Had I ever activated a trigger? Was there a god who could fool me even after paying for the source or my power?

* * *

Kirikiri transferred the power of the source I extracted from my body into a pretty crystal bead. She rolled around with it, a happy

expression on her face, eyes gleaming, and I watched her quietly.

About a dozen minutes later, the excited Kirikiri came back to me. There were bits of grass and dirt everywhere on her body. Kirikiri didn't even think to shake it off and just laughed.

"I'm dying of trouble here, is it that funny?"

"Sorry. Heng." She didn't look sorry at all.

"Have you thought about it?"

I nodded. I looked back on the conversation from the first time I met Kirikiri, but there was no doubt that Kirikiri had deceived me.

The reason was simple. I didn't hear much except for the information on the stage and advice for growth. My goal was formed separately from Kirikiri, and regarding that goal, Kirikiri never interfered, though she had expressed her opinion.

I gave a lot of information about the gods, but it was also meaningless. Even though I gave her knowledge, I judged the gods only as I perceived them. In addition, Kirikiri had never praised most gods. The only thing she ever tried to wrap up nicely was the God of Adventure.

It didn't seem like anything was at stake right now. I could think about it later, but it wasn't something to hang on to right now.

Kirikiri smiled back. I should think about Hyung-jin rather than her.

For now, let's just say that I was going to stop attacking for a while and rest on the 60th floor. I said I'd help Hyung-jin in my spare time. So, even though I helped him in the previous stages, later, I needed his help on the 61st floor. I think it would be better to talk to him. If I asked him to run straight to the 61st floor, he might feel burdened. After thinking about it, I sent a message to Hyung-jin right away.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: Hyung-jin.]

“Are you going?”

“That’s right,” I answered Kirikiri’s question.

“You can stay a little longer,” Kirikiri said, pouting, with her cheeks puffed up.

This was enough. I think I’d have to wait a long time on the 60th floor anyway. No matter how intense the training was, I’d have plenty of time to spare.

“Ah, Kirikiri.”

“Yes?”

“You said it was normally impossible to clear it alone, right?”

Kirikiri nodded. That meant there was an abnormal way.

“It can be done with a vote, right?”

Vote of the gods.

The God of Adventure had forced me to move from the fourth floor. Whenever I got too close to the source, the gods had forcibly cleared the stage. On the 61st floor, the gods would be able to do the same.

“Yes, but they won’t.”

I guessed so. Most of the gods in the temple wanted me to be an apostle, but I had no intention of becoming one.

“On this stage, there are gods who think that you will face limitations and bend.”

For the gods, it was not a significant loss to keep me on the 61st floor for years because the concept of time was different for them.

Someday when I was anxious for the gods’ help, I think it’d be great if you

could step up and convince them.

“I think it’s possible.”

What possibility was there? The possibility of me becoming an apostle of the gods and escaping from the stage through a vote?

“Would you like to make a bet?”

“Yes, I will!” Kirikiri liked to bet. *I usually lose.*

“Then, let’s bet that I’ll clear it normally.”

Kirikiri nodded. She didn’t even ask what my wish was.

“I’ll bet you can’t clear it normally. Buy me a cake if I win!”

Cake? She’d get that even if we hadn’t made a bet. I smiled and climbed onto the portal.

“See you next time! You must buy me a cake!” Kirikiri hopped and waved.

The usual greeting to buy her a cake sounded different from usual. It seemed like a cheer to clear and come out. Answering that I knew, I got moved to the 60th floor.

* * *

[Welcome to the 60th-floor residential area.]

I remember stopping by the 30th-floor residential area, so I wasn’t stunned. The 60th-floor residential area was a scene similar to the one seen in the second Tournament. A road lined with suitable buildings, neatly arranged, and there was a reasonably spacious square in the

middle. At first glance, it seemed like an excellent European neighborhood to live in. It was a pity that I was the only one here.

I clicked my tongue in annoyance. This quiet space annoyed my nerves. I felt a chilling and sharp pressure, like being drenched in cold water when you're incredibly sleepy. I didn't know how long it would take to be completely free from this pain. *Should I become a god?*

Wouldn't I feel lonely if I become a god? It was a good question. After arriving on the 60th floor, I felt more suffocated than before. I didn't know if I could get through it. But it was not about reaching the final goal; it was about the process of reaching there.

Again, I clicked my tongue and opened the inventory. Seregia, Ahbooboo, and the frog were summoned.

[I'm the Dragon Warrior!] As soon as Ahbooboo got out of the inventory, he shouted.

[Warrior, hurry up and get those... Huh?]

Perhaps Ahbooboo did not recognize what time it was currently, after being stopped by the God of the Sky.

[Warrior, 59th floor?]

"I cleared it."

[Oing?]

Ignoring Ahbooboo, who made a strange noise, I saw the frog. The frog, of course, croaked and greeted.

"Keeeeeek!"

"Yes. Sorry, it's been a while. I didn't get a chance to get you out in the last stage."

"Keeeeeek!"

“Okay. I’ll leave you like this for a while.” After talking with the frog, I turned to Seregia. Naturally, she said nothing.

I told them that they had to stay here for a while. The frog liked it, and Ahbooboo was calm. Seregia, who had been quiet, seemed to be shocked.

[So I’m unemployed from today?] she asked.

“I won’t be able to clear the 61st floor, but I’ll be able to challenge it. I don’t think you’re unemployed.”

[Let’s get going, then.]

It was difficult right now. The information from the 59th floor should be sorted out. Most of all, it would take quite a while to sort out the magic theories from the sorcerer.

[I thought you said you’d have a lot of time left anyway. Let’s do that later. Let’s go.]

I had a lot of time left, so I went to the 61st floor later and cleaned up first. Seregia wanted to do the opposite. Since it was necessary to proceed directly with the 61st floor, Seregia decided to do as she wanted.

[Entering the 61st-floor stage.]

[Participating Challengers (1/50)]

– Lee Ho Jae

[The 61st-floor stage begins.]

Explanation: Challenger who wants to take a short break and start a journey, here are two roads. One is a trail, where you have to walk on a burning desert, and the other is to climb a mountain with snow-

storms. Both roads are full of dangerous enemies and difficult challenges. Conquer both paths, and reunite with your colleagues at the end.

– Clear condition.

1. Conquering the first course of asceticism.

2. Conquering the Second Passage.

3. ?

Chapter 278

Tutorial 60th Floor (0-4)

[The 61st-floor stage begins.]

Explanation: Challenger who wants to take a short break and start a journey, here are two roads. One is a trail, where you have to walk through a burning desert, and the other is to climb a mountain filled with snow-storms. Both roads are full of dangerous enemies and difficult challenges. Conquer both paths, and reunite with your colleagues at the end.

– Clear condition.

1. Conquer the first ascetic path.
2. Conquer the second ascetic path.
3. ?

Two portals appeared with the message. They were emblazoned with the patterns of fire and ice, respectively. Splitting 50 people into two halves and conquering both of the paths beyond the portals would be how this 61st-floor stage was conducted.

And finally, they would meet again. The 61st floor would only be cleared when one side is wiped out. If the explanation Kirikiri gave was correct, perhaps it would be so.

[Which way do you want to go?]

“Left.” I chose the portal with the pattern of fire. I was more used to fire than ice. Before going to the entrance, I called the frog.

“Keeaaaaaeeek!”

“I’m sorry, but I’ll have to put you back in. There must be a lot of temperature changes over there.”

“Keeaaaaaeeek!” The frog was sad, but he didn’t object to my words either. Temperature changes were fatal to amphibians.

Of course, the frog only had an amphibian as its head and body of a dog, but anyway. I put the frog back and stepped on the portal. After a while, I stood in an open space, not in an enclosed space.

“I’m glad I called the frog back.”

[Right.]

The place where I was teleported to was in the middle of a raging desert. I thought it was better to recall the frog because of humidity problems rather than temperature problems.

[You have chosen the first ascetic path.]

Explanation: The challenger who has chosen the first route, your journey will be rough. During the day, you will have to walk in the blazing desert, and at night you will have to sleep, hiding from the harsh winds. At the end of the journey, you must defeat one of the two rulers who rule this planet, the volcano ruler. There is a way to make the journey to the ruler of the volcano easier. You can weaken the volcano ruler by dedicating a companion to another ruler of the planet, the ruler of the Snow Mountain. The more the sacrifices, the weaker the ruler of the volcano becomes. As the ruler weakens, the number of his combat forces and powers decreases. Finally, the climate of the Great Volcano is adjusted.

-Clear condition of the first ascetic path.

1. Pass through the Desert.
2. Climb the summit of the Great Volcano.
3. Defeat the Ruler of the Great Volcano.

All I had to do was cross the desert, go to the volcano, and kill the volcano ruler. It was a simple stage. There was a suggestion in between, about offering a colleague, but it wasn't a choice I could make.

"Okay. Let's go for now."

You can never clear it alone, Kirikiri had said. Even if they had a 50-member team, it would be difficult to proceed without the thought of sacrifice. That's how I organized my thoughts and began to walk forward. I liked the feeling of stepping on the fine sand in the desert. I also liked the dry climate without moisture, but a sandstorm ruined everything. My shoes and clothing filled with sand, some stuck to my face, making me displeased.

"Shhh!"

I hadn't said that. When I looked around, I saw a lizard staring at me. Standing on its hind legs, it was as tall as my knee. That was not a good attitude to hunt for food. It had already shown its position. Maybe that lizard was going to hunt me down. Instead, it was as if I had invaded that lizard's territory. I think the lizard was threatening me by making sounds. There's no need to kill an innocent lizard, so I just tried to pass it by. Until the lizard spewed out a fire.

"Cooch!"

The lizard threw the fireball in my direction. The sound was funny, but the power was not a joke. Even in the middle of the hot desert, I could feel the heat of the flame. It was amazing.

"Is it the sub-species of a dragon?"

[Of course not. That's just a lizard.] Ahbooboo answered shortly.

When the lizard saw that I had escaped the fireball, it licked its mouth, a visible sign it was preparing to spew yet another fireball. Before that, I approached the lizard and grabbed it by the tail. The lizard started struggling. Its short legs could not touch my hand that held it by its tail, but it still fought with all its might. I had no choice but to end up flinging away the lizard that was cutting off its tail. As soon as the lizard, with its tail cut off, fell to the ground, it rushed towards me.

I snapped my fingers. A fire broke out inside the lizard. The lizard's insides burned horribly, and it died.

"Damn it. Too much blood."

The tail of the lizard was still wildly flapping, sprinkling blood all around. There was a lot of blood on my clothes, too.

[What's wrong with blood?]

Well, that's true. I felt uncomfortable because it was not the blood of an enemy, but of an insignificant beast. My curiosity hadn't been solved at all.

I asked Ahbooboo, "Have you ever heard of a lizard spouting fire in a crisis?"

[Of course not.]

Was it really a dragon's subspecies? Maybe it was a Hatchling. The ruler of the volcano I was looking for was actually a dragon, but could it be that I had already killed a dragon cub? Something like that was plausible.

[Never. That's just a lizard.]

"But it spat out a flame by its mouth."

[I guess it's a unique lizard. Anyway, it's not a dragon. How can a

lizard that doesn't have even a handful of mana be a dragon cub?]

It was an unusual lizard, huh. Maybe, fire-breathing was a local trait here. Volcanoes in the desert and even fire-breathing lizards. All the themes in the region seemed to be set to fire and heat. Now for the second question, I violated the control of the lizard and set it on fire. How did I do that? Come to think of it, the first time I used <Infringement of Control> was when I didn't know much about my abilities. I just happened to use it.

At that time, I thought that the power to exercise control over others came from the core of the source given by the God of Remorse. But now that I'd been dealing with both gods and the source, I knew it wasn't. So, it didn't make sense that I had started a fire in a lizard's body with the power of the source. Most importantly, I didn't have any source right now.

[Are there not people who have faith in you?]

“Huh?”

[Like people from your hometown or the people you met last time. Don't the other challengers of the Earth or from the Tutorial have faith in you?]

That was a valid point, but it didn't seem so. My image among the challengers was no less than a vague fear. Even Kim Min-hyuk's work was fading the image. I didn't see that as religious. The same was true of the Earth. I didn't know what the people outside thought of me challenging the Hell Difficulty level. I doubted that they had faith in me.

[How about Warrior?] Seregia, who had been quiet, asked.

“Huh? What do I think?”

[No.]

I thought she was asking me what I thought about this problem.

[Warrior believes in himself.]

“Uh, yeah. That’s right.”

[Crazily, maniacally.]

“...”

[Close to crazy. Warrior has the belief that he can do it. It’s not a bad thing. But when you can’t do something, instead of feeling sorry or disappointed, Warrior seems to deny the possibility of failing.]

There’s no way that I can’t make it because I have to. Perhaps such an obsession that goes beyond faith, which I send to myself, had become faith. That was what Seregia meant. She had tried to convey the meaning of words too directly. It was not bad, but sometimes it hurt my heart.

[Sorry.] She didn’t sound sorry at all.

I asked Ahbooboo, “What do you think?”

He was silent for a moment, then replied, [That’s something I can’t tell you.]

He was under a constraint. I didn’t know if it was a systemic constraint or a divine constraint. This increased the credibility of Seregia’s hypothesis. This was quite an important matter. If Seregia was right, then I could self-produce power without anyone else.

“Well, let’s find out slowly.”

If I looked back on the memories of my first experiment with <Infringement of Control> and observed the changes that emerge through training, I would soon know. After thinking about it, I decided to start again.

I spread Talaria’s wings and flew up. I didn’t want to walk because of the annoying sandstorm. As I flew up into the sky, the wind seemed a little less sandy. When my body was covered by mana, the sand that

clung to the body was significantly reduced. There was also one more good thing. A desert city was seen from the top.

After such a long flight, I should arrive in front of the city soon. I landed nearby and walked to the city's main gate. As I was strolling, the city faded from my sight. Soon the city disappeared without a trace, and only the boundless sands remained in front of me.

“...Was that a mirage?”

[Huh... I guess so.]

* * *

“It's not a mirage. Definitely not.”

At first, I didn't realise, but after seeing the city disappear nearly ten times, it slowly began to hit me. As far as I knew, a mirage was a phenomenon in which light bends to move through warmer and less dense air.

This was a phenomenon in which the city showed up at a different location every time.

The problem was, I didn't see it wrong. I had approached the place with the thought that there was a city in the place, not just through sight. Nevertheless, as soon as I approached, the city had disappeared. I had to hold back my boiling anger at this, which seemed as if someone were making fun of me.

“This is not a mirage. Someone's playing a prank on me.”

[Oh, my God, looks like Warrior has gotten agitated again.]

Chapter 279

Tutorial 60th Floor (0-5)

“I’ll make sure to find out and kill whoever’s behind this multiple times.” I gritted my teeth.

As the number of mirages increased, the anger steadily increased. I had already encountered more than 20 illusions. At this point, I wanted to meet the person behind this more than the city.

No enemy popped out after hearing my murmuring.

Instead, Ahbooboo talked to me. [Warrior, is it because of the wings?]

Because of the wings.

[Isn’t it supposed to be a walking place?]

Was it considered too easy to fly to the city? Well, I didn’t think so. The Tutorial was not constrained in that way. Even if that were the case, Kirikiri would have given me such information before entering the stage.

No, maybe she couldn’t have told me this time. I had spent all I had left on privacy settings.

I stopped flying and descended to the ground. When I closed Talaria’s wings, it was already early evening. It had been quite a while since I’d flown for this long.

I shook off the sand that stuck to my body. I had tried to stop by using mana, but I couldn’t completely block the sand throughout the flight. Sand fell from my clothes like rainwater from an umbrella.

“So, you mean we should walk instead of flying?”

That's a possibility.

There was no other way, so I decided to try what Ahbooboo said. Slowly, I walked on the sand again. I could have run, but I didn't want to.

There was no particular reason I didn't want to, but I figured we'd have plenty of time ahead. I didn't want to rush through. I didn't have to be impatient or judge the time efficiency.

"No, it's not even that."

[Huh?]

When I muttered to myself, Ahbooboo questioned me. I wanted to go slowly. There was only a limited amount of work, but there was too much time left. If I didn't slack off, soon everything would be cleared, and time would be left. I hated that.

I hated that a lot, and I was scared. Honestly, it would be sweeter to throw me into a hell-like situation and ask me to get out of it. Or I'd rather, you ask me to beat an enemy when I couldn't stand up. I would do my best to find a way to attack the enemy with a trick. I'd act dangerously. I was better off on that side.

When I finished all my work, training was all I could think of. If I had more time left than the pre-decided time, I couldn't bear to do something monotonous for long. I won't be able to stand it.

It was scary. That was why I was taking a walk rather than running in a desert.

I wasn't an average human, wielding the power of gods. It was natural that my class was elevated, and now, it was hard to think of myself as an ordinary human being. Nevertheless, my fears were too childish and straightforward. I was afraid of being bored and lonely.

There was nothing different from when back then. I thought of myself as an independent person. I preferred to play a game where I won alone rather than playing a game where I had to collaborate with others. It was comfortable and efficient to stand alone.

But to do so, I always needed someone to play against. I needed someone to play games with me, and then, the other person will lose to me again. I couldn't bear complete independence, contrary to what I had thought.

[The God of the Sky watches over you.]

What about the God of the Sky who looked at everything from above? There should be no one around or above him. No friends, colleagues, teachers, advisors, brothers, or parents.

Oh, is this rude? I'm sorry.

But some people looked down on the God of the Sky. Some people considered themselves to be superior. It could be regarded as a terrible self-righteousness to have no one around you and no one above you. On the contrary, it also indicated dependence on people under the God of the Sky.

That may be why, as Ahbooboo once said, the Church of the Sky was more secular than other churches, and the welfare and benefits of believers were well established.

I needed someone too. To win, I needed someone beside me. I desperately needed that. On the Tutorial stage, I remembered the faces of countless enemies I had killed. There were many times when I killed without much emotion, but there were times that pissed me off. There were a lot of enemies and dead-ends that drove me into crisis. All those enemies were precious to me.

As I walked, the burning sun had set before me. The air was beginning to cool down. I was going to make a fireball for a light source, but that idea came to a halt. It was an amazing starry night.

I thought this was a luxury. The night sky that I looked up at, from the middle of the endless waves of sand over the horizon, was stunning. The twinkling stars were extremely visible and felt very close. I

thought they would fall right away. When you get overwhelmed by the natural scenery, you lose a little bit of your self-esteem that was covering you up tightly.

I tried to sweep back the hair strands fluttering before me with my left hand, but I halted my actions. There was no left hand. With a sigh, I arranged my hair with my right hand.

The disappearance of my left arm itself was not that uncomfortable. Not that my left arm was useless. Usually, I wouldn't care about the loss at all, but when I needed my left hand, the sense of melancholic loss came.

"I don't even know if I can reach my goal."

[Huh?]

If the goal was too easy, I was afraid that there would be a lot of time left. So I set a goal that was farthest away, and I liked it. The problem is, it was a bit too far away. I didn't worry about achieving my goal too quickly and disappearing, but it seemed vague because I wasn't near it.

"Can't we wait? Until Hyung-jin comes up to the 60th floor."

[Of course. You talked to him already. He can come up. It's just that it would take some time.]

It'd been like this since the first day. As if the things I'd been working on had been ruined. It was no different from pagodas built with sand. No matter how high the pagoda was, everything collapsed when the ground shook.

Can I wait for Hyung-jin to come without losing sight of my goal? I was anxious.

[There's no way you'd get bored in two days. You can take a good rest for a few days. It's not that you can't stand a short time, but that you're worried and anxious about the time ahead.]

Ahbooboo was right. I was worried and anxious in advance. Would I be able to endure those long hours?

[It's okay. I, Lady Seregia, and the frog are here. When the four of us hang out, it's easy to spend two years together.]

Ahbooboo kept comforting me. I thanked him frankly.

“Yes, thank you.”

[God of Adventure smiles at you]

[God of Slowness smiles at you]

Yeah, I'll try to hold on like Ahbooboo said. If I hold out, even if it were a pain, this wait would be over.

[God of Adventure smiles more at you]

[God of Slowness looks at someone pitifully.]

* * *

As Ahbooboo said, adding a day or two wouldn't bring me down. It has already been five days since I entered the 61st floor. For five days, I found a panoramic view of over forty cities and confirmed that it was all a mirage.

“It'll be real this time.”

[Yes... it could be.]

“If it’s not real, I’ll kill it.”

[What? The mirage?]

Whatever. I’ll blow this whole desert away and find the city.

It’d already been five days. I was flying, walking, and kept repeating both of these. I checked through Ahbooboo several times because I thought I was trapped in some kind of magic spell. Yet, we found no sign of magic.

“But I think it’s real this time.”

Really. Even though we were close to the city, it had not disappeared. It would not disappear when we’re just around the entrance of the city. It shouldn’t. *If it does, then I’ll blow it all up.*

“Hi!” A little boy’s face popped out of the city walls. With a smile on his face, the child greeted us.

“Hi!”

“This is not a mirage.”

[I don’t think so either.]

“Hi!”

I answered the little kid who had been saying hello for a while. “Yes, hello.”

The child who had greeted me came down from the wall and opened the city’s gates, leading us to a village inside. No security guard was doing any background checks or asking about the purpose of the visit. There was just a little kid opening the door at random.

The little boy led me to his own house soon. I was wondering if it was

okay, but for now, I just followed. At the child's house, there was an old man who looked surprised to see us visiting suddenly, but he soon prepared water and food.

"Did you really cross the desert?" asked the old man, who appeared to be the child's grandfather.

I said, "Yes."

The old man explained the desert with a puzzled look on his face and talked about common sense, which was slightly different from what I expected.

"This is not a mirage, but a milestone?"

The old man nodded in agreement. The village was actually a milestone to tell us that we were on the right path. As a result, we did not get lost walking in the desert.

"You didn't know about that, and yet, you managed to find it," the old man remarked and told me to wash up and rest. Of course, it wasn't for free. I pulled some valuable items out of the inventory.

The old man's room was small, with only one small bed. As I laid on the bed, it creaked loudly, but I could still lie down.

[It's a city, thank God.]

Yeah, having a city on the stage was a significant advantage. In the meantime, we could build a religious sect to collect faith, like on the 56th floor.

With challenging the 61st-floor stage, the city's existence had allowed us to experiment with many things. It would make it easier to attack the 61st floor with faith, but we would also be able to study and train more. I could say it was a blessing disguised in misfortune.

It was like divine power. Come to think of it, I believe Kirikiri said that above a certain level, there was no difference between Faith and Source.

[God of the Sky is baffled.]

Oh, the God of the Sky agreed, it seems.

If the divine power violated others' dominance, the source was the power to break one's own frame forcefully. When the frame broke, and the boundaries disappeared, if you don't get yourself together, you'd get eaten by the source. If you held onto your mind and overcame it, you'd be able to break the source's frame. The God of the Sky had said that there would be no difference between the divine power and the source, and as it dealt with the source, it could interfere with the control of others. On the contrary, you could apply divine power to yourself. In a way, it was natural.

But it was hard to use a power that was perceived as one's own to break their own frames. The source was needed to break the frame. That was why stagnant apostles needed a source to get closer to the gods.

[What do you think?]

"If I succeed in gathering my power and treating it like a source, I think I could recover my severed arm."

If successful, not only will I be able to regain my missing left arm, but I also will learn a lot about my power.

I'd have a lot of time to wait and a lot of work to do. The first thing I decided to do was to restore my arm through divine power.

"Then shall we start with the sect?"

Ahbooboo was actively in favor of my plan, while Seregia was silent. When creating and operating a sect, Seregia seemed bored because she had little to do.

“Keeaaaaaek!” The summoned frog croaked loudly. He seemed to like the role of mascot for the sect he had played before.

“Then let’s make a plan first.”

The four of us, except for the quiet Seregia, put our heads together to discuss the establishment of the sect.



PdF by: traitor/SEN



GANDARA 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

튜토리얼이 너무어렵다



THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- VOLUME 10 -

**-AUTHOR-
Gandara**

[Centinni | Nocturne Translations]

Chapter 280

Tournament Chapter (13)

[Lee Yeon-hee]

“Tell Kirikiri to send my regards to Terrapin.”

Would the situation have changed if I had not followed that remark? I didn't know.

The God of Nature, who I met after clearing the 40th-floor stage, talked about information control against Tutorial challengers and hinted that I was already entangled in a similar situation. Information control through privacy settings and keywords.

I asked Kirikiri to tell me the truth, but she just laughed, as usual. We were eating cake together, chatting, and carefreely spending time with each other. She always comforted me and smiled prettily without a positive or negative attitude.

The answer was clear. I'd rather Kirikiri be honest, but Kirikiri never told the truth or lied, as she had always done.

It was easy to see that the keyword of information control was “Terrapin.” I was keeping all the chat messages and letters I had with him. Among the records, it wasn't hard to find one word that had a sense of incompatibility. Furthermore, at that time, I asked what a Terrapin was. Kirikiri didn't answer, and I had dismissed it at that time since I thought it was a nickname or a slang that only Kirikiri and he knew. The feeling I felt at the time was jealousy.

I had envied the link between the two. I wanted to get in between them.

I was about to challenge the sixth floor when Mister made me say keywords. The sixth floor was one of the toughest stages. It was also a

stage that I'd been stuck at for months. Every day the skull soldiers had been cut off by a rusty knife, and a bowl of blood had been thrown out by a mana explosion. Whenever a contracted spirit got extinguished, I fainted from the pain akin to my hair being pulled out. I also had to cut out my leg flesh to find a new spirit and try contract magic using it as a medium.

In those days, all I could see was my blood, flesh, and decaying skeletons. The only things that sounded in my ears were my screams. The stench of blood and rotten flesh had permanently found its home beneath my nose. The constant pain made me suffer from phantom pain, even when I was in the waiting room.

Thanks to his help, there was no severe death crisis. Those were the impoverished days when I thought it would be better to die.

When I couldn't even meet Kirikiri until I cleared the stage, I exchanged letters with Mister. It was the only source of joy. I wanted to quit right away, but I gained strength by reading the letter and went on without collapsing.

But he... At that time, I thought of using the letter to deceive him and use it as a private seat on the 61st floor.

"...Are you listening?"

When I first came in, he consoled me, showing pity, but he was undoubtedly pleased. It was not because a colleague and a savior had come in...

"Hey. Are you listening?"

"I'm listening," I answered the one who was talking in front of me. In recent years, people often drowned in their thoughts. I did that while talking to others. It seemed much more apparent now because after becoming adjusted to being the lone challenger in the early Hell Floors, talking to someone itself was awkward.

"Anyway, I've never seen a case as dirty as you."

I narrated a story, and it was another lame story. The man who has

been talking to me for a while was a challenger of Hell's Difficulty in the other dimension of the Tutorial. We met through the main body of the temple.

"How can there be only two survivors? Can they even get to the 60th floor? That's somehow amazing."

He was a man of ability, of use to me. But he indulged in useless talks.

"Can it not be avoided?"

No. The gods wanted to check the situation on the 60th floor somehow. That was the deal in the first place. They'd direct me to the 60th floor at all costs.

"Do you have the confidence to clear?"

It was a question I'd already asked several times, but I had no choice but to ask again. It was because I wasn't confident.

"Of course. You're nervous because you don't know what an apostle means being. An apostle means that there is a god with you. Why don't you be an apostle? You said you had a lot of proposals."

There were many proposals, but I didn't accept any apostle position. Above all, even if I were an apostle, I wasn't sure I could beat him. The gods would despise it if I said this. When I finished, I had to leave at least one hole to survive.

That's what he always taught. Everything was a matter of probability. Always predict the odds carefully and become immersed in it.

To me, who was deliberately slowing down the attack, he had said he could get out of the 60th floor by himself. I didn't think that was a lie. If he disappeared, the chances of me leaving the Tutorial on my own were gone. Rather than being left behind forever, I had no choice but to bet on a slim chance of victory.

One question is, why was he waiting for me without leaving the 60th floor? Of course, I told him to wait, but that was not the reason for his

stop.

It could be a lie. Being able to get out of the Tutorial alone may be just a lie to get me up there quickly. Then his chances of winning on the 61st floor would be higher. But the problem was that it was not a lie.

“The feeling of a god’s power in my body is really... I can’t explain this if you’ve never experienced it. It really completes me.”

Ignoring the man who talked endlessly about things I didn’t care about, I stood up from my seat. I came back to the room I was using as my accommodation.

It was quiet again. There were times when I wanted to get out of this silence somehow. When I met people and faced a noisy crowd, I thought it was more comfortable.

It was a shame. I was upset and disappointed, and a singular thought kept haunting me.

If I hadn’t said the keyword, if Kirikiri hadn’t fooled me, if I had gotten the information on the 61st floor in time, we might not have been like this. Even so, I would still have felt betrayed. Still, I would have been able to get angry and resolve this disappointment. Even if our relationship went sour, we could have found a way together. Our link may not have been cut off so completely.

I knew it was a lingering attachment. Even if I did, my sacrifice on the 61st floor might not have changed. Still, I kept thinking that way.

If I did something else, could there have been any other ending? A slightly better ending.

-Beep...

Suddenly a beeping sound rang in my ears. Someone had triggered the alarm again.

First of all, I built a barrier around the room to not let anyone in.

Having finished several layers of defense, I focused my mind again.

The alarm went off when someone approached one of my clones. I moved to one of the clones that had set off the alarm.

The place where I opened my eyes was in front of the portal of a public server. There was a giant woman about four meters tall, in front of the portal. It was a familiar face. She was one of the challengers of Hell's Difficulty, at my present level. She was also an apostle of a god.

"Where are you going?"

"To your server. Didn't you say you were from Earth?" the woman answered me, unsurprised.

Why?

"Why on the Earth server?"

The woman replied with a troubled face. "Information gathering purposes."

"I remember I gave you all the information."

"Well, yes. There's something else I need to find out. There are some proposals over there."

What was that stupid woman saying so calmly? I was sure I'd banned contact.

"Tie her up."

The spirit of containment had become visible. It was in the form of a tight chain, binding the woman's body. Rather than struggling to get out of it, the woman just looked dumbfounded.

"What are you doing?"

She couldn't get out of it. It had been a long-improved means to subdue Ho-jae. Now it had become an entity that could not even be called a spirit.

“Do you know what you're doing now? You're oppressing a God's apostle.”

“I know.”

I had already prepared for this occasion. It was not a plan to prevent the actions of the gods. It was more of an act to escape the eyes of the gods. It was an act that would disappear at once if a god wielded his power, but unfortunately, a god could not intervene immediately.

A god could project his power on the apostle without any price, but a procedure was necessary. I was not sure exactly what the procedure was, but it took about 30 seconds to a minute.

30 seconds. It was enough time to kill someone. I took the bow out of the inventory and prepared the black arrows.

“You- You crazy bitch! Do you know what you're doing?!”

Of course, I knew. I was trying to kill the apostles. Of course, it would prevent them from going to Earth's servers to demonstrate power properly. But I couldn't just miss the chance to kill the apostles.

I aimed at the woman's heart. An attack was set up.

“Argh! Untie it now! You crazy b*tch, you can't even thank someone for helping you. How dare you act like this! God will have you...!”

The black arrow pierced the heart of the apostle. She seemed to have tried to defend herself amid a clamor, but the black arrow nullified all her attempts. Black marks spread rapidly around the woman's body, the black arrow at the centre. Because she was wearing long clothes, I had to check it out by looking at her face. The black mark soon reached the woman's forehead.

“...Save, save...”

“Devour.”

With that command, the black arrow began to devour the woman's body. The woman's body became stained with black marks and quickly sucked into the black arrow. In less than ten seconds, the place where the woman had been only had a Spirit of Containment and the Black Arrow.

It was too simple. The Black Arrow was retrieved, and the Spirit of Containment returned to the usual mode. There was a little time left. I could feel the power of a god. The plan that I had made was shattered.

[The God of Fame is angry.]

[Voting begins]

[Yes: 386 No: 6422]

That was it. They decided not to intervene in the apostle's death.

[The God of Dawn is angry with you.]

[The God of Darkness harbors bad feelings towards you.]

[The God of Darkness glares at you.]

[The God of Darkness...]

Ignoring the message, I changed to non-visual mode. I let the portal continue its work and transfer me to a different place.

It was a small, quiet room again. That was why I didn't accept the apostle position. At least within this Tutorial, the apostles cannot guarantee victory.

I didn't want to think about it.

I squatted down on the side of a small room. I felt uneasy again. Time quickly passed by and I'd soon reach the 60th floor.

It was scary. When I met Mister, I only hoped that I would be calm without showing any emotions.

* * *

[Lee Hochi]

I was playing a card game with Yong-yong, when I got called out. I had a guest who came to see me, but I remembered meeting all the guests. In response, I said that I would no longer meet other guests.

However, Park Jung-ah went to the Order of Vigilance headquarters for some reason. Yong-yong left with Baek Sung-woong. I'd met many guests, but there had been few pleasant meetings. And I strongly felt that this meeting would be the same.

"It's a private meeting?"

"Yes, it is," replied the man of short stature. He was a man from whom politeness seemed to permeate from head to toe. Although he was only a little taller than Yong-yong, I could feel that he was a mature person.

"For what reason has the apostle..."

"For the retrieval of power."

The time had finally come. Damn it. What should I do? Should I run away with Yong-yong?

[Don't make a fuss and just listen to me.]

How could I not make a fuss? I never thought the apostle would come in person to take back the power I stole.

“Well, I... I didn't steal it. I didn't do anything. The gods gave it to me. I just came back home because I felt burdened. Yes, I never thought about stealing from the beginning...”

I was just babbling and making excuses. The accusation of stealing was a huge blow to me. Lies were added to theft, and my conscience began to ache even more.

“No, it's not you.”

“...Eh?”

The exceptionally short man spoke in a calm voice. “I want to retrieve the power that the god of duel presented to challenger Lee Ho-jae.”

[Tell him to stop bullsh*tting and get out of there.] Lee Ho-jae spat out a curse at once. Of course, I didn't repeat his words.

“As the power was duly supposed to be handled by Lee Ho-jae, taking away a portion of your god-given powers will be an adequate replacement to pay the debt.”

[Huh...]

Chapter 281

Tutorial 60th Floor (17)

[Hey, why don't you take a shift?] I talked to Hochi, but received no answer. I held Yong-yong, who kept turning around. It had already been three days since Hochi and Yong-yong returned from the tournament.

After Hochi returned from the tournament, he spent more time alone. I heard from Park Jung-ah that she was doing well and without any problems, but Hochi seemed to have something serious. But he didn't look very upset or depressed; he just seemed a little confused.

Maybe I should think of it as just adolescence. Considering Hochi's age, it was possible. It'd been the first time he'd gone out into another world and encountered people. I was sure he'd think about many things.

Yong-yong had slept for three days as soon as he returned. He seemed to have slept very little throughout the tournament because he was too excited. So he, who usually slept for a certain amount of time every day, went to sleep for a long time as soon as he returned home, not waking up.

The problem was that he was not sleeping in his bed but in my arms, not even in a human form, but in a hatchling form.

This was slightly uncomfortable. It was not a matter of weight, but it was quite difficult to hold his short legs and flapping wings and hug them in a comfortable position. I agreed to Yong-yong's request to sleep with me. If I knew he'd sleep for days like this, I should've just told him to sleep in a bed.

I was sitting in front of the desk with Yong-yong lying on my lap. I patted Yong-yong's head with one hand while the other hand was over a book.

Well, it was not a big book. It was just my diary. It'd been quite a while since I started writing this. I began when the creation of a sect on the 41st floor led to the urge to write a religious journal.

The first chapter contained only brief details: the name and orientation of the newly established sect, means used to tempt the people, and the number of believers who changed day by day and their natures. It was merely a diary for record purposes. I turned over a page.

[41st round]

-In two sessions, I succeeded in collecting a little faith through the sect. If I had known the desert people had such a closed disposition, I could have succeeded a little faster. I didn't notice any kindness in dealing with outsiders.

-These people had indigenous religions. Can't even call it a religion. The rulers of the Great Volcano and Stormy Snow Mountain were treated like gods. This is why the sect's growth is slow.

-I recovered my left arm quickly. It wasn't as difficult as I thought.

-After the desert, we arrived at the oasis. There was a portal in the oasis, and I could reach the Great Volcano through the portal.

-There were many enemies on the Great Volcano. Since the fire did not damage them, it was an opportunity to utilize my physical strength in various ways.

-I got the boss mob. The answer was to gather my power to restore my left arm. It would have been hard to deal with without the power.

-The boss mob seemed to know something about the stage. It was taken aback that I could face it alone. It may be fun to simply challenge it alone.

-I'm back on the 60th floor. My left arm disappeared again.

That was the end of the 41st record. I was deeply hurt at that time. When I returned to the empty 60th floor, I wondered how many times I would have to repeat this. After hundreds of repeated clears, I wasn't sure if I could do it. Fortunately, I was still alive.

[42nd round]

-Seregia insisted we go straight to Snow Mountain, but I decided to stay on the 60th floor a few days.

-When I returned to the 60th floor, I lost all my powers from the 61st floor; however, a little bit of the power I had from before remained the same. The power restored my left arm.

-I've been using this new power, organizing my knowledge of sorcery, the 55th floor Mado knowledge that Ahbooboo had remembered as well as Contract magic. I had a mountain of homework that I had put off to study when I had time later.

After this, there was talk of research and studying for a long time. Ahbooboo played a huge role. As an apostle of the God of the Sky, there were no restrictions on sharing the information he knew. Because he had signed a contract with me, I could easily receive his knowledge.

Let's read ahead a little.

[44th round]

-The ruler of the Great Volcano remembered me.

-They called me the first challenger. This was definitely different from other stages.

-We got quite close. After returning from killing him, I talked about him for a long time with Ahbooboo. I wish I could go back to Kirikiri and ask her about this stage in detail.

Later, I decided to send a request to the Order of Vigilance.

[48th round]

-Hyung-jin died.

Only one line was written in the 48th entry. It was a real mess back then. Lee Hyung-jin died on the 17th floor.

I still don't know how he died. Obviously, I prepared him enough to clear the 17th floor.

But just 15 minutes after he entered the 17th floor, one number decreased from the Hell difficulty's list. It meant Lee Hyung-jin's death. I didn't know if Lee Hyung-jin let his guard down, or if his arrival on the 17th floor had more danger than I thought. Lee Yeon-hee was able to enter the 17th floor with overwhelming power. Then again, I did almost die on the 17th floor. [1]

Anyway, I was half-crazy back then, smashing the residential area. Perhaps that was the first time I had destroyed a residential area.

[49th round]

-We need another challenger. Some of the remaining people on the first floor are useless. Even if they changed, it might take a few more years to reach the 60th floor. It was necessary to replace them.

-Successful cloning of Ahbooboo. The main point was that he was an item with an error. Although unstable and soon to be destroyed, there was still a possibility of the item working.

-Time-slowness skill is very helpful. Slowing down time has no real advantage, but it allows you to maintain high concentration during that time. As it has become difficult to focus on one thing in recent years, the time-slowness skill has been maintained.

[52nd round]

-I put my memories in a replica of Ahbooboo's.

-I don't know how to make this a person.

[56th round]

-Frog got hurt.

-According to the Voluntary Agency Network of Korea, it had a short life span.

-I tried giving it Elixir and more cures, but the frog's health hasn't improved.

[57th round]

-The clone is complete. It was more of an alter ego than a clone.

-It's not perfect yet. I can't use it recklessly for experiments. We must make sure it doesn't break somehow.

-There's a problem. The clone looks like the chimera I saw on the 20th floor.

[58th round]

-The God of the Sky took Ahbooboo.

Damn it. For protection? This is some high level bullsh*ttery. I still have a lot of magic knowledge left to learn from him. It was something that I had put off later because I could learn anytime. I'll keep a record somewhere.

-The God of the Sky will one day pay this price.

[60th round]

-I wondered why time was passing so slowly. The time-slowness skill was still being maintained. I didn't know how much time had passed.

- The duration of time slowing had increased almost indefinitely. Due to the nature of time-slowness, which raised concentration to the limit, it was difficult to notice the flow of time and escape it voluntarily.

[61st round]

-The clone has been completed. But it was just a creature that had my memory. There was no sense in it. It looked more like a mannequin than a person. Training was needed.

-If it had intelligence, it would have burned itself to death and made me take a different route.

Thinking about this time, I still felt sorry for Hochi. I had already apologized many times, but I would continue to apologize for what happened then.

[64th round]

-I attacked one side and sent Seregia to the other side.

Since Seregia had grown stronger steadily, it wouldn't be dangerous for her.

-The attack on the 61st floor failed. We failed to enter the last room through the portal.

The 64th round was a memorable episode. I had swept away the residential area. I stayed in the tent for a while, thanks to the clean sweep.

[66th round]

-I was losing my confidence. As Seregia said, maybe the faith that I gave myself was draining away. If I'm losing faith, then I'm losing faith in myself. It was true.

[67th round]

-I insisted that the Korean government withdraw its ban on Hell Difficulty. It was seriously discussed through the Order of Vigilance, but was thwarted by Park Jung-ah's opposition.

-I looked for a way to move another difficulty's challenger to Hell difficulty. Park Jung-ah's opposition led to the cancellation.

-I had a big argument with Park Jung-ah.

- I regret talking to Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk about the 61st floor.

Since then, the records had been cut off for some time. At that time, I didn't record anything.

[70th round]

-I could feel my mind getting more and more exhausted, perhaps because I've been doing nothing.

I felt more like a research machine than a human being. If Park Jung-ah hadn't been continuously talking to me through messages, I'd probably have forgotten that I'm a human being.

-To be "alive" wasn't just a matter of my heart beating but a matter of interactions as well. I'm headed for the 61st floor. I'll stay there for a while.

-I signed a contract with the ruler of the Great Volcano. I decided to get support from him in return for achieving my goals.

But honestly, I don't know what he'll do. Even the ruler of the Great Volcano won't be able to guarantee that I can achieve my goals. We both just bought one low probability lottery ticket.

[71st round]

-When I got into the 61st floor, I got a power boost. It was a power coming from the ruler of the Great Volcano. No matter how many times he was killed, whether the rounds were repeated, whether I had finished my attack and returned, or whether I had died, the power was not reset.

-What can I do with this power?

[76th round]

-With the help of the two rulers, I succeeded in connecting the 60th and 61st floors. Now I can also get my power from the 60th floor.

[78th round]

-I don't know what more I can do. I was already close to a god. I'd achieved all the growth I could think of. There was nothing more to try.

[79th round]

- The use of time-slowness has been eliminated.

-I spent my time blankly. Time went by in seconds. Due to the slow-flowing time, I suspected several times that time-slowness had been applied without my knowledge.

[81st round]

-Newbie in Hell's Difficulty. I hope this challenger survives.

The 81st round was the time of Lee Yeon-hee's entry. I was happy that a useful challenger came in, but I didn't know if she could really come this far. I had watched the challengers who had failed before her for too long.

I thanked Lee Yeon-hee. Every time she climbed up a floor, one by one, I had hope. Thanks to that hope, I was able to get up again after sitting helplessly. Every time an attempt to get out of the 61st floor went in vain, I confirmed that she was coming up and helped her immediately prepare for the next stage.

And on the other hand, I felt sorry for her.

[Lee Yeon-hee, 59th floor: Mister. I'm coming up now.]

[153rd round, Day 1. 8:20]

At last, Lee Yeon-hee had reached the 60th floor.

Chapter 282

Tutorial 60th Floor (18)

[Yong-yong woke up.] Hochi said.

Yong-yong didn't have to wake up yet. I wanted to let him sleep a little more.

I just told him I knew. It was inevitable that Hochi disapproved of Lee Yeon-hee. It happened in the Tournament. In fact, even before that, Hochi didn't want to meet her. If possible, he just wanted to leave her alone.

"Seregia."

"Yes, Warrior." Seregia, who had been in human form, replied. Somehow she looked awkward.

"Let's go. You don't have to watch the barrier anymore."

"Am I going to be unemployed again?"

Unfortunately, yes. It was time for Seregia's role to be handed over to others.

"You've done a great job."

Seregia just nodded her head, without uttering a word of humility. I took her to the front of the portal on the 60th floor.

The portal swirled before me. And indeed, a long-awaited person showed up on the portal.

"It's been a long time, Mister." She had put on a nonchalant attitude. I felt that it was a pretense, but this was enough.

I replied with a shrug. “We just met for the first time.”

“I’ve met you several times.”

It was a vague remark. Did she really mean that she’d met me several times? She’d met Hochi not long ago. I would have her know that Hochi was completely different from me. When teaching her about clones, I’d omitted quite a lot. It was because I taught as much as I needed.

“I asked you to wait six months. I came here just six months ago.”

“Yes. I wish you could have come later.”

I was afraid I’d escape as promised before. Lee Yeon-hee shook her head when she heard me.

“I hope so. There are people who want to push me in somehow. I feel like an endoscope. You know, the colon endoscope?” she said with a grin...

“Let’s go. I’ll show you around. Oh, this is Seregia. She appears on the 26th floor; have you met her?”

* * *

Lee Yeon-hee had little interest in Seregia. Instead, she carefully examined the entire 60th floor.

“This is a lot different from what I knew. I heard the original 60th-floor residence isn’t like this.”

“I’ve fixed it many times since I stayed here.”

It was because the reconstruction was inevitable. Lee Yeon-hee scrutinized the surroundings.

It was not because she was curious about the 60th floor. It was to satisfy the curiosity of the countless eyes on her.

I was shocked to see Lee Yeon-hee crossing the portal. I knew she'd come with the eyes of the gods. Honestly, I didn't know there would be so many.

What the hell? How many are there? In front of Lee Yeon-hee's eyes, there were still many messages showing the reactions of the gods.

"Hi~"

The windows of the two-story building opened and Yong-yong greeted us. Oh, my pretty son.

"You met last time, this is Yong-yong."

"...Yeah."

Next to Yong-yong, who was waving his hand, was Hochi with a sullen face. Lee Yeon-hee hesitated, not responding to the greeting.

"Say hello."

Lee Yeon-hee waved to Yong-yong in an awkward and uncomfortable manner. Somehow, the action was ridiculous.

"That's my room. Remember the location."

Without answering, Lee Yeon-hee turned her head slightly to the side. I didn't bother to talk to her anymore.

Seregia joined Hochi and Yong Yong Yong. I guided Lee Yeon-hee to the accommodation that I had prepared.

"I'm leaving right away tomorrow, so I'll just have to stay here for today."

I had talked with Lee Yeon-hee in advance about this part. We'd take a day off and leave the next day.

"Are you feeling well?"

“...Yeah?” Lee Yeon-hee’s reaction had been slow. Of course, the eyes of the gods may be the biggest reason, but I wondered if it was something else.

“I heard Yong-yong had some trouble with your clone. There’s some aftermath left, right?”

“...Yes, I sent a clone because it was dangerous. I didn’t expect it to cause a lot of damage.”

I was sure the damage was huge. Although I had taught him, Yong-yong’s growth was really no joke. Sometimes, I was surprised as well. I was wondering if this was really a Hatchling who was born a few years ago.

“It seemed stronger than the Dragon.”

“Of course. Oh, come to think of it, you’ve met the dragon.”

Lee Yeon-hee said yes. I tried to keep the conversation going. It was necessary to warm up the atmosphere. It was not good for her to be so nervous and alert.

I brought up the memory of the dragon I had met in the second half of the 50th floor which I had almost forgotten. I started with a story and naturally talked about what happened on the stage.

Soon I and Lee Yeon-hee were both absorbed in the story. It wasn’t difficult. People with a common factor can easily hold a conversation.

To Lee Yeon-hee, I was the only person on Earth who could share and sympathize with her. I could at least bring out the story of someone who was isolated and always needed sympathy and comfort. No matter how weak someone was in communication, this was pretty easy.

“The 17th floor was dangerous, but it wasn’t really that hard. Difficulties and risks come separately.”

That was true. The stages that were dangerous for me were easier to

her than I thought.

“The sixth floor was the worst.”

I had no choice but to sympathize with that remark. A long time ago, it was also a topic that came up when Lee Hyung-jin and John Overton of the United States spoke. What was Hell difficulty's worst stage? We all picked the sixth floor.

In a narrow dark cave, you had to beat up an endless stream of skeletons which stank terribly. There was only a tightly closed door in the back, and one failed as soon as it opened.

It was a stage where you desperately had to wait for reinforcements. The support team came so late that it becomes a stage where you have to solve everything by yourself.

A stage where you first feel the absence of others. It was not a loneliness that comes from lack of communication, but a more painful stage because of the sense of isolation. The feeling that no one in the world can help, remained throughout. It seemed like it was good to be independent, autonomous, and active, to do everything without anyone's help.

But in fact it was never a positive thing. Everyone needed to interact with others. And the sixth floor of Hell Difficulty told the challenger that such exchanges were completely cut off. I didn't know about other planet's challengers, but at least the Earth's Tutorial did.

“I think the hardest time was when I was locked up on the sixth floor for months. How was it then?”

What do you mean? It was too much. I went half crazy.

“My mental-immunity skills were growing. It's a shame that I could only progress little by little.”

If it had been slower, I would have gone completely insane. Just like on here, the 60th floor...

"But I was a little better than you."

"Really?"

"I had the fun of exchanging letters with you every day. Do you remember the letters back then?"

Uhm. Of course, I remembered.

[Man, you don't remember at all. Do you?]

You're right about that. Damn it. I should've talked about another floor, not the sixth floor.

[It seems like your conscience is hurting you too.]

Be quiet. I answered Hochi roughly. What should I say? Lee Yeon-hee continued to speak, as I was trying to find a suitable topic.

"I'm grateful to you. I've come all the way here alive thanks to you. Without you, I would have died. Maybe I couldn't even have gotten out of the first floor."

I'd appreciate it if you said so. My conscience still seemed to hurt.

"I blame you for deceiving me. But I don't regret listening to you. I mean it."

* * *

"I don't like this," Hochi grumbled. He'd been like this for a while. I was all confused. "I hate being like this. I really don't like it, but I'm sorry."

"Yes, yes. It's entirely my fault," Yong-yong, who was listening quietly next to him, shouted.

"No! It's not Dad's fault!"

Actually, it was my fault. Damn it. But that'd been my limit at that time. What could I do now that I was lacking?

“Daddy’s not the one who did wrong...”

I patted Yong-yong’s head. Yong-yong was right. I was not the one who caused this problem.

I didn’t make the 61st floor and the Tutorial nor did I make the rules. I was not the one who brought Lee Yeon-hee here either. Lee Yeon-hee and I were just pushed into this dog-sh*t-like environment. There was only a difference in how they acted and how they prepared for it.

But when it comes to the relationship between Lee Yeon-hee and me, the world was wrong, and the gods were wrong. I couldn’t help but conclude that it wasn’t my fault. Justifying it didn’t help at all.

“Why?”

Before answering Yong-yong again, I thought about how to explain it. It was too important a story to tell as it came to mind.

“Because my deeds are precious to me, and my faults and my sins are precious as well. Even if it is a problem caused by another, it is not good to pass on the faults and the sins that I have committed to another person.”

I wonder if I explained well. Seeing Yong-yong’s puzzled expression, I didn’t think I did.

Fortunately, there was someone else who understood me: Hochi.

[Good. With that in mind, apologize to me again after a long time.]

[Yes. I’m sorry.]

[Wow. You don’t look sorry at all.] Hochi giggled as he said so. That’s how I got forgiven by Hochi, and we got along like a family.

[Oh, no! I haven't forgiven you yet. You're gonna have to apologize until I'm old and dead.]

I didn't even know when he'd get old and die. It was more questionable as to whether he'd die.

While talking to Hochi, Yong-yong seemed to have finished thinking.

Yong-yong looked at me again and asked, "Then who really did the wrong thing? No one's punishing anyone for causing trouble."

Ah, Yong-yong. That's not it.

"I meant that you take care of your own fault and not cover up other people's faults."

"Then who really did wrong? What about those who made the first problem?"

"Of course, they'll have to pay for their own mistakes."

Yong-yong still looked like something was unclear to him.

He thought for a while and said again, "The wrong people won't be punished by themselves."

Indeed. I thought so, too. Now, even if they, the gods, thought they did too much to the Tutorial challengers, what were the chances of them saying, "Let's reflect and pay the price" from now on? If that was the case, they wouldn't even make the Tutorial like this in the first place.

"Someone will have to punish them."

"Who?" Yong-yong asked with his eyes wide open. And through Lee Yeon-hee, I told the gods who'd be listening to our conversation.

"I will."

[Entering the 61st floor stage.]

After a day's rest, I headed to the 61st floor's stage. Lee Yeon-hee seemed to have given up everything. She was faithfully carrying out her role as the pitiful heroine about to be sacrificed. However, it was easy to see that Lee Yeon-hee had no intention of being victimized. She had come fully prepared.

[Participants (2243/50)]

Chapter 283

Tutorial 61st Floor (4)

[Participants (2243/50)]

“The surprises keep coming. I didn’t know there would be so many,” Hochi said, scratching his head. There appeared to be something dubious about it.

“It’s none of my business, but isn’t bringing this many too obvious?”

“They must have hidden it in their own way.”

“Hidden? It’s all seen in the numbers.”

Actually, only I could see the number of people in this position. Of course, Lee Yeon-hee could check the number of viewers, but she wouldn’t be able to see it. Maybe.

It’d only look like this:

[Participants (2/50)]

Just as Lee Yeon-hee had been fully prepared, I’d prepared myself for it.

“Are you sure?”

[The 61st-floor stage begins.]

Explanation: Challenger who wants to take a short break and start a journey, here are two roads. One is a trail where you have to walk on a burning desert, and the other is to climb a mountain with snow-storms...

Of course, I was sure. I was using this now.

All the messages that appeared on the 60th and 61st floors were written as I wish, not by the system. I only marked the number of people who would have been seen in Lee Yeon-hee's eyes as two. Lee Yeon-hee probably thought I hadn't caught on yet.

“You can't do this anymore.”

“What's so hard about putting a message in front of people?”

The bigger problem was blocking the messages from the system. Of course, that was a problem I solved a long time ago.

“Come on, let's go if you're done worrying.”

* * *

On the 61st floor, which was divided into two paths, Lee Yeon-hee decided to proceed by flying in the direction of the volcano. The reason why she chose the direction was simple; It was because Yong-yong liked snow.

“Every time, we met at this ice palace. It would have been nice to meet in my hall at least once.”

The ruler of the Volcano and the ruler of the Great Mountain, beings I met for the first time after a long time, were full of grumbles. Grumbling was childish for an existence that had the title of a giant king residing in lava.

“Of course, my palace is way better than that hot lava hall.”

The ruler of the Great Mountain was no different from the old lady beside him, who kept complaining.

The 61st-floor bosses were unlike the dominant rulers of the volcano and snow mountain. It was fun to watch them bawling, but I wanted to check something else.

“What about the residents?”

“We evacuated them all, just in case they get caught up in your arrangement.”

What? Are you talking about Lee Yeon-hee? I hope they didn’t call people this way every time.

“Are you really going out now? Strangely enough, it doesn’t seem weird to me anymore. It just feels like we’re spending time together as usual,” the old lady said gently.

After Yong-yong grew up a bit, he often came here for picnics. Whenever that happened, we would get together, converse, and play.

“It’s about time that we go out. I can’t help it even if I’m sad.”

“What a shame!” the old man screamed.

“The volcano and the shrine were my pride! Now it’s just a fake tie, binding us here for eternity. But when I leave and the restraints break away, I’ll be free from the illusory volcanoes and halls. What a shame!” the old man shouted loudly as if it weren’t right.

It was a random remark, but I could understand. It was always the same.

“What about you?”

I turned my head towards Hochi. In fact, Hochi was the one who felt the most regretful. For him, who was born here and wasn't unhappy with it, it would not be very comfortable to go out into the outside world. He may just think of it as a change of residence.

“It's alright. I actually thought about letting you go and staying here since that was the purpose of my birth in the first place.”

But Hochi eventually chose to go out together. He pointed his chin at Yong-yong, who was making a snowman alone in a corner.

“My whole family is going out, so what'd I do here alone? We'll go together.”

Thank you for saying that. I thanked Hochi in my mind and looked at the old lady.

“What about you, Grandma? How do you feel about going out?”

“How do I feel? I won't die by your hands anymore. I haven't said much, but frankly, it's been too painful. Every time.”

Hochi, whose gaze had been warm a moment ago, instantly turned cold, as if he were looking at trash. I apologized to the old lady, having no other excuse.

She smiled widely and said, “I'll have to thank you before I tell you how I feel. I signed a contract to help you, but I didn't really believe it would be possible to get out of here because it was so hard. Yet, you didn't give up. I remember how pained you had been for the past few years. Nevertheless, thank you again for not giving up and keeping your promise.”

Next to him, the old man said, “Thank you.”

I smiled awkwardly.

Then, the portal in front of the palace's throne radiated light. It was a

portal to move to the last part of the 61st floor.

The fact that the portal opened meant only one fact. Lee Yeon-hee had cleared the entire hall of the volcano.

It was finally time to get out of the 61st floor.

* * *

[Lee Yeon-hee]

It was strange. As far as I knew, the 61st-floor stage was not like this.

The endless stretches of burning sand and continuous mirages were just like the information I had heard before. But nothing else had shown up.

All kinds of monsters that used fire should have appeared in this desert. The residents of the city lived in the desert, and a few warriors were supposed to the volcano.

But there was no one. It was as if the entire 61st-floor stage was empty.

“It’s not supposed to be this kind of stage.”

[Of course not. Be careful. Something’s wrong,] one of the assistants whispered. He was a challenger who had already cleared the 61st floor in his own planet’s Tutorial.

I was anxious. I felt like an invisible blade was pointed at my neck. And step by step, the blade was getting closer. I was walking on my own towards the edge of the blade, towards the cliff.

If I turned around and went back to the residence area, I’d still be dead.

The gods were not merciful. Not because they treated the challengers carelessly but because they were simply bound by constraints and

couldn't move. And within this realm where constraints do not bind them, they acted without any second thoughts. They didn't value human life.

Kirikiri had warned me. The power of a god who doesn't protect himself was a blade without a handle.

You could stab someone with that blade, but you'd bleed more. I accepted the gods' offer even after hearing it because that was the only way I could survive.

I didn't hesitate to seize the only chance given to me, no matter what the risks were. That was what I had learned from Mister.

As I was walking forward, the tense situation made me feel as if I were playing Russian roulette. Really, I felt like I was approaching death.

How long had I been walking like this? I faced the wall of the hall, which seemed to be far away. There was no ruler of the volcano, unlike the system's declaration that we can't guarantee victory even if 50 challengers from the 61st-floor fight unless we weaken the ruler through sacrifice. Only an empty jade seat was there.

[First ascetic path. You've reached the end of the burning volcano.]

Explanation: You stand here, after countless sacrifices. Sacrifice is valuable because it tramples on all the precious things, including the lives of the victims, their future possibilities, their past stories, their bond with you, and sets your guilt right at the very top.

Now there's only one last hurdle left in front of you. Prove that you are the victor in a duel carried out to test your will.

[Clear conditions will be changed]

[Clear Condition]

– Conquering the first ascetic path.

– Conquering the second ascetic path.

– Win.

The conditions were easy to understand. But that last condition, that one line asking for victory, changed a lot. I stared at the message window for a moment, then entered the portal.

The place I got transported to by the portal was a huge stadium. It would hold a duel between those who cleared the first ascetic path and the second ascetic path.

[Welcome to the Battleground of Victims.]

Forced or not, the true meaning of sacrifice does not change. Now, you have to prove your worth.

The second journey. There are your colleagues who may have been hurt on the icy snowy road. Maybe they'll admit defeat for you. Maybe they'll try to win over you. But what's more important is your choice. Defeat and anger them. Make them your scapegoat.

“Ha...” I let out a deep sigh.

Then I started with what I had to do.

Mister's party had yet to enter the duel. This was an opportunity to set up a barrier in advance. All the challengers who were with me were Hell's Difficulty challengers. At the same time, they were also apostles of the gods.

As long as the gods were with them, it would confirm my victory. Even the power shown by Mister in the Tournament and the power

that converted people's lives to death would definitely be meaningless in front of the gods' powers. All I had to do was buy time. If I bought 30 seconds or so, it would be my victory. If not, it would be my defeat.

I built a series of barriers. The challengers who had prepared for this moment, spread out everywhere, waiting for his entry.

At the moment when I really felt that I had done all the preparations I could, a portal in the corner of the stadium, began to shine. Mister's party had arrived.

The Hatchling, whom I first met at the Tournament, was seen. I could not help but be nervous. Mister's clone was holding the Hatchling.

There were two giants standing behind the party. The large bodies of the giants, each emitting intense heat and coldness, made me feel overwhelmed.

Finally, there was Mister smiling pleasantly, standing in front of the party. It was a face that I had seen many times on TV, and through my cloned self. I, myself, had met and talked to him yesterday. However, Mister who was facing me as an enemy gave off a completely different feeling than before.

It was time to make a choice. I opened my mouth, in the hopes that my voice wouldn't tremble.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

It was a strange feeling. I had wanted to come here for a really, really long time.

I felt strangely content. A sense of accomplishment that I'd finally made it, as a sense of freedom took over me, indicating that all my waiting was over. And the pride that came from the fact that Lee Yeon-hee had finally reached this point.

Lee Yeon-hee stood alone in the midst of the huge stadium.

Even with countless helpers, it seemed as if she were standing alone. She didn't look well either.

She looked like a ghost, with that white face and bloodless lips. Along with her anxious eyes, Lee Yeon-hee showed the typical image of a confused human being. I wish I could tell her to show more confidence.

"Are you the rulers of the volcano and the snow mountain of the 61st floor?" Lee Yeon-hee asked, pointing to the old man and old lady behind me.

They looked at Lee Yeon-hee, as if they were observing her. "Yes."

Why did she ask that?

Lee Yeon-hee remained silent for a while.

"Mister..."

"Yes."

Lee Yeon-hee could not immediately say what she wanted to.

Are you hesitating now?

I had expected an attack from Lee Yeon-hee as soon as I arrived. That was why I had entered the portal a step later than Lee Yeon-hee. I didn't expect her to talk to me with such hesitation.

"I have something to say..."

This was not a very good development.

Are you going to talk about what you've been upset about?

I felt sorry for what I did to her. I also thought I would apologize for

it. But not right now.

Conversing with Lee Yeon-hee came later. I felt apologetic, but now was the time to fight with each other. Instead of waiting for her to continue, I opened my mouth first and uttered a word.

“Barus.”

Barus was the trigger of the suppressor planted on Lee Yeon-hee’s necklace. Of course, Lee Yeon-hee was no longer wearing the necklace, but nevertheless, as soon as she heard me say Barus, she reacted instantly, as if she had been splashed by hot oil.

At first, the barriers that had been piled up in the air appeared as if they were about to hit us. Spirits clung to my body from every side. Among them was a spirit that was shaped like a chain.

I left the barriers and spirits alone. It was clear that their intention was to waste time rather than attacking me. Yong-yong would protect everyone on his own.

Lee Yeon-hee had a look of surprise on her face, after reflexively summoning the barriers and spirits. Were there any more ways to bind her?

Lee Yeon-hee’s helpers began to appear around her. In an instant, the vast stadium was filled with people.

They were Hell’s Difficulty challengers from different universes. I could tell the moment I saw them.

There were over two thousand apostles. This would not simply be considered as a gathering of the apostles. If the apostles were here, it meant that their gods were also here.

Soon, the challengers felt a strong surge of powers in their bodies. The gods were on their way. Two thousand gods.

This was enough. I looked around for familiar gods among the gods who were here.

Most of the gods of the Temple, who used to be in charge of Earth's servers, seemed to have not participated much since all I saw were unfamiliar gods. But among them, there was a very familiar power. From the apostle standing right next to Lee Yeon-hee, I could feel the power of a being whom I had actually met before.

“Long time no see, man with a funny name.”

It was an unexpected god. Because when we had met before, she was definitely not a god.

“Godmother?”

Chapter 284

Tutorial 61st Floor (5)

“...Godmother?”

“You remember me.”

Of course I remember.

The meeting with Godmother had been a big shock to me. Her mana was strong enough to make the surrounding air flicker with a huge fox's appearance. To protect her species, she used curses and ghosts to kill people while asleep, and her status was an apostle of the God of Devotion. Godmother was the divine being who had remembered our first encounter.

Her ability at that time seemed god-like enough to me. Then again, I had tried to attack her with a knife. Admittedly, I had been out of my mind.

“How did you become a god if you were on that stage?”

“Because I've been outside.”

I couldn't believe she'd been outside from the start. It was challenging to comprehend.

“What's your name?”

Before inquiring more, I asked the identity of Godmother, who was now a god. If you wanted to know about a god, you must get to know his or her name. A god's name spoke for his or her identity.

“Sacrifice.”

As expected, I was glad that I'd asked for her name. I could figure out a lot just by hearing Godmother's name.

"I thought the God of Devotion designed the 61st floor."

"He was involved on the 19th floor—the place where you and I met. No, wait, there's a catch. It's where you and my remnants met."

The remnants of a disaster.

Instead of transforming and becoming a god, did you throw away impurities and achieve godhood?

The Godmother I had met was training to become an apostle.

Perhaps, somewhere on the 19th-floor stage, there was still a Godmother who was training and intending to become an apostle, in repeated time; however, Godmother's body had gone beyond that of an apostle and ascended the throne of godhood. She described her past self as a remnant.

The Godmother on the 19th floor was abandoned, bound there for eternity. The main body was left in its useful position, like a foothold for higher goals.

"Isn't it fun?"

"Fun?"

"Your situation. Doesn't it resemble mine? This stage was originally designed to be like that. You and this woman are the first challengers to go through the same process as me. The winner goes up, and the loser stays here forever," the Godmother said with a smile, in a calm tone.

She pointed at Lee Yeon-hee, who was standing next to her.

Because of the presence of a god standing right next to her, Lee Yeon-hee kept feeling uncomfortable. Maybe she saw my relationship with Godmother's remnants and thought of worse outcomes.

“Don’t be so angry. I mean nothing to you. I’m also a Pre-Vaccine god, so I know how crazy you are. Like the other gods, I won’t get involved in this either. I just wanted to watch,” she said amusedly.

“This situation?”

“Yes. I wanted to see who the winner would be.”

Sacrifice.

It may sound meek, but it was risking a loss to acquire something.

Even if the sacrifice that Godmother meant was someone else’s sacrifice.

She wouldn’t consider other people’s feelings or positions.

She was such a god.

“The God of Devotion will be sad.”

“Haha, it can’t be helped. What can I do? This is also a part of being a god.”

The gods were like psychopaths. It hadn’t been many days, but the God of Sacrifice was a bit extreme.

She was a god who preferred sociopaths.

She wasn’t a god who was beneficial to mental health.

Let’s stop with this topic.

“It’s coming soon.”

After Lee Yeon-hee and the God of Sacrifice, the other gods were wrapping up the scene.

It was quite slow compared to the God of Sacrifice.

Gods could wield considerable autonomy in a place where their influence and power prevail, like the God of Hope, who reversed the stage's goal.

If the God of Sacrifice designed this place, it was no wonder that she spoke to me one step ahead of the others.

"Now, it's time for me to leave."

The God of Sacrifice spoke with regret.

I felt sorry, too.

"Why? Stay a bit longer."

"Haha. Do you think I'm a fool?"

As soon as the God of Sacrifice said that, she was gone.

Her apostle remained but only stood dazed.

Damn it.

She's quick-witted.

The God of Sacrifice referred to the Pre-Vaccine gods.

There seemed to be a difference in information between the Pre-Vaccine gods and the Pantheon gods.

They were gods bound by all kinds of restrictions.

If Pre-Vaccine gods wanted to get involved in a place beyond their dimension, there would be costs for collecting information.

I'll have to ask later.

As soon as the God of Sacrifice disappeared, the power of the new gods filled the space.

One by one, the gods began to move.

A single god could make you feel a ridiculous amount of pressure.

The gods' pressure began to build up, and the air felt painful because of the weight of it.

If you were an ordinary person, your skin would burn just by touching the air while inhaling it into your lungs would make your body a mess.

When the number of gods summoned exceeded 100, the floor we were standing on began to crumble.

Lee Yeon-hee was lying down and working on something.

Her top priority was to survive as long as possible.

I turned around and looked at my party.

Yong-yong was working hard in earnest, so there was little damage.

I looked at it as if it were a fantastic sight.

Only Seregia was relaxed, and the rest of them were on alert with nervous eyes.

[Hey, isn't this a little dangerous?] asked Hochi, his tone laced with uneasiness.

However, I had a lot of worries. The faster the gods grew, the noisier the stadium became. The gods were beings who talked even while putting pressure on us. Two thousand of them were renewed almost simultaneously, but none of them were extras. They all regarded themselves as the main characters.

Naturally, it became noisier.

No matter how heavy their presence was and how confident they were, there was nothing to say.

Because I couldn't even hear them.

But the gods didn't stop talking.

They weren't even speaking quietly, and instead, they tried to carry out their voice and will, making it echo all over the place, and in the end, nothing could be heard correctly.

I thought that the Pre-Vaccine or the Pantheon gods' Temple would be this chaotic and noisy.

There might be many purposes for the gods to be here. Some may be interested in me like the God of Sacrifice was, while others may want me as a new apostle. But several wanted to see the strength I had shown in the tournament, to take it, and to figure out how to be outside the scrutiny of the system and the gods.

There would be various purposes. Whatever they wanted, they only thought of me as a target of exploitation. That's why they'd been here all this time.

"I have a proposition for you."

"It's even more amazing to see you in person."

"Why don't you resist?"

"Tell me!"

"My apostle..."

"Are you scared?"

I tried to concentrate on what the gods were talking about, but there

was nothing worthwhile. They were just snorting like pigs.

Meanwhile, Lee Yeon-hee had her hands tightly closed on her ears. It was difficult to withstand this pressure with her ability.

“Shut up.”

There was no need to wait any longer. I’d already waited too long.

I released the power that had been sealed away.

* * *

“Shut up and listen to me.”

The noisy area quickly became silent.

It didn’t matter that they were gods. They were behaving like chatty humans.

I had the power here.

“I’m here.”

Let them listen to me.

“I can see this world and hear all the voices.”

It was a declaration that had been delayed for a long time. I didn’t know that this moment would be this perfect. I thanked Lee Yeon-hee once again.

“My will is the will of this world, and my presence proves it. Now that I am here, this world will be my sanctuary.”

I asked the gods, who kept their mouths shut, “You know what this means, don’t you?”

But no one answered because I didn't allow it.

“Get the hell out of my house, you pigs.”

I forced teleportation. Even the gods from different universes could not disobey the order.

Here, my will was the truth and the law.

The gods were lifted and teleported to where they were initially supposed to be. Now the ones left behind were not 2,000 gods but 2,000 apostles.

The connection with the gods was forcibly torn apart, and the apostles began to go crazy. There was one who cried out in pain, one who was about to go mad for power, and one who ran for me. They were only moths rushing towards death.

Forced to lose the most precious thing of life, they began to run in different directions, searching for their only remaining light: death.

Of course, I didn't want them to be freed through suicide.

The shadows of the apostles running wild shook.

The shadows moved independently as if they were living creatures.

The shadows, which rose with an appearance of mud, began to devour the apostles.

They broke out of their lock and cut off the arms and legs of their own master.

One cut off the tongue of an apostle trying to chant a spell and then cut a hole in their Adam's apple.

Broken joints and castrated vital points. Blood and flesh splattered everywhere. But no screams were heard.

“Ahhhhhh!”

Who was the one who just screamed?

When I turned my head, I noticed that it came from the God of Sacrifice’s apostle. Oh, he must have been hit when the gods were summoned back. He was more relaxed than the others, so he was resisting the shadows.

I spoke while putting some more shadows on him, “Don’t worry too much. I’m not gonna kill you.”

Why would I kill them? All of them were my precious assets. They were of great use.

Firstly, they could be used to negotiate with the gods who came here.

How far can I tear them apart in exchange for the power of apostles and gods left in their bodies?

Just the thought satisfied me.

“Oh, of course, if your god refuses to make a deal, the story will be different. But to be honest, either instance works for me.”

Soon all the apostles sank into the shadows.

When all were swallowed up, I checked the strength, and a satisfied smile rose on my face. This was a fantastic power. The power that the gods had left behind in their apostles without being able to retrieve them.

[It’s not dangerous, is it?] asked Hochi. [Can’t you tell me that in advance? I wouldn’t have been worried.]

Hochi was still grumpy.

Yong-yong was dismantling his barriers. Although they were barriers that could be recalled at once if prepared in advance, dismantling

them was not that easy. It'd take some time.

I approached Lee Yeon-hee, who was lying down. There was still something left to talk about.

“Get up.”

Lee Yeon-hee's body, which had been half-dead, recovered quickly, and she jumped up.

Lee Yeon-hee looked at herself in a bewildered manner and opened her mouth.

“Surrender.”

Quick judgment. Quick choice.

She was a disciple whom I had taught a lot. A portal appeared at her feet, with the message.

[Failed to clear the stage.]

[Before we move to the residential area, we'll finish talking, Lee Yeon-hee.]

The portal that appeared under her feet moved far away. Again, she put on a look of bewilderment.

“You're done for. I adjusted the message and the portal.”

That was what happened when I waited for a capable disciple but didn't want to let her die. I gave her an offer.

“You have three options.”

While listening to me, Lee Yeon-hee's eyes widened, and she asked, "If you could send me up, you would still clear the Tutorial."

"Huh, no."

"Yes, I'm sure you can. You would have told me earlier."

Lee Yeon-hee looked at me with her eyes dripping with tears.

Of course, I knew there was such a method, but there were chances that I couldn't do it.

"What kind of options are those? Please tell me."

She looked quite calm, unlike her earlier stressed appearance. She was still trembling, but she looked better.

"You didn't kill me, and you talked about an offer. At least, I won't die. You've been locked up on the 60th floor for a long time, but you won't kill me, right?"

Once you've survived, you'd have finished the hardest part.

She was right.

I responded positively to her question.

Lee Yeon-hee was greatly relieved that she had confirmed her safety.

"There are three options. One is waiting for a new challenger on the 60th floor as I did, but I don't recommend it. The second is to get out of the 60th floor through negotiations with the gods. I don't recommend this either."

It was too dangerous to recommend to Lee Yeon-hee. Above all, there was no reason for the gods to do so. The use of spying on me was gone. In the past, we could have come out with all gods' consent in

the Hundred Gods Temple, but it was hard as long as the Pantheon Gods also intervened.

The thoughts of 10,100 beings were bound to be different.

“The last offer is to be my apostle.”

Lee Yeon-hee remained silent for a while.

It was a critical moment, so I decided to wait for a while.

After thinking about it, she asked in a monotonous tone. “If I refuse, you’ll kill me, right?”

“Yes.”

Answering so naturally made me feel slightly guilty since she had asked me calmly.

[Really? Hello? Where’d your conscience go?] asked Ho Chi.

I didn’t know what to say. If Lee Yeon-hee didn’t become an apostle, the 60th and 61st floors were exposed to the gods. I’d have no choice but to kill her.

“I’ll do that.”

I gave my power to the accepted apostle. There was no need to be formal. I made her an apostle.

“Is it done?”

“Yes.”

“Now... what should I do? Do I just spend time on the 60th floor? Forever?”

“Go back for now. You remember my room, right? There are things I have left for you. What you need to do will be written there. You’ll be

quite busy, so hurry up.”

Lee Yeon-hee nodded.

Even after being able to get out of the Tutorial, I had no choice but to wait for her because my sanctuary, the 60th and 61st floors, remained. I needed someone to protect the place. So I waited for her.

“Mister.”

“Uh, yes?”

“Nothing...”

Lee Yeon-hee seemed to have something to say, but she soon shut up.

She had a lot to say.

I also knew why I couldn’t talk right away. Later, when time had passed, there’d be a chance to speak again. Lee Yeon-hee climbed onto the portal.

I finally spoke to her without saying any greetings, “You’ve had a hard time. Good job, Yeon-Hee.”

I didn’t know how comforting my words would be, but Lee Yeon-hee quietly nodded and moved to the 60th floor.

“It’s over.”

“I know,” said Hochi, who had come to my side before I knew it.

It was over.

It’d been a long time.

When I came up to the 60th floor, I knew the wait would block my way.

I didn't know it would be this long.

After entering the Tutorial, I'd been through all sorts of hardships.

But in fact, it wasn't so painful.

I was rather excited and happy.

The only thing that always bothered me was the helplessness that came from waiting, and the loneliness that came from isolation. For each of these two things, I turned my gaze and avoided it each time I was confronted. I didn't have the confidence to endure it or overcome it.

For me, the 60th floor forced me to face what I had always wanted to avoid.

In the end, we had reached this moment.

Now, A god could even compare me to a sword.

It was hard to call me a sword before.

I was an arrow back then.

I had already been shot and was flying.

I hoped to hit the target, but it was too far away.

I was an arrow that ran out of power, got blocked by a wall, and then splintered.

I was not perfect now.

The limits of my ability still existed.

My emotions still swayed them.

I didn't have as mature a personality as I had strength.

My behavior was inconsistent.

If Hochi, Yong-Yong, and the others disappeared from my side right now, I might not withstand it and return to the past.

I'd make many mistakes in the past, but I was still not finished blundering.

But as I kept learning, I changed.

And when I looked back, I was sure I was getting better than before.

I was growing.

That was what was important.

That was how it happened, and we were finally over the threshold of the 61st floor.

"Are you going straight to Earth?"

"No."

Before going to Earth, there was a place to stop by.

"I have a friend to meet before I go out. I promised to grant your wish."

I stood on the portal. Hochi and Yong-yong also stood on top of the portal. The old man and the old lady couldn't stand on it, so they put their fingers together.

The portal's light brightened the view.

When the white-colored vision gradually began to regain color, I could see the green fields spread out under the blue sky and a rabbit smiling clearly.

“KiriKiri.”

Chapter 285

Tutorial 17th Floor (?)

[Lee Hyung-jin]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 16th floor: Can I do it?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: Of course you can. There isn't a big difference between you and me. Don't fret over it.]

I re-read the conversation that took place quite a while ago.

I kept reading.

Hyung firmly believed that I could clear the 17th floor without any problems.

The basis of our faith varied.

It depended on the presence of magic. At the time of the 17th floor, Hyung said that he couldn't use magic. This difference was huge.

Magic skills didn't determine everything, but an opponent who didn't know about magic was less responsive.

It was better to stop magic attacks smartly than to be strong or swift.

Next, there was also a difference in items. The only items held by the mirage were a long sword, two daggers, and a small, medium-sized shield.

Of course, I heard that there were a variety of potions, but the items were of no use to me, who had more of them than anyone else.

Hyung didn't like using the items, saying that it stunted your skill growth, but the items had always shown to be more effective than what I had expected.

Finally, there was also the difference between the basic stats. Hyung told me about his stats and compared them to mine. Our physical stats were almost identical, but his muscular stats were far ahead of mine. And in the case of agility, his was almost twice as much as mine.

The massive difference in agility also meant that I could not win without a wide gap in skills.

The difference in agility made a difference in ability since basic body movements and speed were different.

For those reasons, Hyung was positive about my victory, but I myself wasn't.

I'd been preparing for a long time.

17th-floor stage.

Ever since Hyung cleared the 17th floor and told me about it, I'd been thinking about this stage.

Not once had I expected a victory on the 17th-floor stage.

"Can I start?" I spoke aloud, not by message, but by voice.

The person I spoke to was, of course, Kirikiri.

"Sure."

When I asked about the 17th floor, Kirikiri would always answer that she didn't know. That was when I had first heard about the 17th floor. Even now, she stayed silent.

It may be possible that she didn't reply as an act to refrain from informing me of some results.

I took out the monster ball that I always carried and held it tightly in my hand. This monster ball always reassured me. Somedays, when I felt like I couldn't make it, I was comforted that this would be my lifeline.

The monster ball had made me come all the way here.

I was quietly looking at the monster ball when a pale hand snatched it away. It was Kirikiri. Kirikiri had run away swiftly to the other side, taking the monster ball from my hand.

Shocked and bewildered, my body froze for a moment.

Anxiety, anger, and fear that Kirikiri might really take it away came crashing on me.

The next moment, I started running after Kirikiri, who was faster than I thought.

When I felt a sense of urgency beyond impatience, I managed to catch up with Kirikiri.

I lifted her by the scruff of her neck.

“Keeyek.” As soon as Kirikiri was caught, she stopped moving and dangled in the air, flailing like a cat.

“What are you doing!?” I shouted at her, taking back the monster ball from Kirikiri with my other free hand.

I was anxious because I thought I was too rough, but I calmed down when I took back the monster ball.

“I told you before. You’re going to die because of that ball,” said Kirikiri, still hanging in the air, looking at me in the eye.

It felt even more embarrassing when she said it so calmly as if it were natural.

Not long after returning from the Tournament, Kirikiri had mentioned it when she saw me holding the monster ball. I didn't know why Kirikiri was so negative about the monster ball.

I asked for the reason several times, but she never answered.

First of all, I dropped Kirikiri and apologized. It was not right to treat her carelessly.

“Can I use this?”

“I’ve told you before. You can’t send it to another level of difficulty.”

“Then, you can send it to Hyung.”

Kirikiri shook her head with a hard, grim look.

“I suggest you don’t.”

“...Why so?”

Kirikiri never answered again. In the end, I had to infer the answer for myself.

I came to two possibilities. First, I had been neglected.

Hyung’s protection was essential for me to survive on the stage that came after the 60th floor. If Hyung neglected me, the odds of me surviving on my own wouldn’t be high.

Second, I was going to die because of Hyung.

With that eccentric personality, he could try to stop me in anger at the fact that I’d been running away. He had pulled out John Overton’s arm because he was drinking and crying in a Tournament.

Of course, he wouldn’t really try to kill me, but it was another matter whether I actually died or not.

“It’s still the same. No matter how it goes, there won’t be a good ending.”

* * *

[Kirikiri]

“So loathsome,” I murmured quietly, sitting alone in the field.

There was a reply to my murmur.

[But you’re worse. Why didn’t you just let me go?]

“...You keep saying that because you know I can’t let you go. You even hide the fact that it’s ‘new’. It’s loathsome.”

The voice laughed. [Thanks, anyway. Because of you, I had a lot of fun.]

The voice hid its presence in the field at the end of those words.

I mumbled once again, “So loathsome.”

* * *

[Lee Hyung-jin, 17th floor: I’m going in now.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: Yeah. Be careful. Don’t talk to the mirage, just in case. Ignore anything it says.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 17th floor: Yes.]

Hyung had repeatedly stressed not to talk to the mirage.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: No matter how tough the opponent, the mirage can only find a way out through dialogue. Just don’t hold a conversation.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 17th floor: Okay. I got it]

[Entering the stage on the 17th floor]

The monster ball, which had been made into a necklace and was hung around my neck, was once again held tightly by hand.

Thanks to this monster ball, I was able to come all the way here. In my despair, this monster ball was like a ray of hope to me. It gave me a moment of optimism and a chance for me to breathe.

As soon as I entered the stage, I looked around. The peculiar thing was that the interior was hard to see.

Beyond that, I could see Hyung's mirage, and there was a transparent wall separating me from the mirage.

[After 30 seconds, the 17th-floor stage will start.]

Damn it. Give me a little more time.

As soon as I saw the message, I squatted on the floor and drew a magic circle.

I didn't know the principle, but it was a magic circle that was often used because of its excellent effects.

I worked hard to complete the magic circle in 30 seconds until someone talked to me in a calm voice.

"What is that?"

"This is..."

A familiar voice asked me in a monotonous manner, and I almost answered without realizing it.

When I looked up in amazement, it was the mirage that had come right in front of me. He had squatted down and was staring at me

intensely.

“What is it?”

I instantly thought of a crow.

Once in a while, when I walked along the street, some cats and crows stared at people.

They never attacked people, and I knew it was not dangerous to attack them, but sometimes I got nervous and scared.

It felt like that.

I knew he couldn't attack me right now because the wall was blocking him, but I felt like he would rush at me right away.

It was as if a knife was being pointed at me, in front of my eyes. I couldn't turn away.

Like a stone statue, he was sturdy, and unmoving, but was also vigilant.

[After 15 seconds, the stage will start.]

* * *

I finally came to my senses at the message and bowed my head.

When I avoided his gaze, I immediately broke out of my shock.

For the rest of the time, I diligently urged my hands to complete the magic team.

“Wow. So you're ignoring me to finish that?”

I could feel the hairs on my arms rise. I wondered if it was possible. Possible for it to be so much like a human, and at the same time, a monster.

Even monsters didn't go around like that.

[The 17th-floor stage starts.]

After a short period, the transparent wall disappeared. The mirage began to move as soon as the wall vanished.

Bang!

The mirage flew and crashed into me. I couldn't even see the movement properly, but I knew what technique it was: Blink.

It was the technique that Hyung had used as his primary attack at that time. Blink was a way to cross a distance at a very high speed.

Of course, I had my defense ready. I had prepared an item that automatically created a mana barrier whenever there was a strong attack.

The mirage that hit the barrier, and not me, would get a shock.

I took a sword out of the inventory and swung it so as not to miss the opportunity.

The mirage's neck had been very close, but the mirage still managed to escape the sword very narrowly.

My attack had missed, but I continued to take the initiative. It was possible to disorientate the mirage by continuing my attacks.

The difference in speed made it easier. The mirage generally held off on attacking as well.

However, he was not able to completely block all attacks. Little by little, the wounds on the mirage's body increased one by one. The

word victory flashed through my mind.

If only I could maintain this advantage without messing up.

Boom!

The mirage stomped on my foot.

For a split second, I had thought he was about to use Blink again and prepared myself. Instead of using Blink, the mirage made me take a half a step forward when I wanted to attack.

And instead of attacking, he stomped on my foot.

The barrier was not activated.

I swung the sword to strike back at the mirage, who had stomped on my foot, but he was too fast for me to block or change the course of my sword.

The mirage hit me on the chin with an uppercut.

Once again, a barrier was made. Bang! The mirage's attack was blocked. However, my center of gravity shifted to the back. On top of that, the mirage pushed his body straight towards me, and my body fell back.

My ankle that had been stepped on broke and a resounding crack was heard. If I fell to the floor like this, I'd get forced into a mount position.

Death.

I had to escape.

I hurriedly shouted a trigger with my hand in the direction of the welcome face.

Boom!

An explosion occurred in my hand with the short trigger. My body shifted backward.

It was an evasion method that combined short distance teleportation with an explosion that ruined vision. Now was the time for the mirage to be distracted by the explosion in front of him.

I activated the pre-prepared magic circle. "Electric Field!"

Puck!

As soon as I muttered the words, I flew back because of a strong impact.

What just happened?

The mirage caught me off-guard by launching an attack on me and broke through the barrier before the Electric Field developed.

I could tell that my ribs were dislocated. I was struggling to breathe right now.

I grasped my chest and looked at the mirage.

Thank God.

The mirage had managed to get in an attack, but he couldn't get out of the electric field. The mirage was bound by an electrical stream that paralyzed his whole body.

"You son of a b*tch... You're gonna die when this is over. You'll die right away!"

He repeatedly said that I would die, staring at me like a madman, even though an electric shock bound him.

His behaviour gave me goosebumps. Now, I doubted if he was really a person.

I felt a sharp pain in my chest, but I forced myself to stand up. I had to finish off the mirage before the electric field discharged.

Holding a knife in my still-intact right hand, I rushed to the mirage.

When I was about to strike the sword at his heart, the mirage moved.

He, who should not budge even a finger, held up his left hand to block the incoming blade's stroke. The blade penetrated his palm, but not his heart.

I twisted the blade reflexively, slicing the mirage's hand into half and aimed for his heart again.

The body of the mirage shook. He moved his upper body half a foot ahead—a very short distance.

He came near my neck, sinking his teeth into my flesh, taking a large bite, disrupting my concentration.

My vision went black. I heard a brief ringing in my ears, and soon, nothing was heard.

When my vision came back, I was lying on the floor, and the mirage was looking down at me. He was holding a piece of flesh in his mouth, that seemed to be a part of my neck.

My vision disappeared again after he spat it out.

* * *

“Hey, are you up?”

I heard a voice. I was not dead yet.

“Open your eyes if you are awake.”

I didn't open my eyes. I needed to figure out what was going on.

“Ahhhhhh!”

I screamed instantly when I felt a sharp pain on the lower part of my body.

“It hurts, doesn’t it? Everyone who pretends to be dead screams when they get hit here.” The mirage, who was calmly talking, was sitting on top of me.

He was pressing down on a vital point near my pelvic bone with one hand and had a dagger pointed at my neck with his other hand.

“Save me, save me. Hyung...”

I didn’t want to die. I didn’t want to die in vain here.

“Of course, I’ll save you. Why would I kill you, Hyung-jin? There’s so much I need to ask,” said the mirage.

Hope rose again at his words. Hyung at this time knew me, too. If he saw and recognized me, he wouldn’t kill me.

“Hyung. Hyung... let me explain. I can explain.” My voice shook. I could feel that I had been healed using something, be it Elixir or Potion.

It was hard to convince the mirage that this was a stage, but I had to do it.

This was the only option.

“Okay. Let’s start with the magic circle you used earlier.”

“No. Hyung, that doesn’t matter... Argh!”

“I decide what’s important, Hyung-jin.”

Eventually, I was able to start talking only after sharing all the magic I knew.

At first, the mirage didn't believe me and doubted me. The mirage thought he was real and that he was challenging to the 17th floor.

Contrary to Kirikiri's advice, he thought it strange that the difficulty level of the 17th floor was high, but he seemed to think this stage was better than a bland stage.

Besides, he had memories of the 16th floor, which was just before, so he couldn't believe what I was saying anymore.

He thought it was a stage that featured an enemy who was close to him.

The clear goal was to get rid of the enemy at the last minute. I had to persuade him very carefully.

The words available for use were also limited. Under the system's restrictions, I had to make him turn around, be suspicious of the situation, and infer the answer.

"Fake, huh?"

"I understand you suspect me because the whole floor is like a doppelganger. But if you listen calmly, you'll know I'm right, Hyung."

The mirage listened to my explanation for a long time, then asked again, "I'm a fake?"

I felt a strange feeling when I saw the mirage asking the same question again.

I ignored the strange feeling and continued the conversation.

"There's a way out of here. You and I can go up. Using this ball, Hyung. Hyung?"

The mirage was looking at me with an indifferent expression similar

to the one from before. But unlike before, when he acted as if my story was interesting, the mirage seemed to be angry at something.

“Hyung...”?

“Hyung-jin.”

“...Yes, Hyung.”

“I’m not a fake.”

I nodded unconsciously as I saw him speak.

“Right? I’m not a fake. I’m not fake. I’m not.” The mirage, who muttered quietly to himself, raised his hand which held the dagger.

A spark of light flashed at the tip of the dagger.

[God of Hope smiles at you]

Looking at the dagger that began to descend, I foresaw my death.

And on the other hand, I expected the message regarding the God of Hope, which had appeared at the last moment, to save me.

All kinds of thoughts flooded my mind in a split second, and the dagger fell without any hesitation.

[God of Hope smiles at you]

Chapter 286

Seoul (1)

“I’m back.”

“Good. Now come and take a look at this.”

He acted as if he was just meeting a friend on an errand to the convenience store.

“...Would it bother you to tell me that I’ve done a good job on my trip?”

“Ah, well done. Joon-suk, look at this.”

Lee Joon-suk frowned at his insincere attitude. But, as far as he knew, Kim Min-hyuk was a kind and considerate person, and so, instead of being annoyed, he calmly received the note from Kim Min-hyuk.

“It’s from a guy who came out a few days ago. I heard that Ho-jae’s clone did something during the Tournament. He met a hostile challenger from a different planet. They talked for a few minutes. Black smoke appeared, and then, the opponent was found dead.”

Black smoke appeared, and the opponent died. The results were clearly stated, but the cause was vague.

“Is something omitted? Or maybe he didn’t see it right.”

“I don’t think so. This is information from the Order of the Vigilance.”

“...the Order of the Vigilance?”

The Order of the Vigilance knew how difficult it was to communicate from outside and inside the Tutorial.

There were months when people often got deficient and distorted information, and sometimes, the news didn't come in at all.

The Order of the Vigilance members, who were well aware of these facts, had always meticulously written down the information they knew.

Most of all, Lee Joon-suk didn't think Park Jung-ah, who was strict about news like this, would have sent out such inadequate information.

"I don't think they know what's going on either. That's why they sent it."

If they added a personal opinion, it could make the wrong information real.

Kim Min-hyuk asked Lee Joon-suk again, "What do you think?"

"Well, I think I can do something about it."

Kim Min-hyuk was surprised when he asked, "You can do it too?"

"No... I mean, Ho-jae can do it. He used to be obsessed with invisible techniques. He's done it before. I'm not surprised, I guess. Wouldn't you die if a hole was poked in your heart or something?"

It was a valid opinion.

"He said there was no apparent wound. And since the opponent is a Hell Difficulty's challenger, would he die instantly on the spot just because he had a hole in his heart?"

"It could be a mixed attack. If you had a high fever, there would be no blood flow to some affected areas, and as soon as you penetrate a vital point, you'll collapse, so the impact would be enough to make you die suddenly. Of course, it's a different matter to keep it out of sight, but it's Ho-jae we're talking about here. Do you think it's impossible?"

Kim Min-hyuk murmured, "I think it's possible."

Kim Min-hyuk had cleared the Tutorial's Normal Difficulty level and had plenty of experience, but he could not estimate Lee Joon-suk or Lee Ho-jae's abilities.

Whenever common sense, which he understood, was denied by others; he felt wronged.

"How strong would he be now?"

"He's going to be very strong, I guess," Lee Joon-suk answered naturally.

It was an answer that Kim Min-hyuk had heard several times before. When Kim Min-hyuk last saw Lee Ho-jae, he already had unrivaled power. More than a decade had passed since then. It was hard for Kim Min-hyuk to guess how powerful he was now.

"I heard Lee Yeon-hee reached the 60th floor. Are you tense?"

"Have you seen the article?"

"Yes, I saw it as soon as I got off at the airport."

Lee Yeon-hee had eventually reached the 60th floor of the Hell Difficulty's level. The whole world was talking about this fact, and the media was going wild.

It was no wonder, considering the Awakened status these days and the symbolism of Hell Difficulty.

The problem was that news about such Tutorial challengers had been spread around. That kind of atmosphere was formed around the time developed countries gradually emerged victorious from the threat of monsters and gates.

The stakes were high on which challenger would be the first to pass the Hell difficulty level, or which floor they'd arrive at. On TV shows, they had made numerous documentaries about Hell Difficulty.

In the U.S., they were idolizing and characterizing them. In the past,

the U.S. and Korean servers were chosen for the challenge. In the case of the United States, they had the most significant number of Hell Difficulty challengers.

There was an irregular challenger named Lee Ho-jae on the Korean server.

The media had turned the two servers into a competitive structure. It had been making hot bets on what country would produce the first Hell Difficulty level's awakening, or what country would recruit that Awakened and would take a new form of leadership in the world.

Until a few years ago, the U.S's Hell Difficulty had as many as ten 30th-floor challengers. The media predicted that it would be possible for them to clear faster than the Korean server.

Challengers of the U.S. server, who were being targeted by multiple people simultaneously, would not be blocked on the 60th floor where party play was forced.

(T/N: 'Targeted' here refers to how Ho-jae made Yeon-hee his target.)

But it wasn't the 60th floor that blocked them, but the 30th floor. Years had passed since the American challengers reached the 30th floor, but the highest floor they breached was still only the 33rd floor. They had not taken a step forward ever since five challengers died on the 34th floor.

Meanwhile, Lee Yeon-hee's advance began. Lee Yeon-hee slowly and steadily surpassed the 30th-floor mark while the U.S. server's challengers were left behind.

After reaching the 40th floor, her speed seemed to have slowed down, but recently, it had increased dramatically. Every time Lee Yeon-hee's floor numbers were revealed, people went wild.

And then, Lee Yeon-hee finally arrived on the 60th floor. Naturally, the media was excited about the Hell Difficulty attack.

They predicted Lee Ho-jae and Lee Yeon-hee's post-clearing moves or talked about their past once again.

They had been talking all day long about the Awakened world's perceptual changes that would begin with their clearing the Tutorial. In a way, people's enthusiastic support may be called natural.

Major cities were now somewhat free from the monsters' threat, but they were still not completely free yet.

There was still a chance of being attacked by monsters while walking the streets at night, and there was still some amount of traffic caused by the occasional spawning of gates. Even at this moment, in areas occupied by monsters, the population of monsters was growing exponentially.

Moreover, most people shared the experience of losing close friends due to the aftermath of the cataclysmic upheaval that occurred more than a decade ago.

Kim Min-hyuk was also aware of their expectations and hopes for the Awakened from Hell difficulty level.

The problem is that he's not what you expect him to be.

Lee Ho-jae, whom Kim Min-hyuk knew, was like a monk who was uninterested in the world. He always did what he wanted to do and what he thought was right. Above all, regardless of what he wanted to do or didn't want to do, he hated the fact that someone made him do something.

In short, he was crazy.

Whatever people expected from him, Lee Ho-jae was likely to ignore those expectations. Kim Min-hyuk didn't know about Lee Yeon-hee, but he knew there was only one person who could clear the 61st floor. And between Lee Ho-jae and Lee Yeon-hee, Lee Ho-jae had a very high probability of clearing the 61st floor.

"But didn't we originally decide not to do this? I think she was supposed to report only to the 59th floor and notify you later that she went up to the 60th floor," Lee Joon-suk asked.

As far as he knew, Kim Min-hyuk had agreed with the South Korean

government to bury the information for a while, as soon as he obtained information that Lee Yeon-hee had gone up to the 60th floor.

“The government has gone off-track.”

Thanks to that, Kim Min-hyuk’s headache was getting worse day by day. Kim Min-hyuk wanted to keep this fact hidden for a little longer. Before Lee Ho-jae came out, he had to prepare more.

But now that it had already been reported, preparations would be even more difficult.

“The one who leaked must’ve been a civil servant.”

Unlike Lee Joon-suk, who talked calmly about this, Kim Min-hyuk wanted to visit the person who leaked the information, grab him by the collar and shake him.

Fortunately, it wasn’t too bad. It was not too late to complete the building of the summoning portal.

The challengers who had cleared the Tutorial would be summoned to the center of each nation’s capital’s main streets. In Korea, it was in front of Seoul Station. Naturally, the place had become a landmark.

Every time the news of someone clearing out came out, the media camped out in front of it. As soon as the Awakened came out, they pointed the camera at them.

Sometimes, when the weather was good, people gathered in front of Seoul Station to wait for them. Whenever that happened, the broadcasting company’s ratings soared, and the buzz and business near the Seoul Station, where people gathered, rose along with it.

For them, the summoning of the Awakened was a festival.

Even though some liked the situation where people interviewed them as soon as they came out of the Tutorial world, most didn’t like it. Most were locked up in the Tutorial for years or a decade at the most. Their return to Earth made their feelings complicated.

They could be happy, but on the contrary, they could also be afraid. It was never a good thing to draw attention, recite cheers, and hand over a microphone to the confused Awakened.

In Kim Min-hyuk's opinion, ordinary Awakened people would not be able to withstand Lee Ho-jae's anger and irritation. Kim Min-hyuk had made a building around the summon portal in front of the Seoul Station.

Despite a lot of opposition, the building was completed early this month with the aid of Human Rights groups and the Awakened that he drew to the World Association of the Awakened.

The reporters would camp in front of the building for an interview, and the audience would remain the same, but the Awakened would at least be able to prepare their minds to face them.

The final problem was that the building was under the jurisdiction of the government. Given the government's recent behavior, they could not be sure what would happen if they let Lee Ho-jae meet with government officials.

The Korean government was already in full swing due to the leak of the news of the Awakened and the power struggle amidst groups. There was no telling what those crazy officials would do.

"I have to discuss this with them."

"It's going to be a pain to deal with the government."

"Well, there's nothing else I can do but tolerate it."

The damned government may disappear if something went wrong. Kim Min-hyuk intended to win concessions from the government even if he had to give up quite a few things.

If an agreement was not reached, he would be the one to meet Lee Ho-jae first, even if he had to mobilize his association's members to occupy the Seoul Station on the same day.

Of course, that was the last resort, and perhaps, a condition of handing over or returning some of the association's interest to the government would satisfy them.

"You'll be busy again for a while. Oh, right, what happened to your business trip?"

"You finally remembered," Lee Joon-suk replied with a big smile.

"As a courtesy, could you at least give me tea and snacks? I just got back from Antarctica."

* * *

Lee Joon-suk said while munching on a piece of chocolate pie, "There's so much to be said about how the G-class monsters were hunted around in the U.S... The most plausible theory is that the U.S. military used nuclear weapons, but their radiation level was low. I think it's better to contemplate more about the theory."

One of the G-class monsters that existed on Earth had settled on the United States' eastern coast. Since then, any attempt to hunt a G-class monster has failed.

When Lee Joon-suk came out of the Tutorial, the first thing he did was hunt that G-class monster.

In fact, he attempted to hunt it with the World Association, but at the last minute, he gave up hunting and returned to Korea. Criticism was poured on Lee Joon-suk, but he did not change his decision.

Lee Joon-suk thought it would be better to kill other monsters scattered worldwide than to suffer damage from killing a G-class monster that didn't even move in its territory.

"This is the last trip you were going to take, to Antarctica, right?"

"Yes, I've scouted all the G-class monsters."

"How was it?"

Even if he couldn't kill the G-class monsters right away, Kim Min-hyuk wanted to know their power.

Lee Joon-suk checked on the G-class, who were spread worldwide to confirm the possible attacks.

“Bad. I can't touch them.” He gave a firm answer.

A G-class monster had been successfully hunted under the leadership of the United States nearly a decade ago. It was still challenging to get ahead of them because they couldn't recover the power of the Awakened who were lost at the time.

Lee Joon-suk wedged Kim Min-hyuk, who was doubtful.

“I don't think Ho-jae would be able to take out the G-class monsters.”

Note/s from Imagine:

I remember briefly when Ho-Jae killed that other hell challenger, he had bracelets on his arm which disappeared before he used his powers, the fact that he had braceletS to hold back his powers is quite cool and something I didn't catch the first time I read through it.

Chapter 287

Tutorial 71st Floor (1)

[You have cleared the 71st floor.]

* * *

“Hey!”

“Hi!”

Kirikiri and Yong-yong, who had run towards each other shouting the same greeting, grabbed each other’s hands and began to spin around.

How long will they be like that?

The two had been sticking to such a greeting whenever we cleared a floor. It was pleasant to see at first, but now it felt a little strange.

I watched Kirikiri and Yong-yong play for a while, then glanced back. As soon as Hochi came out of the stage, he took out a novel and started reading it.

The old lady and the old man were resting in a small space while Seregia was sprawled on the floor.

Her limbs flung out in different directions. Her figure resembled a discarded doll, rather than a man resting.

“Seregia, lie down straight and rest.”

As usual, Seregia ignored me. I sighed at her, who seemed to suddenly be deaf and didn't react at all.

"Do you want a futon to lie on?"

"Yes, please." She was good at answering questions like this. I laid down the futon, and Seregia crawled into it. Then, she stopped moving again.

I thought that she'd been living too long as an inanimate object. I was thinking about setting up a tent for her, but now that I thought about it... *Nah*.

It was obvious that she wouldn't care anyway.

I walked to Kirikiri. Yong-yong rolled with Kirikiri for a while and then ran away to catch the butterfly Kirikiri had summoned. It seemed that Yong-Yong loved everything he saw for the first time.

"You didn't summon anything like that back then."

"Do you like butterflies?" Kirikiri asked.

Of course I didn't like butterflies.

"You don't even like them."

"I don't like them, but still," I said curtly. It felt like my heart was aching.

Actually, having that heartache wasn't entirely false. Whenever Kirikiri showed me something I didn't know about, I felt discomfort, even at the insignificant act of summoning butterflies.

Maybe it was because of the strange power I felt from her. When I cleared the 61st floor and met Kirikiri again, I thought I could get a glimpse at her strength.

It was a miscalculation. Kirikiri had too complicated of a power to see

at just a glance.

“If I had brought in butterflies before, you would have killed them,” Kirikiri said in a playful tone.

There was nothing for me to refute. If there were butterflies like that in Kirikiri’s field, I would have thought of catching and dissecting them while she was sleeping or eating cakes. In those days, it wouldn’t have been strange for me to do anything to butterflies.

“The stage was fine, wasn’t it?”

I nodded at her question. The Tutorial stage had been fine. To keep me entertained, at least.

Kirikiri had stopped me from returning to Earth immediately after our reunion, and I was recommended to clear all the stages and return home normally.

It was a result of Kirikiri’s position as a manager who had to manage the Tutorial.

Instead, Kirikiri told me what I could obtain by clearing the stages: stage information, the Tutorial’s stage-clearing compensations, and Kirikiri’s advice.

All of these were rewards that would help me. I asked the others for their understanding and decided to clear the Tutorial before going out.

There was no hurry to go back to Earth.

The 61st floor, which I wanted to escape from, had already been cleared out. Moreover, as long as I cleared the 61st floor, there was no reason to be reluctant since no other gods could watch my surroundings.

Instead, it was good that Hochi and Yong-yong had had time to adjust to a new world before we went back to Earth.

Even if I got stuck in a unique stage like the 61st floor, I could just

leave anytime. Kirikiri told me that a situation like the 61st floor would not happen anymore.

Above all, targeting the Tutorial stage itself was fine. It felt weird to have come up this far. I was clearing the stages out as if I were taking a walk in an amusement park without any hardships.

Yong-yong, who was happily chasing butterflies over there, was the evidence. Yong-yong enjoyed visiting the Tutorial stages. Even on a stage that could give a mental shock, Yong-yong just laughed at it and finished it.

Somehow, I felt betrayed by that sight.

“They were meant to be hard for human beings.”

“Because it wasn’t a level of difficulty designed for humans in the first place.”

However, it was a difficulty level that humans could choose. It was the level of difficulty that didn’t consider the human being who came in. It was a level of difficulty where even a more powerful being than a human would suffer.

“Well, most gods don’t care about humans.”

Yet, the gods were worshipped by humans.

It would be the same even if there were a God of Philanthropy or Love.

“Correction. There’s no such god that cares about humans.”

There’s no such god, huh? At least there was no such god in the Pantheon.

Kirikiri looked at me all of a sudden. “Oh, that reminds me. You cried a long time ago because it’d been a long time since you saw one.”

Talk about changing the subject. Why was Kirikiri suddenly talking about me crying when we were talking about gods?

At that moment, someone cut in.

“Crying? Who?” asked Hochi, who had just arrived.

Kirikiri pointed at me with her finger.

“Him?”

“Yes.”

Hochi looked at me and muttered, “This guy cried? Why don’t I remember anything like that?” A shocked expression was plastered on his face. Hochi looked as though he had peeped into the secret of his birth.

Why? I didn’t put it in his memories, so he couldn’t have known about it.

“Kirikiri, would you like some cake?”

“I want to eat cake!”

I bought a cake.

Kirikiri ignored Hochi and rushed toward the cake. Hochi soon went to Kirikiri, who was eating a cake, having lost interest in the question of his memories.

“Can I have some too?”

“No!” Kirikiri exclaimed indignantly.

Hochi made a deal to share his fork in exchange for lending it, and Kirikiri accepted the agreement on the condition that he would not touch the only cherry on the cake.

Soon, Yong-yong joined forces and ate the cake, while the cherry which Kirikiri had treasured, crept into Seregia's mouth, who had crawled there with blankets around her body.

Kirikiri was in tears and asked me to buy her another cake, but I didn't buy her one.

* * *

"The gods are going crazy. Who would have expected a new personality to pop out of the Tutorial. There's a movement to make Tutorials in other Hundred Gods Temple' dimensions, and there's a rumor that they're going to make each Tutorial have only one difficulty: Hell."

It was a mess. The Tutorial, to which the Earth belonged, was limited to the dimensions managed by the Hundred Gods Temple. Therefore, the Hundred Gods Temple participated in the design of the Tutorial and shared the right to participate.

That was until the other gods of the Pantheon intervened.

"What happened to the Hundred Gods Temple?"

"Nothing bad happened. The Pantheon Gods compensated the Hundred Gods Temple," she said lightly.

It probably costs a considerable amount of money to act beyond the interference of the system and constraints. All the Pantheon Gods who crawled onto the 61st floor must have paid the Hundred Gods Temple, the original owners of the Tutorial.

I didn't know the price, but it wouldn't have been less than the apostles I had captured on the 61st floor.

Damn, this makes me mad. Are there any possible incentives?

I had quenched my curiosity, but there were still two questions left. I decided to ask the first question.

“Tell me the exact difference between the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon Gods. They seem the same, and sometimes, different.”

The concept of the Pantheon Gods itself appeared after I was trapped on the 60th floor.

It was the Pantheon Gods who had contacted Lee Yeon-hee after I was isolated on the 60th floor. Of course, I didn't know much about them. I just thought they were gods from a different dimension.

“You can say that the Pantheon is a complete gathering of all the gods under the system. There are hundreds of groups under the Pantheon.”

“Do all these gods belong to Hundred Gods Temple as well?”

“No, there are more gods who belong only to the Pantheon.” Kirikiri added that there were only a few gods in the Hundred Gods Temple.

The Pantheon itself was a restraint that bound the gods with system constraints. There was another restraint called Hundred Gods Temple.

I wondered if the Hundred Gods Temple's concept was not a private organization of gods, but a secondary restraint by bringing together exceptionally dangerous gods. It was all the more so because the gods who made up the Hundred Gods Temple had completely different personalities, let alone similar tendencies.

The presence felt by most of the Pantheon Gods on the 61st floor was quite different from that of the Hundred Gods Temple.

It was time for my second question. The gods of the Pantheon had confirmed that I had achieved a level of divinity almost comparable to theirs.

“There's a movement to make a new Tutorial after they found out about my powers?”

It sounded like they wanted to find a new personality by making a Tutorial. It was hard to understand, considering that the reason the gods wanted a Tutorial challenger was usually to get the apostles.

“They can still get apostles with the lure of making them a subordinate-god ^[1]. If it doesn’t work, the apostles will be forced to eat dog-shit.”

Is that so?

The words ‘eat dog-shit’ instantly made sense. The gods must be rejoicing. If they put ordinary humans in there and even one god came out of every 10,000 people, they might think it’s worth the try.

The gods, in general, wanted power.

When the source first appeared, they heard that it helped me achieve my powers. Even those who had already achieved their own wanted to gain more power from my source.

In the stage where the source appeared, the stage ended with the involvement of the Hundred Gods Temple. Perhaps the dispatched god was meant to retrieve the power of the source.

There was no way that the gods, who were so covetous of the source, would not covet other people’s divinity.

“It’s going to be a brutal struggle.”

“I suppose so.”

However, the Earth’s Tutorial aimed to help humans through Easy, Normal, and Hard Difficulty to solve the Earth’s crisis. However, if the challenger’s only purpose were to achieve his or her prestige, the story would be different.

Every challenger summoned as a Tutorial Challenger would be forced to face a hellish situation.

“Even the species with powerful powers from the beginning, unlike humans, will face such difficulties that they cannot easily break away with their abilities. You’re the only successful one we’ve had so far.”

And I had gained divinity by breaking through a difficulty that was

generally never cleared. The challenge of the new Tutorial would only have one level of difficulty, and that was Hell.

No matter how powerful it was, it was difficult to clear it. It was someone else's business, but it wasn't beneficial for me either.

"I don't feel very good."

Kirikiri nodded. "There are still gods who are looking for you. Of course, I can't deliver their message directly to you, but they keep asking if I can arrange a conversation."

"I don't want to talk to them, so ignore it all."

I didn't want to be another God's apostle now. There was nothing to gain, not even experience.

"Have you asked all your questions?"

I nodded at Kirikiri's question.

Kirikiri said she would grant my wish as promised when I cleared the 61st floor, and we reunited. I told her to give me some time. The wish that Kirikiri had promised had come to mind after a long time.

I'd really thought about what to ask for. But for the last time, I wanted to think about it a little more.

I wanted to clear the stages, check some more information for Kirikiri, and tell her my wish. Then, I'd clear the 71st floor.

Ten more floors were cleared to earn information, and all necessary information had been grasped by it.

"What wish should I grant?"

Somehow Kirikiri, who was pretending to be serious, felt like a mountain god. A rabbit and a mountain god, it was a combination that didn't make sense.

But she could grant my wishes, I who was something akin to a god.

“End this Tutorial.”

Note from Imagine:

[1] Subordinate-God most likely means something like becoming a Saint (however this is just my theory on what it means, feel free to interpret it anyway you want to for now as i doubt we'll get an explanation on what exactly it means)

Chapter 288

Tutorial 71st Floor (2)

“Are you thinking of making another wish?”

“Not at all.”

“Do you have any intention of taking back your wish?” Kirikiri asked.

Of course, I have no such intention.

“I could give you more power than what you have right now. I could give you the means to win the gods’ support, or I could bring your friends here from different stages, or I could call them to Earth.”

Kirikiri’s proposals would be of great help to me: power and support of the gods, even reuniting me with people I’d met in the past. But that wasn’t what I wanted right now.

“I just want this Tutorial to stop. Don’t let the stages that are currently repeating continue to repeat over and over again.”

I could achieve my goals and keep my promises on my own. What I wanted from Kirikiri was to put a stop to the stages that were repeating at this moment, so that one day, they flowed along to a new present, and not a recurring past.

That was all.

“Ugh...” Kirikiri pretended to groan for a long time, but I had no intention of changing my wish. Of course, I knew that stopping the Tutorial stage was meaningless as a result.

Nevertheless, I wanted it.

“Promise me one thing!” exclaimed Kirikiri, raising one hand.

“What promise?”

“You’ll be sure to clear all the Tutorial stages before you go out.”

Uhh...

Kirikiri stressed that I had to clear all the stages. The biggest reason why I’d remained in the Tutorial was to think about the wish I’d ask from her. Of course, I could wish for information on the stage and clear compensation, but honestly, they weren’t that appealing. Likewise, there was no reason to rush to Earth.

“If you promise me that, I’ll stop all stages right now except the ones you’re going to target. All the challengers will be sent to the waiting room or a nearby residential area.”

I couldn’t help shout out, “Cool, sounds good.”

I never thought this wish would come true so easily. I was a little dumbfounded, but Kirikiri accepted my wish without a hitch.

I had no choice but to question the smooth acceptance. “Are you okay with that?” It was strange to ask if it was okay after saying that it was my wish, but I still asked.

Kirikiri nodded. “It’s alright,” was what Kirikiri said, but I wondered how it was possible to stop the Tutorial at her disposal.

“The Tutorial’s management is entirely in the hands of managers. Of course, we have to pay for it, but it’s possible to shut it down temporarily.”

The control was in the hands of the managers. It didn’t make any sense.

“The system accepts that?”

Kirikiri grinned at my question. She displayed a mischievous smile. “I have no choice but to be forgiven. The system just regulates us when we act beyond the constraints. With our power...”

“Anything is possible.”

Just how the gods usually do within their sphere of influence. So far, the system was faithful to its role as a constraint. However, it was not understandable that the Tutorial’s halting was possible just because all the managers agreed.

“And the Hundred Gods Temple?”

“The selection of the manager was with all the Hundred Gods Temple. It’s them who set our authority along with responsibilities by majority vote. As always, they can’t change what had already been decided at that time. If they’re going to overturn our decision, they would lose all of us and vote for re-election as a manager. Pick up candidates, drop someone, put someone up. Then they’ll adjust the responsibilities and authority given to the manager. By majority vote on top of all that. It’ll probably take a year. Even if you don’t like it, you’ll have to be satisfied, because that’s how much we had to pay.”

After hearing Kirikiri’s explanation, I thought she still had too much authority as a manager. If managers came together, they could monopolize the Tutorial. What had the Hundred Gods Temple’ planned by giving managers such authority?

“In fact, in general cases, the managers’ opinions are not unified.”

“Why?”

“We’re at odds with each other.”

I could understand that a little. I had seen many times when the Hundred Gods Temple were unable to unify their opinions. Even if something was decided through voting, there was always a dissenting vote. Unity was indeed a rare sight.

The reason was obvious. Gods cannot compromise since their egos were huge. That’s what all the gods did. Maybe that’s why they were

gods.

The God of Light does not prefer dark over light. It would go against his identity to choose dark. The God of Duel does not tolerate cowardice. The God of Devotion does not feel joy in the sight of someone suffering. It was not a matter of preference, but a matter of feasibility.

Moreover, apart from the issue of voting, relations between the gods would significantly affect the vote. The manager would, too. It would be impossible for them to unify their opinions if they had collected the opposites. If there was a condition that the opinions must be unified to give authority to the manager, the authority becomes virtually ineffective.

They had once already handed over the responsibilities and authority to the managers. It would be difficult for the gods to re-decide new ones.

It was a convincing process.

“But this time it’s different. We all know your goal. And I hope you achieve your goal. Each of us has a slightly different wish, but we all agreed to grant your wish for it anyway. Some oppose, and some agree with our decision, but they can’t argue with our final decision.”

Kirikiri had made it clear that she supported my goal, and so did other managers. I remembered what the God of Hope once told me. I felt uncomfortable as I recalled what the God of Hope had said.

* * *

As Kirikiri said, I had decided to clear the Tutorial stages to the end, but questions still remained. Why had she recommended me to clear the stages so much?

“First, information points. Second, clearing rewards. I told you last time,” Kirikiri answered grumpily, possibly because I had questioned her advice. Clearing rewards was manageable. But was there still any more information I needed to gather?

We had to clear the stage.

“There still is,” Kirikiri said with a grim look.

I couldn’t understand it right away, and I couldn’t ask more because of the lack of information points, but I decided to move on. The advice Kirikiri gave had always been beneficial and would continue to be.

“You’re going to go now, right?”

“No, I’m planning to stay a little longer.”

When Kirikiri asked if I was going to leave, I answered no. Kirikiri sounded surprised at my answer.

“Huh?”

Typically, I moved on to the next stage as soon as I heard all the advice, so Kirikiri had a strange look on her face when I said I would leave a little later.

I pointed to the side where Seregia and Yong-yong were. Seregia was lying still on the bed. Yong-yong had been playing by himself. As soon as Kirikiri and I began to talk seriously, he wandered around and dozed off next to Seregia. Once they both lay down, they didn’t get up easily, so I decided to let them take a little rest and then start off.

“I see you still have a soft spot,” Kirikiri remarked.

Of course. How could I have survived this long if I didn’t? Of course, there’d been many crises.

“It’s all thanks to me.” Hochi chimed in with self-praise.

I was going to say something to him, but Kirikiri spoke to Hochi first. “That’s right, Hochi deog-iyang.”

(T/N: I’m not quite sure what the author was trying to imply... Either way, Deog/Deok refers to virtue/moral, and yang meaning sheep...)

Kirikiri's smile and her answer left me with a bad feeling. It was not because of her actions, but because of Hochi's name, which had been pronounced by Kirikiri.

"How did you just pronounce his name?"

"Huh?"

She pronounced my name as Hoo-ouh-woo, stretching it out, unlike when she called Hochi. Somehow I felt disappointed.

"Oh, right. Kirikiri, I have a question."

Hochi had met Kirikiri for the first time after leaving the 61st floor, but he was comfortable with Kirikiri. Perhaps it was because of his memories.

Kirikiri treated Hochi as if she knew him for a long time. To be fair, Kirikiri would do that no matter whom she met.

"What on earth does Ho-jae mean? Why does everyone laugh when they hear it?"

At Hochi's question, Kirikiri tilted her head. "I've answered this before."

"Really? Why don't I remember?"

Why? Because I didn't put it in.

"No way, what do you mean? You even touched my memories?" asked Hochi, glancing at me.

That's right. I didn't think I needed to put all my memories into Hochi. If I had put all the shameful memories in, neither Hochi nor I would have felt comfortable.

"Heng, do you want me to tell you?"

“Oh, tell me. What does it mean?”

Kirikiri and Hochi whispered softly as if they were plotting something dangerous. It was necessary to stop them.

“Oh, you shouldn’t try to invade other people’s privacy.”

The meaning of my name was strictly personal. This had been confirmed long ago.

“You know, that privacy may or may not apply to Hochi. Ahahaha!”

“Right! I’m your clone. I’m you in a way. Privacy’s nothing. Hurry up and tell me what it means.”

Hochi tried to find my name’s meaning, arguing that he and I were the same person, having thrown away his identity. Extra measures needed to be taken and quick.

“Kirikiri, would you like another cake?”

* * *

[The 80th-floor stage begins.]

Explanation: A source has been drifting in outer space on a planet whose name is unknown. It recently crashed onto it. The source quickly devoured everything in the area, and the planet was destroyed.

The Hundred Gods Temple’s investigator reported something dubious about the source, unlike the usual ones. The Hundred Gods Temple wants to send you to retrieve the source and find out what is unique about the source.

-Clear Conditions:

1. Eliminate the Source.
2. Investigate the source.

When Seregia and Yong-yong woke up, I headed for the 80th floor with my party. The 80th-floor stage was set in a plain wasteland. I could see the source in front of the summoned place.

“It’s a different stage than usual,” Hochi mumbled.

I thought the same. It was easy to see the strength of that centipede-like creature from its strange appearance.

The clear condition was the killing and investigation of the source. Perhaps after killing the source, something worth investigating would come out.

“I’ll do it!” Yong-yong stepped up with enthusiasm.

In fact, there was no one but Yong-yong ready to deal with the source. The old man and the old lady had little interest in the stages. The same went for Seregia. Actually, I was the same as well.

After leaving the 61st floor, Hochi and Yong-yong took charge of the stages, and I rarely did anything. All I did was give advice from time to time. It was the same this time.

So even when Yong-yong stepped up, I just told him to do what he felt was right. The problem occurred shortly after Yong-yong fired his mana at the source.

A bright energy barrier was wriggling near the source. It was an energy barrier made to protect itself.

And the mana that Yong-yong had fired destroyed the source’s protective layer, and the body of the source was reduced to powders.

[Stage failed.]

[Returning to the waiting room.]

...What the heck, man? They told me to kill the source, so I killed it.
Why did I fail?

Chapter 289

Tutorial 80th Floor (1)

Kirikiri granted the wish and attached the condition that I should clear all the Tutorial stages.

I was reluctant. The biggest reason I'd remained in the Tutorial was to think about the wish I'd ask of her. But Kirikiri advised that I still had a lot more to gain from the Tutorial.

Of course, I decided to finish the Tutorial stages as she advised. Kirikiri's advice was generally correct, and there was nothing to lose by accepting her help. It had always been like that, and it would continue to be so.

Stage clearing was easy. Although Yong-yong and Hochi were entirely in charge of the attack, they were clearing five or six stages a day. We did so even though I was not in such a hurry to attack.

Yong-yong enjoyed clearing the stages. He took excitement in seeing the worlds of various stages as if he were at a theme park. The old man and old lady weren't particularly interested in the stages, and neither was Seregia.

I was a little uncomfortable this time. The 70th-floor stage had a consistent concept, and a native god appeared on every stage. Those gods crashed and created a hellish environment.

The challenger had to either evacuate and protect people from the Hundred Gods Temple or survive until a new divine being of the Hundred Gods Temple appeared.

It was different from the other stages. I felt like I was experiencing propaganda rather than a stage.

It was as if they were showing how horrible the power of uncontrolled

gods could be, and by doing that, they seemed to be praising the Hundred Gods Temple gods. It was as if the system was necessary for the Hundred Gods Temple gods to exert their influence.

However, it was contradictory that most Hundred Gods Temple gods who had designed the stage wanted to get out of the system. I had to find out more about the relationship between the gods and the system.

I hadn't gotten all the information yet, and I couldn't even ask Kirikiri. Before entering the 60th floor, I spent all the information points I had. To ask new questions, I had to clear the stage and earn them again. Maybe Kirikiri's remark that I needed to clear the stage also meant that she wanted me to gather more information.

* * *

[The 80th-floor stage begins.]

Explanation: A source has been drifting in outer space towards a planet whose name is unknown. It recently crashed into the planet, quickly devoured everything in the area, and destroyed the planet.

The Hundred Gods Temple's investigator reported something dubious about the source, unlike the usual ones. The Hundred Gods Temple wants to send you to retrieve the source and discover what is unique about it.

-Clear Conditions:

1. Eliminate the Source.
2. Investigate the source.

"It's a different stage than usual," Hochi mumbled.

It was different. Perhaps the concept had changed once we arrived at the 80th floor. Unlike the 70th floor, which mainly displayed the gods, the 80th-floor's theme focuses on the source.

First of all, it was unusual that the source had reappeared. The 80th floor was set in the wilderness.

I could see the source in front of the summoned place. The power emitted and the appearance of a centipede gave away the fact that it was a source.

"What should we do?" asked Hochi, looking back at me.

If Yong-yong's job was to use his strength to clear the stage, Hochi's job was to plan the attacks. But Hochi asked me for advice every time he saw something for the first time, or whenever he had to deduce something.

The reason was simple. Hochi had no enthusiasm to spend his time in deep thought to clear a stage. Like Yong-yong, he enjoyed clearing the stage and experiencing new worlds, but he was much less motivated.

"Just kill it for now."

"Just kill it? They want us to investigate."

There were two clear conditions for the 80th floor: eliminating the source and investigating it.

The important thing here was that the first condition was killing, and the second condition was an investigation. The sequence of clear conditions was not random.

Perhaps it was only after the source got eradicated that a proper investigation could be carried out. Some abnormalities about the body needed to be investigated only after killing the source.

"Then, I'll do it!" Yong-yong raised his hand.

Hochi smiled and told him to do so. Yong-yong fired his power at the

source. The source was just as explosive as the power was.

[Stage failed.]

[Returning to the waiting room.]

The next moment, we returned to the waiting room. What the heck, man? They told me to kill the source, so I got rid of it, but why did I fail?

I was puzzled. I merely followed instructions, but I was taken to the waiting room without notice.

Before entering the 80th floor, Kirikiri had not explained the stage. Yong-yong looked at me with perplexed eyes, wondering what he'd done wrong, while Hochi was waiting for an explanation.

I didn't understand the situation, so there was only one thing I could say. "Let's do it again."

Through the portal, we entered the 80th floor again.

[The 80th-floor stage begins.]

Explanation: A source has been drifting in outer space on a planet whose name is unknown. It recently crashed onto it. The source quickly devoured everything in the area and the planet...

I skimmed through the explanation. The clear conditions remained the same.

“Hey, explain it to me.”

“Um... it’s...”

Hochi asked me for an explanation, but to be honest, I didn’t understand the situation either; however, I didn’t want to reveal my cluelessness.

“Are you in a situation you can’t figure out?”

“No, it’s not that... The...”

I needed time to organize my thoughts. Damn it. I’ll just think about it while spouting bullshit.

I began to speak slowly so I could think a little more. “First of all, there are two possibilities.”

“Oh, what are they?”

“One is that this may not be the source.”

This case was not very likely. The only source I could see around here was that giant centipede. That centipede and my party were the only beings alive on this planet.

“Second...”

“Second?”

Yong-yong had made an overly powerful attack. Normally, considering the 80th floor’s difficulty level, the average challenger could never produce that much power. Because of that, the system could have suffered an error.

I was afraid that was the case since I couldn’t think of anything else.

“Then I’ll try to attack it gently,” Hochi replied, after hearing my explanation.

But that wasn't easy either. That source had an unusual energy barrier around it. The source was sucking in and absorbing all the powers around it.

The fact that the planet's ground was a dry wasteland and no signs of life may be due to the centipede's unique ability.

It was not just absorbing the life force of the planet but the life force of everything nearby. Just getting close to it would make the challenger look like a lifeless mummy. Even if a long-range attack was launched, the centipede would be difficult to attack.

If you attacked that source with a half-hearted move, it would be absorbed and used as nourishment. The source had been decimated because Yong-yong had made the source explode with a single blow.

But it was strange. To ignore the absorbing ability of the source and make it explode at once was difficult enough. A typical challenger on the 80th floor wouldn't even be able to deal a significant blow to that source.

"Oh, now I get it."

The first clear condition was a fraud. It gave the condition of killing, and let the challenger attack the source. The source absorbed the power of the challenger, and then the challenger would die.

It was a clear condition, but it was not surprising that it was confusing, considering the design of the Hell Difficulty's Stages, which wanted to f*ck the challengers over.

"Then what should we do?"

"Just attack it. Let it absorb energy quickly and grow."

Yong-yong understood me and began to attack again at the source. It wasn't an explosive attack that killed the source in one-go. A more primitive and basic attack—a fireball the size of a soccer ball—headed to the source.

The source trembled, absorbing more energy every time Yong-yong hit a fireball towards it. It was unsettling to see him shudder every time it got hit. It was all the more so because it resembled a giant centipede.

Unlike me, Yong-yong liked seeing the centipede wriggling. “Cute!” Now, Yong-yong’s aesthetic tastes were being questioned.

When Hochi and I called Yong-yong cute, did he think that the word cute was an all-around compliment that could be applied to all situations? If he believed that the centipede was cute, the situation was a little serious.

Yong-yong fired a fireball at the centipede. He was having too much fun and completely disregarded my anxieties.

The centipede ate the fireball, which was an action akin to a child throwing fish feed to a goldfish. Of course, Yong-yong was the child, but the centipede wasn’t a goldfish either.

I glanced at Hochi to ask him what he thought of the situation. But rather than worrying about Yong-yong, Hochi was preparing a small fireball to shoot at the centipede.

Hochi was a little shy, but he still sent his fireball to the centipede. He pretended to be calm on the surface, but he looked excited from having made a fireball.

Come to think of it, Hochi was no less of a child than Yong-yong. After Yong-yong and Hochi entertained themselves by shooting fireballs for a few minutes, the centipede’s wriggling reached its peak.

It expanded so much that the ground it was standing on trembled. And it wasn’t just that. Something was awakening inside the centipede.

[Clear conditions have changed]

Description: Despite the desperate efforts of the investigators, they failed to eliminate the source.

The Hundred Gods Temple confirmed the source's abnormal behavior through investigators and decided to send a new apostle to stop it.

Due to the unexpected situation, it'll take a considerable amount of time for the apostles to arrive at the scene.

Survive from the source until the apostles arrive.

-Clear Conditions:

1. Survive until the apostles arrive.
2. Eliminate the Source.

It was expected. There had been cases like this before. When the source first appeared, the stages were held in the same way. It was similar to the 40th floor.

The source had now stopped shaking. All its movements had halted, including its quivering. It now resembled a stone statue or a pupa.

There was no sign of change outwardly, but I knew what was going on in there because I'd been through it before.

"Then, that's it, right?"

"Yeah, that's it," I answered Hochi's question.

It was 'that'. I couldn't explain it in a word, but the source was evolving.

The source's host's most prominent characteristic was that its own power ate it upon the source's evolution.

The cost of taking on a source will only eat away everything visible to gain more power.

Becoming a monster that had lost reason and only thinking about eating the enemy in front was the source I'd seen. But that centipede was on edge, resisting the source's devouring power.

It was trying to get rid of its primal desires. Its sense of reason, which had already been eaten up by the source, was about to awaken again.

"Wiggley, you can do it!" Yong-yong called out in support of the struggling centipede.

When did you even name it?

After a while, a new Wiggley was born in the body of the centipede. Inside the entirely still centipede, something was crawling out of the centipede's shell.

Our eyes were concentrated on the figure. Hochi and Yong-yong were curious about what would come out from there. I was also curious about it.

What would a person who had changed to a source look like when they had just regained their sense of reason? Would they look like how they were before they became the source? Was it the same centipede monster? Were they a completely different monster? Or, as I did, could it change itself?

I was excited and curious after a long time.

"Wiggley!" It was not until Yong-yong broke the centipede's shell and shouted aloud in an enthusiastic voice that it responded to Yong-yong.

"Kyeeeak!"

It was an ordinary monster. I sighed in disappointment, and I clenched my hand into a fist.

[You have cleared the 80th floor.]

Perhaps because I killed the centipede monster, Yong-yong looked a little depressed. Did he really think the centipede was cute?

Hochi was soothing Yong-yong.

The stage had already been cleared, and the portal had appeared, but Yong-yong would not move until he was feeling better. I felt sorry for killing the centipede and watched Hochi and Yong-yong. Suddenly, a message came.

It was Park Jung-ah.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: We're in trouble!]

Big trouble? Well, maybe there was another day of great harmony. I hoped so.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: The stage is blocked. No matter what I do, I can't get into the stage. Now all the challengers are stuck in the waiting room and the residential area.]

Oh, that's what she meant. Come to think of it, I didn't tell Park Jung-ah in advance.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: No information was pre-announced by managers. No clues. I can't even meet the managers because I can't get on a stage. Do you know anything?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 80th floor: That's because of me.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor:... Uh, what?]

Chapter 290

Tutorial 80th Floor (2)

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: When did you reach the 80th floor? You came out from the 60th floor just a few days ago.]

I came out a few days ago, but the 80th-floor journey was still slow enough. It would not have taken this long if Yong-yong and Hochi hadn't spent time having a reunion with Kirikiri agonizing over their wishes.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: No... Aside from that, what do you mean by stopping the Tutorial? Is that possible?]

If I asked myself if it was possible to stop it, I'd say it was impossible. It was nothing but Kirikiri granting my wish that stopped me from saying it was impossible.

I explained this to Park Jung-ah. I stopped the Tutorial stages using a wish I had been promised by the manager before. At this point, I gave a general explanation of the reason for the suspension and what would happen.

It was something I had known the gist of, but I had never explained it in detail.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Yeah... Well, let's say the reason is not understandable at all. What about me?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 80th floor: Huh?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: I won't be able to leave like this.]

It was obvious. Without entering the stage, Park Jung-ah couldn't clear the 100th floor and go outside.

[Lee Ho-jae, 80th floor: I'm going to ask you for a favor regarding that. I want you to stay here for a few more years, and it's okay if you give me a hard time. I need to take care of the floors left and need someone to take care of Lee Yeon-hee.]

I didn't tell Park Jung-ah in advance because of this very request.

Just in case I left first, Lee Yeon-hee had been appointed as my apostle, and the 60th and 61st floors were fully protected against external attacks. But I was still worried. I needed someone to take care of Lee Yeon-hee's mental state for a while.

Of course, Park Jung-ah didn't approve of my plan. She didn't like it.

"Daddy, what are you doing?" Yong-yong approached me.

I guessed that Hochi had to comfort him a lot because of the death of Wiggley.

I raised my hand to cover Yong-yong's eyes since the message window was filled with swearing. It wasn't vocabulary that I wanted to show my child.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: You're determined to make me die an old maid, aren't you?]

That's not true. A challenger neither grows old nor dies easily, in the Tutorial. And I didn't intend to leave Park Jung-ah here long enough to die of old age in the Tutorial.

Hochi peered over my shoulder at the message window and took Yong Yong away. They seemed to be going to see the body of the centipede.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Then there won't be any more Awakened, what about that?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 80th floor: It's okay because I'll be out.]

Upon seeing my words, Park Jung-ah became even more irritated. But

what could we do if that was the truth? As long as I went out, we didn't need a new Awakened.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Let's not tell anyone about this. We should keep it between ourselves and explain it to the others in another way. No one else will find out anyway. They can't even ask the managers because they can't get into the stage.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 80th floor: I don't mind telling them.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: I'M NOT OKAY WITH IT! SO YOU WILL STAY SILENT, GOT IT?]

[Lee Ho-Jae, 80th floor: Yep.]

As Park Jung-ah said, we decided not to let others know. We could just tell Kim Min-hyuk later.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Now that I've rested enough, I'm going to go work again. Damn you.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 80th floor: Please work a little harder. Above all else, please take good care of Lee Yeon-hee, as you did for me before.]

We had kept in touch every day, fighting and swearing. Although we argued with each other over useless things, Park Jung-ah always kept in touch. I didn't give up either and tried to talk to her every time.

At that time, arguing with Park Jung-ah was my only conversation with others.

Thanks to you, I realized time was flowing, and I confirmed that I was still alive. You made me realize I was still important to someone. That someone would take time out of their day to talk to me... Even if most conversations ended up in fights.

Without you, I wouldn't have been able to endure those difficult times. Truly, thank you for everything... Jung-Ah.

Park Jung-ah spoke ill of me for a long time, but in the end, she

promised to take care of Lee Yeon-hee as I instructed.

Unlike in the past, her language had become harsh and had a hysterical irritation. But some parts were not different from the past.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: I don't owe you anything after this. Not a single thing. I've paid it all back.]

That debt had long been settled.

I replied to her.

* * *

"Huh?"

"Huh?" Kirikiri looked at me with curious eyes.

"What?"

"You never dismantled it? Not even conducted any experiments?"

"I didn't."

"...Huh?"

Why are you looking at me like that? It was not surprising that I didn't dissect the monster's body.

"Huh... I thought you'd do it for sure," said Kirikiri, scratching her nose.

Truthfully, I'd even thought about taking care of the source's body, but what I felt on the body was so insignificant.

After hearing what I said, Kirikiri nodded with a convincing look. "It could be. It's an imitation, and to add to that, a failure."

What are you talking about? I asked her to explain.

“You know that everything on the stage was real, right?”

Of course, I knew. I nodded.

“The 80th floor is a bit unusual. It’s all normal until the monster stops moving.”

In other words, something changed when the monster stopped moving and broke its shell.

“What broke through the shell of a monster was different from what happened. It couldn’t be brought in or replaced by making a plausible imitation.”

Couldn’t replace it. That was unexpected.

“Then, what was that being that came out of the monster?”

The Hundred Gods Temple, who made the Tutorial, couldn’t even copy them? These were the gods who kept different worlds in every stage. It was not easy to accept that their designs had limitations.

“The thing that popped out of it was the same case as yours. Albeit a bit different.” Kirikiri used me as an example.

“You regained your sanity when you overcame your source and began to wield a leagues’ power above what it was before. You jumped a whole class at one go.”

I could understand Kirikiri’s words to some extent. The Spirit King had said that he could reach godhood through a source. When you get your source, you obtain a considerable power, but the moment you overcome it, you gain full control and not just power. If so, I could understand why the Hundred Gods Temple neither reproduced nor imitated the monster.

The monster that appeared on the 80th-floor stage would eventually be closer to a god. If it were possible to create it as an imitation, the

Hundred Gods Temple would produce gods like manufacturing products.

“What’s the difference?”

“Huh?”

Kirikiri responded to my question with a blank look. I had asked too straightforwardly. Kirikiri wasn’t used to me asking such crude questions.

It was more comfortable for her to read my thoughts and answer them on her own. But now Kirikiri could no longer look into my thoughts. It was a good thing, but there were also inconveniences.

“You told me it was like me. That monster. But it’s not like there were no differences at all.”

“Heng, right. There was a difference.” Kirikiri smiled and explained what was different. “In your case, you overcame the desire of the source. The monster on the 80th floor was released from desire only after eating a few planets. There’s a difference. Even if you let go of desires, the reason for that desire still exists. Thus it’s control over the power would be worse.”

Indeed, the quality was worse. There was no choice but for it to be like that. Free from the source’s desire, but the purpose was the same as before, just with more power, stronger abilities, and reason.

I hadn’t thought much of the monster. I had never felt a sense of crisis from it since, in my views, the source was prey that the gods were hunting to gain strength. It was all because the monster couldn’t keep its sanity.

An enemy not in his senses cannot be above a prey’s level no matter how strong he was. But if it had its sanity...

“How come it had that low a level of intelligence?”

“The source was part of a civilization. A fairly advanced civilization.

You can say that the civilization is of the same level compared to where the Tutorial stages have appeared.”

Well, that’s the worst.

“Now you know why I said you had to clear the stage and get out?” asked Kirikiri while humming.

She must have been a little disappointed that I didn’t take her advice.

“Yes, thanks to you, I know it’s important. Now here, have some cake.”

I bought a cake for Kirikiri. I bought her a bigger cake than usual, considering that Yong-yong and Hochi, who played next to her, would join her. Naturally, Yong-yong and Hochi approached. Kirikiri turned down Yong-yong and Hochi’s request to share the cake.

Of course, Yong-yong and Hochi started eating cake regardless of whether Kirikiri refused or not. Kirikiri was forced to eat the whipped cream cake without a fork since Yong-Yong and Hochi had taken it.

I watched the scene for a while and organized my thoughts. The information I had found this time was essential. There were people who had overcome the source and achieved a high level. There was someone who was moving with their senses intact at the top of the monsters.

I thought that it was strange. One day, monsters suddenly appeared on Earth, and then the fights began. Monsters who ran wild without any reason appeared all of a sudden in groups. Even strange ones that seemed to come in groups.

The monsters sometimes showed an organized appearance. There were countless hypotheses for such monsters. A few things came to mind right now.

‘The gate connected to the monsters’ home opened, causing the monsters to burst into Earth, causing chaos suddenly.’

‘Even monsters have some level of cognition.’

‘At a primitive level, communication with them is possible.’

‘It’s just that humans haven’t figured it out. Plus, these monsters breed through mating.’

‘Where do the monsters hatch?’

There were various hypotheses, but a certain fact could convince quite a few. The monster, who had similarly overcome the source as I, was training and directing the monsters.

When I turned my head, I saw Kirikiri, Yong-yong, and Hochi stuck together, busy eating the cake. Rather than being peaceful and friendly, there was a competitive and intense atmosphere. They were squeezing each other’s cake into their mouths to take another bite.

There was more I wanted to ask, but first, I decided to wait for Kirikiri to finish the cake.

* * *

“They usually call them the Completers or by their self-proclaimed title, Ruler.”

“Self-proclaimed?”

“Self-proclaimed.”

It was an ominous title. The monsters who had regained their sense of self after consuming an innumerable amount of lives who were once controlled by the source’s desire were hard to count.

“What about the gods? They left it alone?”

“Yes...” Kirikiri nodded somberly.

I asked for an explanation.

“Because of the wide range of activities, it’s hard to find. The gods bound to realms don’t move without any reason. Most of all, even if they encountered each other like that, they can’t guarantee victory, so it’s even more problematic.”

Kirikiri’s explanation left me speechless for a moment. For a moment, I thought I had heard wrong.

“Can’t guarantee a victory? The gods? How is that possible?”

“Because it has become a god, too,” Kirikiri replied.

It also became a god. What was the most necessary thing required to be a god? It was faith through the identity of a god, self-discipline, and believers’ support and trust.

There were so many conditions, but there was one that was more important than the others: overwhelming power.

I was able to draw faith from people on the 57th floor and 61st floor because I had power. Otherwise, I would have been just a nobody to them. Power alone became the fundamental base of gaining faith.

Monsters who wanted more power and ate everything visible may draw faith from others for more strength. They would have the reason, knowledge, strength, and class to do so.

Suddenly, an idea crossed my mind. I asked Kirikiri, hoping it wasn’t true.

“Is it not a part of the Pantheon?”

“Yes.”

Damn it.

“What about the Hundred Gods Temple?”

“Yes.”

This situation was very messed up.

Chapter 291

Seoul (2)

“Hey, this isn’t a prank, right? It’s not something you planned out, is it?”

Secretly, Kim Min-hyuk desperately wanted Lee Joon-suk to laugh and say, “It’s just a joke.”

Of course, Kim Min-hyuk would be mad if he said that, but it was much better than admitting that this difficult situation was a reality.

“I’m serious. It’s not just the Korean server that’s facing this.” Lee Joon-suk’s words felt like a court sentence. Whatever it was, things were going to get very ugly.

All challengers were expected to come out on the same day. But of course, the date and time of the exit depended on when the challenger cleared the Tutorial’s 100th floor. Long story short, the challengers may return to Earth at any time.

However, it’d already been over a decade since a challenger of the Tutorial had shown up. There were several new regulations regarding the Tutorial, and one of them was about the return of the Awakened.

The Awakened people who returned to Earth unannounced and disappeared quietly were sometimes considered more dangerous than monsters. The government wanted to put a leash on the Awakened, even though they can’t completely control all of them.

Whenever a challenger completed the Tutorial, they had to report it, scan their fingerprints, and be issued a new identification card. Such processes allowed the government to estimate how many Awakened people there were and provided a way to contact them. These regulations had been firmly established over the years.

Just as predicted, some of them ignored the regulations. For example, there were Awakened who hated being in the spotlight, had their reasons to step out of the Tutorial as soon as possible, or hid in shadows before being identified. There were many other various cases.

However, in most cases, the Tutorial should've been cleared on the designated day. But none of them had shown up at Seoul Station yesterday, which was supposed to be their return.

Kim Min-hyuk had thought it wasn't that big of an issue and brushed it off. Even though the survival rate had increased rapidly, about 100 people were entering the Tutorial each month.

Even though the number was limited, some months, around 10 of the Awakened would pop up, while there would be no one showing up in other months.

Because of that, Kim Min-hyuk was able to convince himself by saying, "It seems like we have bad luck this time."

However, in Beijing and Tokyo, the Awakened had not returned. The same thing happened not only in Korea but also in other countries.

Kim Min-hyuk had hurriedly dispatched Lee Joon-suk to check the situation in other countries.

And the result was..."No one cleared the Tutorial this time. No one in the whole world."

If it was something that happened around the world, it could no longer be regarded as a coincidence. Something went wrong inside the Tutorial.

"At this point, it's not that they didn't clear the Tutorial. They couldn't clear it."

"I can't say that for sure."

The variable that may be the cause of this situation flashed immediately. It was the Tournament. Kim Min-hyuk heard that the

recent Tournament had just been held. Not to mention, it was also the reason several representatives from different servers met and had some talks.

“What if there was an agreement between the Tutorial challengers?”

“Come on, that’s a bit... If they did, they wouldn’t be able to get a chance to advance to the next stage.”

His words made sense.

“They won’t get any benefits by not clearing a floor or saying anything about it. It’s their loss. Above all, the leaders can’t stop the other challenger from clearing a floor.”

It was not an easy task to force another challenger in the Tutorial to do something because they lived in a physically isolated space.

The challengers who were in the residential area on the 90th floor or higher couldn’t violate such liberty by any means. Of course, they could blackmail or conciliate with others, but most of the Tutorial leaders had lost their power.

The only power the Awakened had was outside the Tutorial. Those who stayed in the Tutorial and took care of the challengers were now only treated as NPCs or losers.

“Wow, what’s this? In South Korea alone, there were four people scheduled to show up for this month. But unexpectedly, all of them failed to clear?”

That was ridiculous. The challengers who nearly cleared the 100th floor must’ve met the target. The probability of failure should not have been very high, as it almost followed the same approach and attack.

“And there’s one more thing to note.”

“What?”

“It’s time for Ho-jae to come out.”

Lee Yeon-hee had arrived on the 60th floor. That meant Lee Ho-jae, who had long been on the 60th floor, would start climbing the stage again.

“What a pain. That means he might not be able to make it.”

Kim Min-hyuk had prepared many things, thinking that Ho-jae would be able to exit. It all became meaningless.

No, something is not right. Is it true that Lee Ho-jae could not come out like the other challengers because of this situation?

Kim Min-hyuk couldn’t help but be suspicious. As far as he knew, Lee Ho-jae was someone who caused problems, not someone who got entangled in issues. Of course, Kim Min-hyuk had to handle the problem every time.

If he’s involved in this, then...

Kim Min-hyuk’s head reviewed the facts repeatedly.

“I don’t know anymore, damn it. I need some information to speculate on this. I don’t know what happened or how to interfere inside the Tutorial. There’s nothing I think we can do.”

He gave up.

“Yes. Unless we have any way to contact the gods or managers, we have to let the insiders solve the inner problem,” Joon-suk calmly responded.

Kim Min-hyuk always hated that aloof attitude, but this time was an exception. It strangely reassured him.

“Let’s do what we can. Take this opportunity to bring Seoul Station under our wing.”

“Is it going to work? I think this situation is just going to make it harder.”

“No, it’s the opposite. You have to insist that under dangerous circumstances, our presence is required here.”

The way to persuade the government was simple. Either give them what they’d want, or they’d force the government. Everyone will be damned if the government didn’t follow their advice.

No one knew what happened in the Tutorial, and no one knew what may happen to the portal in Seoul Station. It could be argued that the Awakened should be on standby in case of an emergency.

“But first, I have to contact Jong-sik.”

“What are you going to say?”

“Cancel the dispatch to Japan. From now on, everyone who is A-class and above must get ready in Korea.”

* * *

TTTTH IS BACK

“Three rolls of cheese kimbap, please.”

On his way back to the association, Park Min stopped by a kimbap restaurant and ordered cheese kimbap. There was no particular reason. He was just a little hungry, and kimbap had been his favorite dish in the Tutorial.

Park Min was from the first batch of Awakened. As soon as the Tutorial and monsters appeared in this world, he was summoned to the Tutorial’s first floor. Even now, the early stages of the Tutorial were the talk of the town.

At that time, there were various problems, but he clearly remembered the food problem. The only free meal offered in the Tutorial was beef jerky, and only on the first floor. From the moment the challengers

cleared the first floor and went up to the second floor, they had to purchase all meals with points.

Park Min didn't know what it was like now, but when he was in the Tutorial, he had to save more points to buy a potion. Most of the challengers had to get through with beef jerky or biscuits.

On rare occasions, such as his birthday, he collected presents from other challengers and bought Kimchi stew, the only luxury he could obtain.

Of course, Park Min was quite rich in the Tutorial. After all, he was a member of the Order of Vigilance. Although he had more points than others, Park Min did not invest lots of points into food.

Buying a roll of kimbap every time he cleared a stage was the only luxury he could have afforded. Kimbap was also the first food that Park Min searched for when he returned to Earth after clearing the Tutorial.

He didn't know why either. He ate it every time he cleared a stage, so maybe his subconsciousness thought that he had to eat it, even after he'd cleared the Tutorial. It was like a reminder of his achievements.

Funnily enough, Park Min often bought and ate kimbap since then, and every time, he had an odd feeling. He had the impression that no matter how expensive the food he eats, he couldn't quite taste it.

In those difficult times, he wasn't aware that such food became his reward. He hadn't even thought about it.

Park Min took the wrapped kimbap and asked, "If I'm not mistaken, I only ordered three. Am I wrong?"

There were more than five or six rolls of kimbap in the plastic bag. The lady who handed over the bag smiled and told him that she added more as a bonus. She had such a warm smile.

She didn't even charge for the extra kimbap, so Park Min ended up returning to the association with free kimbap.

My uniform looks good. Park Min looked down at his costume to check.

In the past, Awakened were supposed to wear costumes that would be worn by Batman or Superman. As time passed, the regulations relaxed, and they didn't have to wear them anymore. What Park Min was wearing right now was not a costume but a jumper reminiscent of a subway public service worker. But people still recognized him in those clothes, even though it was dull and unseemly.

Park Min felt good for the first time in a while. It wasn't because he got free Kimbap. The moment he faced people with good intentions and kindness like the kimbap lady, his mood brightened.

When Park Min cleared the Tutorial and appeared at Seoul Station, he was treated like a hero. It felt amazing because he was the first Awakened in Korea.

Back then, it had been such a hectic day. He spent years like that.

In fact, he had spent more time in front of a camera and microphone rather than monsters. However, it wasn't pointless. Through the interviews and broadcasts, Park Min reassured people and inspired them.

At that time, Park Min was a hero, but those glory days were over for him.

He used a private elevator and headed for the president's office. After accepting the greetings from the people he encountered on the way to the office, he arrived at the office and opened a kimbap wrap.

* * *

"Is that Kimbap?"

Park Min nodded. "Try it. It's too much to eat alone."

"Okay then, if you insist."

The team leader, Lee Song-eun, nodded and reached out for the kimbap. But it seemed like he had to wait for a while to put kimbap in his mouth. His mouth had other things to do.

“With everything going on, the association will crumble apart, President. The foundation of this association is the Awakened, after all. It would be nice if this odd phenomenon were to end as soon as possible.”

Lee Song-eun talked about the possibility of the association’s influence decreasing.

“If this situation, in which the Awakened are not returning, lasts for more than a few months, it will be fatal to the association. And if the Awakened never arrive at Earth, we will face the worst situation ever.”

“I think differently.” Park Min disagreed with Lee Song-eun’s opinion.

“This situation might bring favor to us.”

“Pardon?”

Park Min had always thought about this. There were too many Awakened.

“The Awakened’s influence cannot be diminished easily unless the monsters in this world are gone instantly. No, even if they do, the status of the Awakened will remain unchanged.”

It was rather the opposite. The status of the Awakened would soar if the monsters disappeared. The government would likely try to take the Awakened’s privileges by saying they were useless, but it wouldn’t happen.

The Awakened were already at the top of society. The Awakened who had worked under a company or government now owned the company and sat in government positions in each country and had extensive connections.

Only then, when Awakened showed up, the land value increased, and people began to gather. Because of them, the flow of money became smooth and people were guaranteed safety.

A powerful Awakened could even snatch the role of the state. If the monsters were gone, the Awakened's position of the hero would ascend to the ruler.

Of course, it was a different matter whether the Awakened have the qualifications and abilities to do so. But the Awakened wouldn't give a damn.

No one can stop them. They would do anything in their power to satisfy their greed. "The problem is not of the probability of the Awakened's influence decreasing."

Instead, the other Awakened who were not part of the association were the problem. Korea's Awakened were originally divided into two groups: the association and the government.

Both sides did not dominate the other side because of the extreme outflow of Awakened. But a few years ago, things changed.

When Kim Min-hyuk came out of the Tutorial, he established a guild: a guild that resembled one from an online game. It brought together the Korean Awakened that were scattered all over the world.

Since then, it has become the largest Awakened community in East Asia. In Korea, most of the A-class or higher Awakened from the Hard difficulty level were in Kim Min-hyuk's guild.

In Park Min's eyes, it was hard to figure out how Kim Min-hyuk had coaxed so many Awakened.

When Park Min exited the Tutorial, many hard-level challengers could not pass the 50th floor. Park Min knew little about the bond between Kim Min-hyuk and the hard difficulty level challengers. One thing was for sure, Kim Min-hyuk's guild posed a threat to both the association and the government.

Even if all the Awakened members of the association and the

government were put together, it could not match the guild's size.

If the Tutorial was closed and the Awakened's status increased just like how Park Min predicted, the credit would fall to the guild, not the association. And that was the problem.

"We need to create a bigger issue. I need to change how things are going."

"You already have something on your mind?" the team leader asked as she set her eyes on him. It was the team leader's job to come up with such a plan. Park Min looked at the team leader, who was worried about being criticized as incompetent, and pointed to a place on the map.

Where he pointed to was near Pyongyang, North Korea, which had quickly fallen to ruin after the monsters' invasion. They were no longer maintaining a country. It was more like a warlord's area than a country.

The military units near the border were all that remained from North Korea. Beyond that, it collapsed from the invasion of monsters and was practically treated like a wasteland.

Pyongyang, which Park Min pointed out, used to be the capital of North Korea, but now it was just a wasteland occupied by monsters.

Pointing to it, Park Min questioned Lee Song-eun. "What if there were G-class monsters here?"

Chapter 292

Tutorial 89th floor (1)

I couldn't get all the information about who and how many beings there were in the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon from Kirikiri.

It was obvious. Kirikiri would only tell me a certain amount of information, depending on the information points I'd collected. To get more information points, we had to clear the stages again.

I thought it would be better if these information points could be expressed in numbers. I'd pondered this many times before, but I didn't know that I'd think the same after clearing the 60th floor.

"Heng."

"What kind of response is that? Just tell me about the next stage."

Kirikiri grinned. Perhaps she was satisfied with the situation in which I was anxiously waiting for my answer. "The next stage is what you wanted."

"Wanted?"

"It's a little unusual. Usually, the challenger is a member of the Hundred Gods Temple. But this time it's the opposite."

Are you saying that the stage is being held from the opposite side of the Hundred Gods Temple?

It was certainly interesting. If I had reached Earth without going through this stage, I would have been disappointed.

"Am I going to become a source and complete myself? Devour

everything in sight?”

There were two ways to complete oneself after being swallowed by the source: to regain one’s mind by controlling one’s desires or regain one’s mind after devouring whatever they desired. Of course, the difference between the two methods was huge.

“No, it’s not like that. It’s the role of the servant.”

A servant?

“You’d better take your time and attack.” That’s all Kirikiri’s advice was.

More than that had to be checked after I’d enter the stage.

* * *

[You’ve entered the 89th floor’s stage.]

The 89th-floor stage was a large stone chamber. There was a rough patch of discarded furniture, and the floor was filled with broken wood, making it challenging to move around.

“This is a place that reminds me of the old days,” Hochi mumbled.

Hochi explained to Yong-yong, who looked at him in a confused manner, “My house resembled this once upon a time. ”

Oh, that’s what you were talking about. I could feel my conscience hurt at that moment.

Hochi’s ‘house’ was the 60th-floor residential area that I had made a mess out of. Surely, it was a similar situation back then.

Hochi had spent years on the messed-up 60th floor. I would have said it was short, but for Hochi, who was newly born, it would be clearly imprinted in his memories. It was embarrassing.

While I was coughing in vain, a message about the stage appeared just in time. It was indeed fortunate.

[The 89th floor's stage begins.]

Explanation: One day, you, who was living a normal life, was summoned into an unknown community.

The being that summoned you promised to make your wish come true if you used the extractor inside the cavity to extract the target's energy.

You are yet to decide whether the promise will be to return home or get a new life.

But one thing is for sure. You must obey the orders of the being that summoned you.

For the sake of your wishes that have not been determined yet, and to survive on your own.

You can collect energy through an extractor.

You can also purchase manpower and traps with the energy collected to protect the extractor.

Prevent the invasion of various enemies and observe the extractor to gather energy from the target.

-Clear Conditions:

Protect the extractor.

Use an extractor to collect energy.

Somehow, I felt a sense of déjà vu from the description of the stage. It was a story that I'd seen a lot somewhere.

Being summoned endlessly. Wanting to buy traps and soldiers to stop the enemy.

It seemed like a standard defense game. The stage description focused on a thing called 'extractor'. I quickly found out what the extractor was.

A man-sized mechanical device was seen in the middle of the planks of wood on the floor. Looking at its bottom, it seemed to be embedded into the floor.

I approached the extractor. There were several words marked with holograms.

[Dungeon Status]

[Dungeon Management]

[Energy Status]

[Purchase and sale]

I could tell by looking at them.

"This is a dungeon," Hochi, who came to my side, murmured. It was so obvious that even Hochi noticed. This extractor was the core of the dungeon, and the primary goal was to protect it.

A game of defense and management strategy that acquired energy through an extractor to block enemies.

I asked Hochi, whose eyes glistened beside me, "Would you like to

try?”

“Can I?”

Of course he could. Recently, both Hochi and Yong-yong had been targeting the stage. Kirikiri had also advised me to not clear it up quickly, and as such, I decided I wouldn't be the one to clear it.

I wasn't interested in this dungeon, so I asked Hochi, who was pressing the hologram windows of the extractor one by one and excitedly calling Yong-yong to do the same.

“Looking at the dungeon's condition, it seems pretty spacious. We can build a lot of traps. Small fries will get taken care of by the traps, and Yong-yong and I will only have to deal with enemies who manage to reach the last room.”

I nodded at Hochi's words. It was a well-thought-out strategy.

If I were my old self and had risked my life to go up one floor after another, I would have rushed and wiped out all the enemies that existed here and sought to conquer the area. Now, there was no need to do so. I just had to make sure nothing went wrong while I watched over Hochi and Yong-yong.

* * *

“No, Yong-yong. We've got to set up more traps rather than buy more manpower. The traps would be more helpful.”

“But I prefer having a lot of soldiers.”

There were more conflicts in opinion than I'd thought there'd be. Hochi preferred a trap-oriented attack, and Yong-yong just liked to have a lot of soldiers.

The dungeon was attacked one or two times a day: sometimes adventurers, sometimes soldiers. There were various kinds of enemies. There were even visitors who took the wrong way and entered the dungeon and those who wanted to join the dungeon for the sake of

personal desires.

In that way, I blocked the visitors and coaxed them into making them my subordinate, while Hochi and Yong-Yong developed the dungeon. Maybe because they were on the same level, they sometimes argued with each other, as if they were playing a game together.

They looked happy. I even thought about making a game like this myself. Of course, I was not talking about computer games. In fact, I wanted to design spaces, put people in, and play around with them.
[1]

Of course, if I made it myself, it would be a little dangerous for ordinary people to do it. Nevertheless, it occurred to me that there must be someone who wanted to do it.

It had already been three days since the 89th-floor stage had begun. Kirikiri had asked me to take it easy, but it took longer than I thought.

Hochi and Yong-yong poured all the energy coming into the extractor in the dungeon's defense and interior upgrades, even though they didn't even care about the need to collect energy from the target. At this rate, I couldn't guarantee when this stage would end.

I liked it when Hochi and Yong-yong were having fun, but honestly, it was a bit boring. So I thought about what Kirikiri had said. I could get information from the stage.

I had a rough idea of what information it was. She said the stage would be carried out as a servant. In other words, the challenger had been summoned here and the being who owned the extractor were considered a complete source with the energy produced through this extractor.

The energy was being pulled from deep underground by the extractor. The power felt in this energy was similar to the source. Of course, it wasn't exactly the same.

I didn't know if it was the limit of the extractor or because it's a fake source as always. In any case, it was clear that the identity of the energy was closely related to source power.

“That’s strange.”

“What is?”

“I thought the power of the source came from a person.”

Just like faith. Of course, I’d heard several times that it was influenced by the level of civilization. Even so, I didn’t think it could get it this way. It felt like my common sense was being destroyed in many ways.

If you had the equipment, you could get power similar to the source easily.

“I think it’s plausible,” Hochi remarked.

I left the hologram window to Yong-yong and Hochi approached me.

“It’s the land. It’s home to the people who live here. Maybe...” Hochi trailed off.

I asked hastily, “Maybe, what?”

“Maybe this land is the whole world for those living on this planet. It’s like in ancient history, if you travelled far enough you’d reach the end of the world? Kinda like that.”

It certainly was. In fact, there was no need to go back to the old days. Before confirming that the Earth was round and thinking that there might be different civilizations and creatures in the endless space outside the Earth, people thought Earth was everything in the world.

Because for them, Earth was everything. Because whatever occurred beyond the universe would not reach them, and their world would be limited only to the Earth.

“The feelings people harbor for their land, for their hometown, and for their world is as good as faith. Maybe that’s related to the source. At least, that’s what I think.”

Is that so?

Hochi spoke in a pretty confident manner, but I didn't particularly agree.

"I suppose so. You wouldn't know since you don't have any attachment to your hometown."

It was funny. Hochi, who was born in the Tutorial, was telling me about his feelings about home.

But it was true. As Hochi had said, I didn't have much attachment to my hometown whether it be Korea or Earth.

"Don't be so on the edge. Someday, you'll know everything." Hochi said and went back to Yong-yong.

"Who's on edge?"

I belatedly opened my mouth to give an excuse, but Hochi refused to listen to me. The words that had lost its way hovered around me with nowhere to go.

* * *

"You're bored, aren't you?"

"Mhm."

Hochi came to talk to me. It'd already been 15 days since the stage began, but I felt like I was going to die due to boredom.

"Get out."

"Get out?"

Wow, am I being kicked out now?

I felt like I was being kicked out of a house that was in my name on

my wife's command. It was unfair.

"You don't have to be upset again. I'm telling you to go out if you're bored. I just happened to have to go out and do something," Hochi looked at me and said with a tired look on his face.

First, I asked what was going on.

"What is it?"

"This." Hochi offered me a purple jewel.

"It's a token," said Hochi.

"If you use it, your soldiers will appear. Usually, it's standard for them to defend the dungeon, but they can also attack. I need to release soldiers outside, so I have to be near the village situated outside the dungeon."

So, the plan was to create a disturbance outside to distract the attackers a little. There was so much to it.

"If you use this, are those soldiers summoned just to make a disturbance?"

"No, I heard it's like a package full of soldiers. If you use it, you'll have a subspace, and your men will multiply little by little inside the space. Then, when the area is filled with people, I'll send a certain number of men outside to attack the surrounding area."

It was more complicated than I thought. "But if you get rid of the space, your soldiers will be exterminated."

"The subspace doesn't disappear unless you break the nucleus(core) deep inside the subspace."

It was so difficult to use that I wondered if this was necessary. It'd be better just to release some monsters instead of making it so tough.

“But the soldiers continue to reproduce unless you close the subspace. If the enemy is not capable of killing all the men in the subspace, the soldiers will attack the enemy endlessly. It’s perfect to draw the enemy’s attention from the dungeon. But most importantly, animals ‘change’ when around the subspace.”

“Change?”

“Wild animals will become ferocious and turn into monsters.”

The source monster I met on the 40th floor had a similar ability: to turn the surrounding creatures into monsters. It seemed as if that was the same as entering the subspace and hiding its identity.

Had the monster become the motif of the token? As Hochi said, I approached the village outside the dungeon and used a token.

I would get to know immediately after using it what it was. And what information did Kirikiri say I needed to find out on this stage?

“This is the gate.”

The subspace that showed up in the place where the token was used, had a very similar appearance to the gates that had appeared on Earth.

Note/s from Imagine:

[1]: Sounds Awfully like a certain place Hojae was stuck in for a long time, I wonder what that place is called, I can’t remember.

Chapter 293

Tutorial 89th floor (2)

The gate had been created. However, it was quiet for now. After a while, the number of monsters created in the subspace inside that gate would exceed a specific amount, and they'd rush out from this gate.

If no one found the gate before the time, the nearby village would suffer significant damage. No, the village's fate may not change much, even if someone discovered it beforehand.

It was still debatable if the villagers could enter the subspace, kill all the monsters created inside, and then close the gate by breaking the nucleus(core) deep inside the subspace.

I checked the gate once again and then went back to the dungeon. When I arrived, there was a group of people outside the dungeon.

They looked like soldiers. However, they were only waiting nearby and didn't enter the dungeon. Ignoring them, I entered the dungeon.

Every turn I took, I ran into some beasts. Some of them greeted me, and some of them barked at me, possibly because of their low intelligence.

Passing through the dungeon's twisting maze, I headed to the deepest part of the dungeon and to the last place where the extractor stayed.

When I reached the place, I overheard a conversation. One of the two voices was very familiar, but the other was a new voice.

"Who?" As soon as I entered the room, I asked Hochi.

"Dad's here!"

“Oh, you’ve come back.” Yong-yong and Hochi welcomed me.

I hugged Yong-yong, who rushed at me. He pointed his chin to the stranger in the last room.

“Ah, this mister is from a kingdom near the dungeon... or something. Anyway, he is an aristocrat.”

So he was an informant.

* * *

Apparently, the soldiers I saw outside the dungeon were the aristocracy’s soldiers who came to the last room.

The nobleman took his sweet time as he spoke to Hochi, then bowed politely and left the room.

Something came to my mind when I was looking at the back of the nobleman walking down the dungeon hallway along with a monster trailing behind, acting as a guide.

“Care to explain again where and when you found such a guy?” I asked Hochi to explain.

Hochi said it began with the capture of that nobleman’s soldier who happened to enter the dungeon. Since then, they had been sharing information and trading adequately.

“This time, the number of cases increases a little bit too much. They’re preparing to send massive troops soon. It’ll be tough to stop, but things afterward would be much easier if we get past this. Knowing the airstrikes in advance will increase the chances of stopping them.”

Sweet, he was a useful informant.

“If you cooperate with him, what will you get?”

Hochi shrugged at my question. “Well, this and that. I can take out

what I want from the stolen goods, or the captured captives if I want it. It just exchanges money moderately, and releases monsters in the competition's territory."

It turned out that Hochi was no less useful than that mister. He had been doing a lot of things in less than a month.

One might think that he's been managing the dungeon for about ten years. He was meant for this job.

"What, are you jealous? Want to do it, too? Do you want me to let you in now?"

Forget what I said. What was I gonna say?

The mixed feeling I had wasn't due to childish jealousy. It was more akin to irritation, frustration, and patheticness.

"Such a guy is left on Earth."

And that guy wouldn't be so stupid or pathetic, but the clever one. A guy like him would do everything to get what he wanted. I couldn't rebuke such an act.

I was a selfish person, discussing others' morality. But still, a sigh came out of my mouth.

"How many are there?"

I hoped there were not too many. It was the only thing I wanted from the people outside.

* * *

"Is it wrong?"

"Yeah."

Kirikiri's answer was unexpected. It was hard to believe it.

“I am serious. What you saw on the 89th floor is the source’s extractor. However, no god in the Pantheon nor the Hundred Gods Temple extracts their source like that.”

I thought the Hundred Gods Temple’s gods would extract the source similar to the way on the 89th-floor stage like it’s natural. I thought that the god who was not interested in anything other than their position and strength would naturally rake in the source.

I was a bit taken back when I heard from Kirikiri that it was not true.

“There’s a simple reason. Let’s take an example, a planet that has been extracted from more than a certain extent of the source deteriorates at rapid speed. You’ve heard of it before, right?”

I have.

It was said that the land which had lost its source was ruined and could not be rebuilt. I never confirmed it directly, but indirectly, when I get through the stage related to the source, it could be expected.

“It’s true that the power to extract the source of a planet needs to be considered, but that alone is not enough to eliminate a planet’s future.”

But even if the future of a planet disappears, it wouldn’t affect the god. Then there was no reason for holding back.

“It would be much more efficient to establish religion on the land and acquire faith in the long run.”

Oh, so it was about efficiency. That, I could understand.

“What difference is there between extracting the source and gaining faith in religion?”

To my question, Kirikiri pondered for a moment and answered, “It depends on some circumstances, but assume that religion becomes prominent, and within 200 years, one can gather powers similar to extract all the sources of a planet.”

The efficiency difference was substantial. If a planet did not crumble apart, the god would gain power through faith stably for thousands of years or more.

“And so the gods may not be interested in extracting the source.”

“Exactly, the gods never extract the source or destroy a planet in their own territory.”

The last word caught my attention.

“And if it is outside their territory?”

“There are Temple rules to prevent it from happening.”

Without my knowing, laughter escaped my mouth. I just couldn't help it. This situation was hilarious.

Instead of extracting the source, they prioritized the religion, not for the faithful ones or a planet's future, but because they want to maintain a long-term benefit. The number of rules of the temple and the many events that arose from it resulted from agreements to preserve each other's territory.

It was according to the logic of gain and loss.

Although the scale was uncommon, it was no different from the way humans huddled in society. Instead, it looked uglier because it was on a larger scale.

Kirikiri frowned at my laugh. Her face looked upset.

“I still don't think the system of the temple is very wrong. With no temple, the gods would invade another realm all they like. If it happened, only a few civilizations would be left in the world now.”

I had no interest in the good thing about the temple and its system. It wasn't my problem.

“Then, what about the Hundred Gods Temple or the Pantheon?”

“You don’t have to worry about them. After all, it was intentional to have them in the temple in the first place.”

Initially, the temple’s system itself seems to have been designed to put a leash on others. All this time, I’d thought that the system had another reason and eventually became large-scale to restrict the gods.

But now that I heard about this, it seemed the system was originally designed for constraining the gods.

“The problem lies with the Rulers who don’t belong to the temple. They only enrich themselves. On the contrary, the restrictions inside the temple are getting worse. The effects slowly appear. That’s how Earth came into the play.”

“Earth?”

Suddenly, Earth was mentioned.

“Earth was Hundred Gods Temple’s joint zone. A buffer zone. When the rulers reached out to such a planet, we had no other way to go to summon humans to the Tutorial and train them,” Kirikiri continued, not giving me space to think.

“It is for the same reason that we longed for a great apostle and have high hopes for you. The Hundred Gods Temple’s gods are powerful, but they’re under a lot of restrictions.”

Kirikiri said with a serious face and pointed at me with her finger. “The temple’s regulations are increasing day by day, and the Rulers are increasing their power beyond our reach. We have to take action one day before the scales are out of control. Either wipe out the Ruler or remove the unnecessary pile of regulations.”

To wipe them out to reduce their influences, the god should take action, not the apostle. I heard the Rulers had been worshiped. If gods wanted to come forward, they’d be constrained.

That's why they concluded that constraints must be broken to take over the Ruler.

"Those rulers seem to be well versed in the inside of the temple."

Since they were out of reach of the gods, they did not obscurely intrude on their territory and gain worship. They must have been well aware of the gods' territory characteristics and the constraints imposed on them.

"I know very well."

Kirikiri's eyes sparkled. It was a look of hostility toward something. It was a rare sight of Kirikiri.

"Remember the 49th floor?"

"Mhm."

I remember it well because it was such an impressive stage.

"On the 49th floor, there was the Holy Land of Hope. It was a hidden holy place, of course, and a small one. Nevertheless, the origin monsters are everywhere."

Yeah, there was that place on the 49th floor.

Although the origin monsters couldn't enter into the Holy Land, they could occupy most of the continent. Maybe there was an extractor installed somewhere on the continent, and the source was extracted.

I asked Kirikiri how such monsters could appear on a planet with God's holy ground in there. But Kirikiri did not answer and just repeated one sentence. "You have to remember."

* * *

"I understand how much expectations you have for me."

“Iz dat sho?” asked Kirikiri, who was eating a cake.

Her expression was very different when she talked about the information with a serious face a while ago. Kirikiri was trying to bite off more than Hochi and Yong-Yong, who were eating cake together next to each other.

Although I was answering my own question, I also felt reluctant, so my eyes, mouth, and hands were entirely focused on the cake.

“As long as I refuse to be an apostle, I am as good as a ruler.”

Having the power and ability as good as a god could allow one to move regardless of the temple’s constraints.

“At the same time, have a purpose that is somewhat in line with the gods’ wishes.”

“Your choice. Do whatever you want,” Kirikiri said. She might have replied like that because she was distracted by the cake. But I knew Kirikiri was thinking that way.

I wanted the people in the Tutorial to be free. That was why I had thought of getting rid of the temple system.

But according to the information so far, there was one condition to be able to be free of the Tutorial. I had to get the consent from the gods of Hundred Gods Temple, the Tutorial owner.

And the price to get that consent is that I have to bring something. That’s the price I have to pay for. What will the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple ask in exchange for handing over the rights of the Tutorial to me?

Several things came to mind, but they were jumbled together.

“You’re going to be a mercenary when you get out of here.”

Chapter 294

Seoul (3)

“The worst,” Park Jong-sik muttered.

No one in the conference room refuted that remark. During the break, the conference room fell into silence.

“Let’s get things organized first.” Kim Min-hyuk, desperately attempting to brighten the mood, clapped his hands.

It was the first meeting since the situation had been revealed. Kim Min-hyuk knew that the situation was that serious, but he had to lead the meeting somehow and gather opinions.

“The first problem is that the Tutorial is closed. I don’t know what’s going on, but since last month, no one has been invited to complete the Tutorial, and no one from before has returned.”

No one was being called to the Tutorial. It was difficult to accurately count those summoned to the Tutorial since they disappeared on the spot in just a few moments. They received reports of missing relatives or neighbours, but it was only a rough count.

However, last month, there had been two reports of missing people due to a summoning by the Tutorial. And both of those cases proved to be simple disappearances.

No new Awakened came out, and no humans were forced to enter the Tutorial. At this point, a discussion was needed to solve the problem, excluding the Tutorial itself.

It was a severe problem, but the cause was undiscovered, and a resolution didn’t seem to be apparent.

“The second problem is that a G-class was detected near Pyongyang.” Unavoidable sighs erupted from every corner of the conference room.

After the cataclysm, they had only succeeded once, and since then, all attempts at G-class eradication had failed.

It was a colossal loss. It had already been years since the steady rise in the Awakened’s power allowed the city to defend itself from the monsters’ offense. But still, the G-class remained an inextricable and intangible existence.

“From what we’ve learnt, I don’t believe the existing G-class has moved into a nest.”

The G-class’s domain was spread throughout the world. That meant that signs of a G-class appearing in Pyongyang meant that it was a newly born G-class, which had never been seen before.

“That is the third problem. It’s a new one because I’m not sure if it’s going to act the same as the others.”

All of the existing G-class had one common feature. They set up their territory outside the country and didn’t leave it. But was this one the same as them? If it were someone ready to go outside of its area, the situation would spiral downhill.

“It’s a problem, even if it’s no different from the others,” Lee Jun-seok said while solitarily munching on shrimp snacks.

Kim Min-hyuk had no choice but to ask, “Why?”

“Its territory reaches Seoul.”

Kim Min-hyuk shut his mouth in response to Lee’s answer. He had nothing else to say. Neither Kim Min-hyuk nor the others in the conference room were able to speak for a while.

Only the sound of Lee Jun-seok grinding on shrimp snacks echoed quietly throughout the conference room.

“Are you alright?” Lee Sung-eun asked the team leader.

Park Min merely shrugged. Then, he put down the newspaper in his hand.

As expected, the government failed to give up on Seoul. Seoul was too essential to give up on, even though it was dangerous.

The same was true of the people. Seoul’s population had been steadily increasing since the cataclysm. Instead, more people started living in Seoul than before the cataclysm.

The reason was simple. Seoul was the safest place. The largest number of Awakened stayed there, and the most significant amount of military units surrounded Seoul. But this was before the G-class appeared.

After reports of the G-class in Pyongyang, people searched for countermeasures. Instantly, convenience store items went out of stock, and problems broke out.

Housing prices plummeted, and loans in local cities soared. A thought came to mind among those who were confused. Can’t we just get rid of the G-class?

It seemed like a less risky option than abandoning their homes and the largest city where the nation’s resources were concentrated.

It was the Awakened and the soldiers who launched the attack. They thought it was worth a try even if the success rate dropped. It was something the U.S. had already succeeded in more than a decade ago.

There were many skeptical thoughts. Talks about the differences in defense capabilities between the U.S. and South Korea and their international political positions broke out.

The U.S. had mobilized all of its naval and air forces to combat the G-class and gathered Awakened from all over the world. South Korea could not emulate them. Thus, it had been repeatedly said that the

attacks were theoretically impossible.

However, talks of eradicating G-class did not subside. People's fears soon transformed into madness.

In sympathy for the panicking, the media talked about Korea's unprecedentedly powerful Awakened group. They assured that the group of Awakened gathered under Kim Min-hyuk's guild were like that of the U.S.

Citing South Korea's previous record of sending troops overseas, they said other countries would also support the awakening as if it were natural and logical. Overseas aid was reported as if it had been scheduled.

Finally, the fact that the G-class was a newborn was taken advantage of. They said that it would still be young and weak compared to the existing G-class. And people believed the loose-lipped media.

The demonstration took place at Gwanghwamun Square(Seoul), in front of the Guild and association building. They had been urging them to prepare for the G-class's attack.

Every day, whenever the association and the guild's silence continued, voices of criticism poured out, calling them cowards. The Awakened had become shameless for not fulfilling their duties.

The association and guild building began to smell like the fishy scent of raw eggs. The Awakened, who had a high social status and lived like celebrities, had their reputation quickly spiral into the abyss.

Their SNS' were spammed with abusive tests and had to be shut down. Kim Min-hyuk's guild members were bewildered when they heard people's voices telling them to pay the price if they lived well off their tax dollars.

They were not part of the government. Some of them had already given up their Korean nationality and never paid taxes. Most of them were freelancers from overseas, not from Korea. They had already left their country for better terms.

There was no way they'd sympathize with citizens' protests that forced patriotism, responsibility, and duty.

On the contrary, the opposition only increased. When the decision that it would be better just to leave Korea began to circulate quietly within the guild, the association moved first.

"The association will do its best to fight the G-class."

"We'll use all the available power."

That was how the situation changed.

"What's wrong with you?" Park Min asked relaxedly, lifting a cup of coffee to his lips.

Lee Sung-eun could not understand his composure.

"Isn't it just us?"

The association had begun preparations for the G-class attack. They had formally asked the Associations of Other Countries for assistance and issued a call-up order for the Awakened members.

Of course, the number of Awakened gathered was small. The foreign associations all asked whether guilds, not governments or associations, would participate.

This meant that the guild's Awakened was superior. It seemed like the association could force the guild's Awakened to participate in the current situation, but it was actually impossible.

The association didn't have the authority, nor the power. They could only ask them not to participate in the attack. And the guild had the option of resisting. Then, they could very well forget about the support from other countries' associations.

The association may have to go after them only with its strength. But maybe the association's power would only further weaken.

“Anxious?”

“Yes.”

Park Min smiled at the team leader and pointed to the middle of the map. The place that had been indicated was Pyongyang. Team leader Lee Sung-eun felt a sense of *déjà vu*.

“What if there’s no G-class here?”

Park Min’s words contradicted what had been said in the past.

“...yes?”

“Think. What if there’s not actually a G-class here, and people are all being fooled?”

“...yes?”

Lee Sung-eun repeated the same word, so Park Min continued to explain as if he were talking to himself.

“There’s no harm if the guild doesn’t participate. That alone will raise the position of the association in people’s eyes. We will have people’s support.”

Lee Sung-eun felt like it’d indeed be better if the guild didn’t participate at all.

“If they don’t participate, the guild’s reputation will be stuck in sh*t. They’re already halfway through, but they’ll probably relocate their base overseas.”

And then, the association, alone, would try to attack. Their reputation would rise, and there would be several defectors within the association. But let’s not talk about it.

All they had to do was bravely move to Pyongyang. It would push out the guilds in the country and raise the political standing of the

association.

The Tutorials had already been shut down, and it was expected that the value of the remaining Awakened would soar soon.

“Great.”

It was the best situation. There was no better news.

* * *

“What are you going to do?”

“Well...”

Kim Min-hyuk had yet to make a decision. He was unsure what was right and didn’t want to send guild members to their deaths with his hasty judgment.

He thought the best way would just be to give up Seoul. But neither the citizens of Seoul nor the government would tolerate it.

“How are the guild members feeling?”

Park Jong-sik smiled on being asked this.

“They’re a mess. If you leave them alone, there’ll be a truck-load of people leaving right away.”

Was that so?

But it was hard to blame them. They weren’t precisely shameless and immoral people. They were well aware of responsibilities and duties, and also had an attachment to their hometown.

Perhaps when they first heard the news, some were determined to participate in the G-class’s attack. As people said, to risk their lives at times like this, they had lived a happy and wealthy life.

But would they try to stand up while enduring the public's sudden outburst of contempt and ridicule? He didn't think so.

Kim Min-hyuk trusted his guild members, but he was sure that no adult would be that generous.

"How is Japan?"

"It's about to collapse. The kids there were begging to join us, but Japan might lose the miniscule amount of support it has left if they did come here."

Japan was the country that could be said to be at the front lines. Every day, the battle to stop monsters crawling up from the Pacific Ocean, which had been entirely hoarded by underwater monsters, continued.

Japan would suffer indirect damage if it tried and failed to target Pyongyang, destroying Japan's Awakened.

"That's why the offer came from Japan."

"To the association?"

"No, to the government. They say we're always welcome to move to Japan. There's a lot of perks."

No, you've already pushed the contract in. It was both ridiculous and funny.

"Well, that's a good offer for us. What about China?"

"Refused to cooperate."

It was a little surprising. The G-class territory in Pyongyang would also invade China's territory, so Kim Min-hyuk had thought China would cooperate with the attack.

"The situation is terrible."

As he continued to think about it, he concluded that it wouldn't be enough to attack G-class with just the guild's power. Kim Min-hyuk wondered if he should really give up on Korea and go abroad. The guild and its members would lose their prestige, but it was better than risking their lives on unwarranted attacks.

"I wish this had happened after Lee Ho-jae had arrived," Park Jong-sik grumbled.

Kim Min-hyuk replied to Park Jong-sik, "Hey, that would have been a serious problem too."

"Hahaha, that's right."

The two laughed as if they found it funny for a moment.

Lee Ho-jae could have been an all-around key to solve all problems at once, but on the contrary, he would have become a bigger problem than the G-class.

As a member of the Order of Vigilance in the Tutorial, they laughed with Lee Ho-jae because they shared the memory of trying to avoid problems and making sure that he didn't get caught up in other issues.

Just then, the cell phone on the table vibrated. Text messages popped up on the cell phone's screen: 'Seoul Station's Portal Launching.'

Chapter 295

Tutorial 100th floor (1)

“Wuuu... wuuu...”

Tears dripped down Kirikiri’s chin, and I could see the sorrow on her face. Regardless of whether I cared or not, I felt troubled.

Wouldn’t anyone else feel the same? When a person you know cries right next to your ear, your mind is bound to be disturbed.

The reason why Kirikiri was crying is simple. It was for a cake, as usual. I bought her a cake as I’d always done, but this time she was annoyed by Yong-yong, Hochi, and even Seregia, who was rare to see.

Naturally, the amount of cake was too small for the four. Kirikiri played a trick, thinking about how Yong-yong and Hochi ate the cake every time. She was supposed to take her share of the cake in advance.

Unfortunately, Seregia took what was in her hands, an act that even Ho Chi and Yong-Yong wouldn’t stoop to. Thanks to that, Kirikiri came to me and started crying.

I didn’t need to figure out why she was crying next to me. Yong-yong approached Kirikiri. He looked restless, an expression of regret plastered on his face, probably due to him eating a little bit of the cake.

In the end, I bought another cake to settle the situation.

Kirikiri stopped crying and grinned. “Thank you!”

Surprised by Kirikiri’s instant change in attitude, Yong-yong’s eyes widened, and I placed him on my lap. Then I looked at Seregia, who

was approaching Kirikiri.

“Seregia, it’s not good to eat what’s in other people’s hands.” Seregia glared at me fiercely for a moment and then disappeared.

I felt like I’d seen a ghost filled with resentment.

“Why glare like that at me?”

“Scary,” I mumbled to myself, but then I heard Kirikiri talking. Was she humming about her victory against Seregia?

“Amazing.”

It was weird. Why was Kirikiri calling her amazing? Though, I wasn’t surprised by that. I did feel that Seregia was amazing.

The act alone of showing up and disappearing in this area, which was practically Kirikiri’s territory, proved it.

“I think she’s hiding in such a way that we can’t notice.”

“Yes,” Kirikiri mumbled incoherently. She then took a big bite of the cake and continued, “It’s amazing. Very good.”

I nodded. Again, I was amazed, too. Even I wasn’t confident in copying Seregia’s tricks. Perhaps no god would be able to imitate them either.

Seregia’s appearance and disappearance were something that no one could reach even if they had enough power.

“The God of Slowness would love it.”

“God of Slowness? Doesn’t the God of Slowness value the proof of existence?”

Kirikiri shook her head. “The God of Slowness doesn’t judge directly. Everything is relative to him.”

The more I knew, the more complicated it got. What if the present me got to re-experience the 40th floor, where I had known nothing about the God of Slowness?

I might get a glimpse of something I never noticed back then.

“How was the 90th floor?” Kirikiri changed the subject.

“It wasn’t good.” I could answer with certainty. It wasn’t good.

“After the 90th floor are the stages that require you to demonstrate your ability and strength, so it will be fine.”

After the 90th floor, the stages needed us to prove ourselves, irrespective of the powers obtained from the Tutorial. They were stages that tested how much I’d grown, and how complete and confident I was.

It was already a meaningless test for me. Even if I excluded all the stats and skills gained from level-up and clear rewards, there would be little change to my total amount of power.

But the intentions of the stages were clear. The Tutorial gave the challengers a gun, but it didn’t want a challenger who just knew how to pull the trigger. It required them to have a minimum level of aim and to keep maintaining their gun.

That was why it checked my ability at the end of the stage: to check if I passed the minimum standards.

Not only the Hell difficulty, but the latter half of all stages were like this.

There was a challenger of Easy Difficulty, who climbed the floors only with the Order of Vigilance’s support and failed to pass the stages in the second half.

“But doesn’t this overlap with the 35th-floor stage?”

The 35th-floor of Hell Difficulty level was a stage where all the

abilities gained in the Tutorial reset. It looked back at all the stages that the challenger had gone through.

“I told you back then. The 35th floor was not a stage to overcome. It was a stage to escape.”

Kirikiri lashed out at me.

“You were reckless then. You didn’t have to clear the stage in that risky manner; you just had to get through it.”

Before entering the 35th floor, Kirikiri advised me not to crash because it was dangerous. Of course, I did just the opposite.

“What could I do when the only other option left was to surrender? That word isn’t in my vocabulary.”

If I didn’t think it would work, I would have had no choice but to find another way. But it did work.

Kirikiri mentioned the stages I had passed before, starting from the 35th floor, where I was too reckless, didn’t listen to her advice, made a mistake, quickly cleared the stage, and did more than expected.

I retraced what I’d experienced and felt, as I progressed through the stages one by one. I looked back on the past, along with Kirikiri.

There was a reason why Kirikiri, who usually liked to talk only about the future, talked about my past.

[Lee Ho-jae, 99th floor]

The 99th floor. Now there was only one floor left to clear. It was time to leave the Tutorial.

* * *

[100th-floor stage will begin.]

Description: Get ready to wake up from your long dream.

I was in the dark. It was a strange unknown darkness. Not the kind that occurred without light, but a darkness that blocked my view; darkness that narrowed my perception.

A stale smell permeated my nose. I turned around and laid flat on my back to avoid the stench from the pillow.

Slowly, I raised my hand. I pulled it out of the rough quilt and felt my chin. It was prickly.

My mouth felt uncomfortable. It was probably because I only drank soju and slept the day before.

I rolled around a bit in my smelly bed, and only after the alarm started to sound, did I finally get up.

I went to the bathroom and washed my clothes roughly, not even using soap. I shaved quickly, took out my comfortable sportswear, and left home.

I waited for the villa's little elevator. The elevator door opened, and I could see the people inside.

A young lady held a baby. I got on the elevator and leaned against the metallic wall. The baby in the mother's arms looked at me with big, round eyes.

I flashed a smile.

There were so many sad laws in the world. One of them was even if I liked someone, the other person may not like me back.

I'd experienced it many times, but this law had applied to me once

again. The baby burst into tears when he saw my smile, and I apologized to the mother.

The door of the elevator opened. I greeted them roughly and left as if I were running away.

I went to the restaurant in front of my house and ordered a dish of white rice.

It was a tasty dish at a reasonable price, but I got too used to it. I was so used to it that I almost got tired of it.

A lady, who made eye contact while sitting at the table next to me, asked if it was delicious.

Of course, I said it was delicious. It was delicious, although I was tired of it.

I paid the bill, left the restaurant, and went to the convenience store in the next building where the part-timer was dozing off.

I knocked on the counter to awaken the sleeping part-timer.

The part-timer stood up in shock, thinking I was a customer. He sighed in relief as soon as he saw my face.

“You don’t have a guest with you, right?”

“Yes, fortunately.”

Of course, for a part-timer, that was a good thing. As for me, the boss, I felt annoyed.

“Why aren’t the other part-timers here yet?”

“They’ll be late today. I got a text earlier.”

This guy had been working at my convenience store for more than half a year. I hired him and gave him extra pay, entrusting the

management of other part-timers to him.

It was almost like I left all the troublesome work to him.

“Okay, I’m going.”

“Yes, Hyung. Take care.”

“Okay. Learn to rip off well.”

I heard a whimper from behind me. I ignored it and left the convenience store.

He didn’t know jack about ripping off.

After checking the convenience store, I went to the local park. I warmed up and ran slowly along the park road. After a while, I ran out of breath and couldn’t run anymore.

I flopped down on the park bench. It was still.

I could only hear the wind, the birds, and the rustling of fallen leaves on the floor. There was no one passing by the park, probably because rush hour had already passed.

In the middle of the park, surrounded by tall buildings and apartments, I sensed this familiar feeling.

This was the end, the end of my day. It was peaceful, quiet, and calm.

And it was boring as hell.

Now all I had to do was go back home, pick up the soju bottle, leave the TV on, and kill time.

What did the Tutorial want to show me? Did it want me to remain here, manifesting dreams of my peaceful past? Did it want me to remember my initial intention?

My initial intention was to escape from this peaceful hell so I could go wild and crazy again.

I didn't know what it wanted to show me. What would the other challengers feel here?

That was also unknown.

“Disappear.”

The scenery disappeared along with my mana. I was sitting in a small stone chamber, not a bench in the park.

“What happened?” asked Hochi.

“I saw my old self.”

“How was it?

I ignored Hochi's question.

No matter how much I wanted to tell him, it wasn't something good for him to know.

[Tutorial Hell Difficulty level, 100th floor cleared.]

[Checking for additional rewards.]

The clear message on the 100th floor was quite simple. I'd heard it many times already.

The additional reward was a purple crystal. It was singing that Kirikiri would need me.

[Please select one designated item before returning to Earth. You can only take one of the items you used in the Tutorial.]

Designated items allowed the challenger to take an item they had used in the Tutorial.

It was common to bring along the equipment that you had used until the end. Some others would take out elixirs or potions, but in my case, I didn't have to choose.

All the items in my possession were under the protection of my domain. I just had to take everything out.

"How do you feel?"

"How do you feel?" I asked Hochi back.

"How do you feel about going back to Earth?"

"Well, I'm sure you feel more than me, leaving the Tutorial like this."

It's true.

"How do you feel, then?"

"I think it all unraveled when I left the 61st floor. Right now... Well, I just don't think much of it."

I wanted to keep it that way.

Hochi grumbled, saying it was a bland reply and then took Yong-yong in his hands. It seemed that he was discussing things with Yong-yong before we reached Earth.

It was fun to talk to Yong-yong. It was his first time on Earth, and

chatting about different experiences was exciting.

Watching the two of them, I felt another gaze on me. It'd been a long time since someone had watched me like this.

Kirikiri insisted on the abolishment of the problematic system.

But at the same time, she'd talked about civilizations that could have been safe thanks to the system, explaining its necessity. The gap between her opinions meant that there was one more problem that Kirikiri had not told me yet.

It was a problem that the current me couldn't solve or even touch.

"Hochi."

"What?" asked Hochi, who came up to my side.

"Are you ready?"

Neither Hochi nor Yong Yong Yong nodded.

Yong-yong stepped in between Hochi and me. I held Hochi's hand with my left hand and Yong-yong's hand with my right hand.

Hochi and Yong-yong seemed a little nervous, which I could understand.

No matter how powerful Yong-yong was, moving to a new world that he'd never seen before would cause anxiety.

That's what life was about.

Just like when I first came into the Tutorial, I was happy and scared.

"Now, let's go out."

Holding Yong-yong's small hand tightly, the three of us went into the portal together.

And with that, I cleared the Tutorial.

Chapter 296

Seoul (4)

The news that the Seoul Station's portal had begun to function was not only heard by the guild but also by the association and the government. All of them were focused on the Seoul Station's portal, so information was readily available.

Despite being caught off-guard by unexpected factors, the guild sent their members to meet those who'd return from the Tutorial.

The government had prepared a contract for the returnees and dispatched investigators to Seoul Station to find out what happened in the Tutorial.

The association was agonizing.

“Why did this happen now...”

Park Min rubbed his hands over his face. He wished it had come out a month later, or rather a month earlier.

What bad timing. It didn't matter who came out of Seoul Station's Portal.

Park Min thought that there were three possibilities for what would come out of the portal: first, was the returnees who had normally cleared the 100th floor of the Tutorial.

That wasn't very good.

One of the reasons the media and the public were encouraging Pyongyang's attack was that no more Awakened had been produced. The idea was that the G-class in Pyongyang should be hit when it's weak.

If the number of Awakened were to start increasing again, giving up Seoul may be encouraged instead of planning an attack.

Besides, the media will be focused on a new topic. “A newly returned Awakened had appeared”. Just talking about problems within the Tutorial would be a big fish.

It was not good for the public’s attention to be diverted from Pyongyang. The second thing that could appear from the Seoul Station’s portal was monsters, making it like the other gates.

They knew that the guild had won the right to manage the Seoul Station’s portal from the government, and were warned of this possibility.

However, Park Min did not think that the chances of this occurring were high.

Of course, it would be wise to do so in this crazy world, but Park Min nevertheless believed that the second possibility would never happen.

The third possibility was Lee Ho-Jae. Not long ago, news of Lee Yeon-hee leaving the 60th floor made the guild restless.

The guild was closely related to the Order of Vigilance in the Tutorial. Kim Min-hyuk, the guild’s master, was the deputy head of the Order of Vigilance. The Awakened who had cleared hard difficulty had all been members of the Order of Vigilance.

And Lee Ho-jae was the one who formed such an organisation (referring to the Order of Vigilance).

Park Min was also a challenger who’d entered the Tutorial in the early days, so he was well aware of Lee Ho-jae’s presence.

At first glance, it was Lee Ho-jae’s power that kept the Order of Vigilance stable, which was so bizarre that it was doubtful whether it’d last. The driving force behind managing all the challengers in the Tutorial was his power.

Lee Ho-jae's strong powers and the fear everyone held of him were good. If there was one challenger who had to be asked to return grandly to the Tutorial that had come to a standstill, and if one of the challengers Park Min knew was to be picked as the returnee, he would pick Lee Ho-jae without hesitation.

The problem was that this was the worst situation ever. Everything would become a mess if Lee Ho-jae came out.

“What should I do?”

Park Min was annoyed by the team leader's question. The one who needed to give directions was only asking questions. He knew that his recent silence had caused her to lose a lot of confidence, but this shouldn't happen.

Lee Sung-eun should rely on herself. They didn't have that kind of relationship. They had decided to deal with that matter later and settle the issue at hand right now.

“Send guides, provide training, and offer contracts, just like we did to the usual returnees.”

When the returnees arrived, it was the association's job to explain how the Earth changed and to help them adapt.

In the case of contracts, they were carried out by both the government and the association. The Awakened who rejected both the government and the association would have the status of a free contractor.

Usually, they belonged to the government of another country or Kim Min-hyuk's guild.

“Tell the government to withdraw from the Seoul Station's vicinity, and to start controlling the area.”

The government also had a group of Awakened, but it was way smaller than the guild's and association's.

Most of the Awakened in the government were for the management of

Awakened and police, for work, and not for combat.

When danger struck Seoul, the association would typically be in charge of suppressing the situation. It was quite well known that the guild had warned that the Seoul Station portal could be dangerous.

Even if Park Min didn't consider the possibility, he couldn't completely exclude it. It was not to prepare for one minor possibility but to leave no room for mistakes.

"I'll dispatch six teams," Lee Sung-eun replied.

The association could afford it. There were no recent emergencies in Seoul or other areas, and all of its troops were gathered at the headquarters in Seoul because of the attack on Pyongyang.

"No, don't do that."

"What? But..."

"Team 3, Team 2, Team 6, Team 7. Let's put Team 1 on standby."

Lee Sung-eun complained about the smaller number of people, since that could become a problem later. Park Min was frustrated. It was pitiful for him to have such an idiot as his close associate.

"So we're going to send Team 2? Don't get upset later."

It was said that Team 2 was one step below Team 1. Chances of them being criticised were high. The criticism that the association would deal with half-heartedly could be avoided.

"Tell Team 2 to come up, and get Team 6 and Team 7 out right away. Oh, and the reason is, team leader, you have a nephew on Team 6, right?"

"...Yes, I do."

Lee Sung-eun's nephew was not an Awakened. Not all members of the

association were made up of Awakened.

Unless it was overflowing with Awakened resources like the guild, most of the organization's members were non-awakened.

Of course, even though he was an Awakened, being a member of the association was a great help in society: from income to preferential treatment to social standing.

Thanks to that, some of the non-Awakened members of the association often asked for favors. Such was the case with the team leader's nephew.

The position of the head of the association was enough to put some of her relatives into the association.

Park Min also knew but he pretended to be unaware. In some cases, he stayed silent and hired them. But in times like this, he had to use them without hesitation.

"There's one thing that the team leader's nephew should know. 21 years old. He's young, so of course he knows social media well, right?"

Team leader Lee Sung-eun was forced to answer with a gentle nod. Park Min had even mentioned her nephew's age accurately.

Park Min ordered the team leader Lee Sung-eun to relay what her nephew had to do and scrolled through contacts on his cell phone.

He called the number located at the top of the category of 'Media'.

* * *

"How do you feel?" asked Hochi with a tense look.

"I told you, it's nothing much."

How did I feel about coming back to Earth? I couldn't really feel anything. Some things I thought were worse, some were better.

“What’s good, what’s bad?”

“It’s good that we got teleported indoors. I heard that usually they teleported to the middle of the square, but if it was noisy from the start, it would have been annoying.”

“And what’s bad?”

“The air is more polluted than I thought.”

It didn’t have the environment of the 60th floor that I worked hard to create. It wasn’t even the size of the 61st floor of the Great Volcano or Snow Mountain.

The air I breathed in when I came back to Earth was really bad. I couldn’t help but wonder how I used to live in such a place.

“It’s cramped.”

“It’s cramped.”

The old woman and old man said in unison. They were resting in a small space, but they were peeking outside as if they wanted to see this new world.

Their giant figures weren’t fit for this place, so they had to crouch to keep the ceiling of the building from collapsing.

“If it’s cramped, you can just make yourself shrink.”

“I’m already small.”

“Reduce more.”

The old man shrank his body while grumbling. He shrank a little, checked his body, and then repeated it again.

I think he wanted to reduce it as little as possible. On the contrary, the old lady shrank coolly.

“Hmm! I feel young!”

“Too short, Grandma,” I advised her, now that she was about the same height as Yong-yong.

“Isn’t it alright?”

“No, it’s not okay. The old man would be treated like a criminal, so you’d better make your body a little taller.”

After a brief argument, I adjusted her height to that of an average adult’s. She looked very unhappy, but she didn’t know much about Earth, so she quietly followed my opinion.

While doing that, Hochi wandered around the interior of the building and found a large wardrobe.

“Can I wear this?”

“You can.”

I didn’t know who it belonged to, but I guessed that he could wear it.

“Change your clothes. Don’t wear that weird outfit.”

“Why, isn’t it fine?”

Hochi’s outfit now looked like he was going out on an adventure. It resembled the characters from a medieval fantasy novel.

“It’s not fine. Change.”

“Can I wear one, too?” Seregia, who had been quiet, asked.

“Sure.”

It kept bothering me that I still didn’t know who the owner of the closet was, but for now, I told them it was fine.

“Daddy, what about me? Can I change too?”

“Well, if there’s anything that fits you, then yes.”

Yong-yong had a lot of clothes and a good fashion sense, so I didn’t think he needed it. Still, he seemed to be interested in new clothes made by others.

Finally, I told the old lady to pick out her clothes. While we were examining the clothes inside the wardrobe, the door opened from behind.

Someone came in through the open door. It was a man who had been hanging around the building for a while. A face that I couldn’t recognise. There was a weak scent of Korean food on his body. He was not an ordinary person.

But he wasn’t strong either.

“Who are you?”

“Hey, I’m Cheol-min.”

It was the first name I heard.

* * *

The man who’d opened the door and came in was an Awakened named Lee Cheol-min.

I had been a member of the Order of Vigilance before, but honestly, I didn’t remember seeing him anywhere.

Not that my memory had gotten poor, I just don’t think I cared about him even if I did ever meet him, given that I didn’t remember. Hochi, who shared the same memory as me which served as evidence, also failed to recognize Lee Cheol-min.

“Kim Min-hyuk is gonna come soon?”

“Yes.”

This felt strange. Like I just got out of prison, and I heard that my friend was coming to meet me.

Lee Cheol-min said, “Kim Min-hyuk will be here soon, and by then, I will explain anything that you’re curious about.”

Lee Cheol-min began to tell us things.

“This is the Seoul Station’s Portal? I don’t think I’ve ever heard of it.”

“Yes, it was recently built. Since there were many people who were confused after they returned, we built it so that they had a place to prepare their minds.”

That’s nice. I liked this, no matter whose idea it was.

“Haha, cute.”

Yong-yong patted Lee Cheol-min on the side and giggled. His innocent smile made it seem like he really did think that Lee Cheol-min was cute.

Once again, I was worried about Yong-yong’s aesthetic sense. Lee Cheol-min looked at Yong-yong, who was approaching him without hesitation and turned his eyes towards me.

“Is this Yong-yong?”

“Oh, you know him?”

“Of course. I participated in his naming contest before.”

He was closer to me than I’d thought.

“The name I gave back then was Nafplion.”

It was even one of the elected names.

“Oh, that’s my name!”

“That name was perfect,” Yong-yong and Hochi said one after the other.

I felt that they were a better fit than I’d initially thought. At that moment, the door opened again. This time, it was an acquaintance.

He was none other than Kim Min-hyuk.

Chapter 297

Seoul (5)

“Damn it,” Kim Min-hyuk muttered in the car.

The driver in the front seat shrugged his shoulders as if he were helpless. It wasn’t his fault. Traffic jammed the road, so they were stuck on the street, wasting their time.

A traffic jam occurred at an inconvenient time. The streets typically weren’t this busy, but today was an exception.

“This is for Seoul Station, right?”

“Uh... Uhm... Yeah, I think so.”

The driver confirmed Kim Min-hyuk’s suspicions. Kim Min-hyuk’s cell phone buzzed with text messages. It was challenging enough to deal with the situation here, let alone reply to everyone else’s texts.

The flood of text messages made it clear the Seoul Station portal had opened to the public. And somehow, people were convinced that there was a new challenger, so they flocked around Seoul Station.

Ignoring the dozens of incoming messages, he opened a single text. The text was from Lee Cheol-min, an S-class Awakened who was waiting at Seoul Station.

It was a message to confirm Lee Ho-jae’s appearance at Seoul Station. As he read the text, Kim Min-hyuk felt like his world grew dark. As if it hadn’t already been tough enough.

Lee Ho-jae’s appearance was a big problem, but thankfully, Kim Min-hyuk had already prepared for it a long time ago.

However, the busy roads were unexpected. It was scary.

Lee Cheol-min was an S-class Awakened. Even within the guild, it was hard to find someone more powerful. But there was Lee Joon-suk—one of the most talented people in the world.

Kim Min-hyuk sent a text saying, “Stop being such a coward and hurry home.”

Subsequently, he scolded the driver off. Kim Min-hyuk knew it wasn’t the driver’s fault, but he couldn’t stand the wait.

After a while, a text message came from Lee Chul-min. It said, “When on earth will you arrive?”

“I can’t do this,” Kim Min-hyuk muttered when he saw Lee Chul-min’s text message.

Kim Min-hyuk was impatient. If anything were to piss Lee Ho-Jae off, not only would Seoul Station be obliterated, but the entire city would reduce to atoms.

He felt like his life-span would be cut in half if he sat in the car and waited for the jam to clear. Kim Min-hyuk opened the car door on an impulse.

He peeked outside the door for a while before stepping out of the car. After telling the driver that he would go first, Kim Min-hyuk started running on the road.

* * *

Kim Min-hyuk finally managed to reach the building in front of Seoul Station. He couldn’t be any happier that he was an Awakened.

One thing he wasn’t happy about was the number of people gathered near Seoul Station. Watching from afar, Kim Min-hyuk felt his heart pounding.

He considered the probability of people entering the building.

Fortunately, guild members stood guard at the entrance.

“Keep the people out of the way, and if the reporters come in, kick them out. We’re not having a press conference today. Push people as far away as possible. Even if you have to use force.”

“It’s not easy. These people are civilians. It’s a little...”

“It doesn’t matter.”

A child who knew nothing should be kept as far away from knives and fires as possible, even if they hated the restriction. It was what was right for the child.

After issuing the order, Kim Min-hyuk entered the building and heard voices from the dressing room.

As he stood in front of the door, Kim Min-hyuk could see what Lee Cheol-min meant. He shuddered, and his body spasmed, rejecting the thought of entering.

Kim Min-hyuk had a similar experience to this before. There was a famous stage in Normal difficulty at the 7th-floor stage.

It was a stage whose information was slowly released and passed along, but it was a different challenge in the early days when there was no information at all.

Kim Min-hyuk had been the first ranker to attempt the stage. There was a monster on the seventh floor he didn’t know anything about: a hippo-like creature with a giant lion’s head.

It wasn’t until after people learned that the monster invoked the opponent’s fear with a mental attack that Kim Min-hyuk came to know its fighting power was nothing exceptional. But it had been a terrible incident when he first met it.

It was a feeling akin to that time. Kim Min-hyuk took a deep breath and placed his hand on the door handle. On an impulse similar to when he opened the car door a little while ago, he twisted the

doorknob.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

“Oh, you’re here?”

He came earlier than I thought. I thought he would take a while because of the people outside.

“Cute!”

Even before Kim Min-hyuk could answer my greeting, Yong-yong ran towards Kim Min-hyuk. He patted Kim Min-hyuk’s body.

That’s nice, my pretty son. But you can’t just say that everyone is cute. That’s too much.

Kim Min-hyuk smiled and stooped down to Yong-yong, who quickly clung to him. Yong-yong held on to him as if he meant to hug him.

Kim Min-hyuk hugged Yong-yong back, even though he looked embarrassed. His reaction was quite different from that of Lee Cheol-min.

I didn’t know if it was because he was bolder or more insensitive. Squeezed in a corner, Lee Cheol-min had kept his distance from Yong-yong since he first came in.

He shifted, picking up fallen clothes or touching the fluorescent switch on the wall.

Of course, it didn’t go unnoticed. Amid disappointment, a brave man appeared, and Yong-yong hugged him quietly.

He brightly smiled as if he was satisfied with the fact. Kim Min-hyuk approached me with Yong-yong in his arms, looking less nervous than before. “You came out. That’s amazing, Ho-jae.”

“Yeah, I came out. I’m not a fake.”

I felt sympathetic towards his attempt of making conversation. I decided to introduce the others to Kim Min-hyuk. Kim Min-hyuk once heard about them through a message in the Tutorial, but it was his first time seeing them in person, so I needed to introduce them.

“This is Hochi.”

“I remember that this guy has taken up a lot of your time. You’re going to lose a lot more in the future, so I apologise in advance for that.”

When I asked him to say hello, Hochi spoke nonsense, so I hit him. I decided to skip Hochi and introduce the rest.

“Hey, Old Man, Grandma. They’re from the 61st floor...”

I tried to introduce them, but they continued to pick clothes from the closet.

They were uninterested and turned their backs on me, not listening at all. Somehow, it felt embarrassing.

I skipped the two and saw Seregia. Seregia lay on the floor like a worm, and fortunately, her eyes were open, staring at us.

“Seregia? Why don’t you get up and say hello?”

She did not get up, but her eyes glanced at us while she lay on the floor. I knew it, yet I asked, just in case...

Damn it.

* * *

It took Old Man and Grandma quite a while to choose their clothes. I didn’t know they were interested in fashion. It was unexpected.

“Shall we get out?”

I think we had prepared enough. It was almost time for Yong-yong to sleep.

Kim Min-hyuk left the room with Lee Cheol-min, saying, “I will go out first and clean up the rush before you go out.”

He didn’t say exactly when to come out. Did we have to wait for about two or three more minutes before going out?

Yong-yong somehow looked anxious. I hugged Yong-yong. “What’s wrong, Yong-yong?”

He did not answer. I whispered to a mumbling Yong-yong, “Is it because of the man who just left?”

Yong-yong looked at me for a moment and gave a small nod. Was he nervous? I thought he might be.

“Does he look cute?”

“...Yes. What does Daddy think?” Yong-yong asked me.

This may be the reason for the anxiety. Yong-yong and I had different attitudes toward other humans.

“Dad thinks the same.”

After hearing my answer, Yong-yong finally let go of his anxiety. I hugged him tightly and patted him on the back. Nevermind whatever power and ability he had, Yong-yong was still young.

The fact that they’re different from their parents was a great fear for children.

It would’ve been a sight for Yong-yong to see me talking to a human being, who seemed cute and funny to him, at an equal level.

I understood. Anyone would be scared to see their parents clinging to a tree and communicating with the cicadas seriously.

If you're just a child, you'll be more scared, and even worried if you were doing wrong for your parents.

Unlike me who was born and raised as a human being, Yong-yong was born a dragon and quickly formed a different class.

Hochi and I lived alone, so we lacked communication experience with others. It was worth him being scared to see me talking to Kim Min-hyuk.

“Hey.”

“What?”

When I was ready to go out, I spoke to Hochi, who was lifting Seregia.

“You... your powers are leaking.”

“Huh? No? This is...”

“It's dangerous enough.”

Lee Cheol-min and Kim Min-hyuk were Awakened, so they just ended up feeling uneasy. If it was someone normal, they might have felt drowsy.

“Really...? It's very weak.”

Hochi shared my memories, but only in the Tutorial. There was no experience of me facing humans or being human, so he couldn't get the hang of it.

In fact, by our standards, it would be similar for any being, not just humans. It just hit me that we'd spent a long time locked up.

“Yes, weak. Let's go out now to meet those weak humans.”

By now, Kim Min-hyuk must have prepared the necessities. We left the dressing room and exited the building together towards a weak and cute world.

* * *

“This is the worst.” Kim Min-hyuk had no choice but to mutter this.

A large crowd of too many people gathered. He wondered if everyone in Seoul had gathered.

The people gathered under the stairs obscured the floor. People approached the building right in front of them.

Guild members were trying to stop the rush, but even that didn’t faze them. As guild members said, they were civilians without power, and there was a limit to pushing them away by force.

They forced them to step down with threats, but it became meaningless when the number of people exceeded 10,000. People gained strength in numbers.

Even though guild members shouted, “Stay back,” people courageously pushed closer. Perhaps because of the recent anti-guild sentiment, people threw harsh words at the guild members, trying to anger them.

Now, he was worried that the guild members would use their strength. The number of guild members blocking the building was smaller than before.

He saw some of the guild members far away. There seemed to be a quarrel, but they were too distant for Kim Min-hyuk to accurately discern the situation.

There were no members of the association and no police officers who should have arrived by now.

“Hey, you done?”

Kim Min-hyuk looked back, his heart contracting painfully. Lee Ho-jae and his party were coming out. If he knew this would happen, he'd have told him to come out later.

No, he would've made an escape route for the people to sneak out. Regrets filled Kim Min-hyuk's head. And now, he felt like he'd f*cked up.

"What's wrong with the air? It's even worse out here."

Kim Min-hyuk was speechless on seeing Lee Ho-jae frowning. People became noisier as they saw him walk out. He could hear cheers and applause but shouts more than anything else.

They wanted to get closer to Ho-jae, to see better. The noise also contained many questions.

They were reporters. The questions, mixed in with the loud noises, were inaudible. However, Lee Ho-jae heard them.

"I'm so sorry."

"Do you know about the G-class that showed up in Pyongyang?"

"What do you think was the driving force behind Hell difficulty?"

"What food do you want to eat the most now?"

"Did you know that your real sister, Lee Myung-sook, died three years ago? If you do, what do you think about that? How do you feel?"

"A word to the people..."

"It's so noisy."

Ttuk. The square, which had been clamoring loudly, fell silent.

Those who had been shouting and running forward stood still and shut their mouths.

There was no noticeable power, but people remained silent as if it were only natural. Only the distant sound of honking cars echoed. Silence enveloped the square.

Kim Min-hyuk hadn't asked anyone to do that, but all those gathered quietly closed their mouths.

Standing in front of the building, Lee Ho-jae breathed out quietly. The sound let out through the slow exhalation was like abdominal breathing.

It was akin to a whistle that a zookeeper made to calm down a wild animal. While everyone had stopped, there was one person who desperately tried to move.

It was Kim Min-hyuk. Lee Ho-jae released the binding on him and asked, "Why?"

Kim Min-hyuk said, trying to calm his trembling body, "...Hey, don't-"

"Why? I even waited on purpose."

It had always been this way.

Lee Ho-jae, whom Kim Min-hyuk knew, always chose to steer away the problems he didn't want to touch.

"People..."

Kim Min-hyuk managed to open his mouth, but he couldn't think of anything to persuade Lee Ho-jae.

Glancing at Kim Min-hyuk, Lee Ho-jae mumbled, "You know what? The main character doesn't need to hide his strength."

Chapter 298

Seoul (6)

“...The number of victims from the downtown explosion over Seoul continued to rise around 4 p.m.”

“The exact figures have yet to be determined, and at least 7,000 people have been injured. No deaths have been reported yet.”

“The walls and the interiors of the buildings near Seoul Station have been reduced to dust, resulting in enormous property damage.”

The news displayed the view of a crowded hospital. There were a lot of people in the hospital.

“Why? Tell me, why?”

I asked Kim Min-hyuk, who was looking at me, blankly.

“Hey, that’s all insurance crooks. I’m glad I didn’t hurt people. It’s a little scratch, at best.”

It was true. I had set off an explosion that didn’t let people get hurt. Would I have made such a stupid mistake like that?

“Really? You set off an explosion, and you didn’t hurt people?” Kim Min-hyuk asked again. He seemed like he didn’t believe me.

“Uh... Yes, really.” I was upset at that moment, but I was not bothered enough to where I made an explosion to kill people. I just pushed the dirty air away. Honestly, I was annoyed and angry, but I just let it go.

It was our first day, after all.

“Oi, what are you doing?” asked Hochi, sitting on the sofa reading

comic books.

What am I doing?

“Is it because it’s your hometown?” Old Man asked. [1]

It’s not like that.

It’s just that I thought it’d be more annoying if I saw blood on our first day. I wanted things to go smoothly, peacefully, and naturally.

“Well, such mercy will incite the people to look up to you,” Grandma said. [2]

That’s not it either.

Humans on Earth felt threatened and terrified by the explosion that happened earlier and would not think I was merciful.

Grandma and Old Man existed as different beings, and they said so because they ruled over humans.

Kim Min-hyuk looked confused. Unfortunately, no one in this room shared such a mindset.

“Yeah, well, people aren’t dead...”

In the end, Kim Min-hyuk went with that. Just then, the news on the screen changed. The screen turned gray.

Emergency patients were rushed to hospital corridors. Doctors and nurses shouted at each other. Some carried patients away, screaming at the people nearby to the hospital corridor to move aside.

The patient’s condition on the screen couldn’t be identified, but it was easy to guess that he was in critical condition, thanks to the bandages wrapped all over his body and the visible bloodstains.

Kim Min-hyuk stared at me.

“...You said no one was hurt.”

“Except for them.”

I couldn't just let them go. They said such ridiculous things about me. Just because they were a reporter didn't mean that they could say anything.

Kim Min-hyuk called someone and ordered them to find out about the critical patients. Then, as if he had given up, he muttered, “Well, a few casualties is fine.”

“But are you sure you'll be okay? It would have been easier if you had moved on quietly. That's why I'd been working so hard to keep this silent.”

Kim Min-hyuk used his work as an excuse to express his concern, implying that it might become more of a nuisance. But I didn't think so.

“What can they do? Do you think they're gonna put me in jail for vandalism? If so, how?”

It was impossible. After a little more time and a few more blows, people would understand on their own: I'm entirely different from them, just as Old Man and Grandma were different from humans.

* * *

The situation changed according to Lee Ho-jae's expectations. What happened at Seoul Station attracted many people's attention.

It was an incident in which a single Awakened attacked some people, which has happened several times before. Previously, an Awakened who couldn't control their strength caused a disturbance.

People considered this to be a riot of such Awakened. Those who heard the news through the media were angry.

This incident could have been a trigger for those who already held

terrible feelings for the Awakened. Park Min felt the same.

He had expected this to happen. Park Min met Lee Ho-jae in the Tutorial and had a close relationship with the Order of Vigilance.

Due to Lee Ho-jae's personality, he knew that he would try to finish it up right away if anything was bothering him. Of course, he didn't think he would just explode like that.

It was actually good. Park Min was excited to hear the gossip in the office. As soon as he heard what happened at Seoul Station, he cheered inside.

When he got to know about the portal's news at Seoul Station, he made a good move. He prepared to dispatch members of the Association at once.

Lee Ho-jae could not be arrested or killed. It was impossible with the association's power. In the end, they had to compromise.

But he was able to gain the upper hand by using his job. Park Min was confident that he could continue to maintain and widen the gap based on that advantage.

People would now pay more attention to the Awakened's mental health. They'd find a way to control the Awakened, turning their treatment from celebrities to powerful ticking time-bombs that may explode at any moment.

The method would be through the Association. Park Min himself would see it through. In his head, he made plans to increase the influence of the association.

It was good stress. Once again, all arrangements had been made to take a big step.

Up in front was the data screen of news that calmed Park Min, who was working hard to turn things around. After a while, the horrors of Seoul Station appeared.

A building near Seoul Station was burned to a crisp. Seeing that, Park Min began to question if it was CG in a movie.

The building's condition was bizarre.

It wasn't because of the terrible destruction, but the fact that it was still standing there.

If that was possible, the architects who designed the building were God-gifted geniuses, or there was something wrong with the laws of physics.

Seoul had many buildings in that condition.

The trees were all burned down, and the road was a mess as if there had been an earthquake.

"...Didn't you say there are only a few dead people?"

There was an explosion like that, but people were alive and taken to the hospital? Impossible. How could it be that there were a lot of people, but only half were injured, and very few died?

"Mr. Park, Team 1 is ready. Shall we begin?" Lee Sung-eun, who opened the door, asked.

"No!" Park Min shouted, alarmed.

"Wait, just wait."

Just in time, the news flashed on the screen. It contained a video of an explosion at Seoul Station from afar.

The video, which began with the words 'Video uploaded online,' contained a panoramic view of Seoul.

After a while, there was a scene of an explosion. Like a lightning bolt, a flash of light appeared and disappeared just as fast.

“...Tell them not to start. It’s cancelled.” After answering, Lee Sung-eun hurriedly closed the door and left the room.

Park Min, who became alone again, muttered while watching the same video replay on the news.

“What the hell was that?”

* * *

“Is the accommodation all right?”

I nodded. The accommodation that Kim Min-hyuk had prepared was a mansion in the suburbs of Seoul.

The air was not good enough, and in many ways, there were a lot of things we lacked. But there were advantages. Kim Min-hyuk prepared various things for our stay.

What stood out the most were the novels and comic books for Hochi. He seemed to have moved an entire bookstore, remembering our conversations about Hochi’s hobbies.

There were lots of snacks and food, and several entertainment facilities were available. There were many odd things to explore, so Yong-yong was very happy.

As soon as Hochi came, he sat on the sofa and started reading. Seregia sat next to him, forgetting about her snack.

Perhaps because they were similar in birth, they were similar in behavior as well. Yong-yong was playing alone in his room, collecting oddities.

Old Man and Grandma were whispering something in the corner of the living room. Those two got along well on their own if left alone, so there was no need to worry.

Anyway, I was satisfied as my party liked the accommodation facilities.

“So, speaking of what I said earlier.”

“What, the G-class?”

On our way to the hotel, Kim Min-hyuk talked about the G-class monsters. There was a problem.

I wasn't paying much attention to the G-class monsters.

Unlike other monsters, the identity of a G-class, which did not stay in one place, was assumed to be the source extractor. Kirikiri had confirmed my speculation.

It could be called a problem, but it was not an urgent one.

“A G-class appeared in Pyongyang.”

“In Pyongyang?”

As far as I remember, there was no G-class in Pyongyang.

“It was recently born,” Kim Min-hyuk added.

The G-class monster, which had appeared unexpectedly, had reached the southern part of Gyeonggi-do, which was why it was being seriously discussed.

“Joon-suk is on guard nearby.”

It was strange. It was not surprising that there was a new G-class since the monsters on Earth were well spread, but why Pyongyang and not Seoul?

I had heard a variety of information about how the dungeon with the extractor operated from Hochi, who'd worked very hard on the 89th floor.

It was too inefficient to build a dungeon in a crowded place. Rather, it was better to settle down at the mountainside. In fact, I heard that

most of the G-class on Earth exist in remote areas where few people live.

“Are you sure?”

But in Pyongyang, there was no such dungeon, according to what I knew.

“Yeah. The information was confirmed, Joon-suk had also checked it several times.”

I looked up at Kim Min-hyuk’s words. First of all, I could sense Lee Joon-suk wandering around Pyongyang.

What was wrong with that guy? I ignored Lee Joon-suk, who was much weaker than I’d thought, and continued my search.

There was definitely something weird there.

“You know... there’s probably a Ruler there.”

“Ruler? What?”

“There is one, huh?”

I’ll have to do something.

I thought so, but Yong-yong appeared in a split moment.

“I’ll come!”

“You will?”

He ignored Kim Min-hyuk, who was surprised by Yong-yong’s sudden appearance. Yong-yong nodded as if he was confident.

“Well... You have to be careful.”

“I’ll make sure to be!”

That was reassuring.

“Yes, don’t kill him in one go.”

“Yes!”

I patted Yong-yong’s head as he answered energetically.

“Just in case, go with Seregia. Seregia?”

Seregia, who was sitting on the sofa staring at her chocolate pie, turned and glared at me. She was giving me a look that said, “What’s wrong with you?”

However, I wanted to make sure that Yong-yong was fully prepared since this was the first time I’d let go of him on Earth.

When I didn’t retract my words, Seregia popped the chocolate pie from her hand into her mouth with a look of discontent and turned into a sword.

Seregia-turned-sword rolled down the sofa and dropped to the floor. The sound of metal resounded as the blade hit the marble floor.

If he wanted her to go along, he would have to carry her because she refused to move. It was a very powerful yet lazy will.

I sighed at the sight, and called out Grandma who was talking to Old Man in the corner.

“Grandma, can you go with Yong-yong? Just in case.”

“Huh? Do you need me?” Grandma asked back.

Why are they all so lazy?

“It’s Yong-yong’s first outing, so I’d like you to go with him.”

Yong-yong pouted, as if he was dissatisfied with being treated as a child. This time, Grandma readily accepted.

“I’m coming too!” Old Man shouted out as loudly as ever.

“Yeah, no you aren’t. If you see something you don’t like, you’ll probably smash everything and make a mess.”

I could feel Kim Min-hyuk staring from the side. It was as if I could hear his innermost thoughts saying, “And you don’t?”

I ignored it. Instead, I decided to ask him a favor.

“What do you want?”

“There are a few people I need to find.”

“Who are they? Are they regular people?”

They were Awakeneds. I took a note out of my arms.

One, two, three... seven.

There were a lot of names. I handed the note to Kim Min-hyuk. In fact, I clearly remembered each name. But just in case I forgot one, I wrote them down.

“Jung Won-sik? Who are these people?”

“Oh, they’re the guys I promised to visit as soon as I cleared the Tutorial.”

Notes From Imagine:

[1]: Old man is the Fire Person from the 61st floor. Incase you forgot

[2]: Grandma is the Ice Lady from the 61st floor. Incase you forgot

Chapter 299

Seoul (7)

Jung Won-sik was an Awakened who'd cleared the Tutorial, but he didn't think of himself as an Awakened.

Born and raised in a well-off family, he had no intention of risking his life to fight against the monsters. It was the same when the Tutorial invited him. Naturally, he chose the Easy difficulty level.

It had already been a few years since the Tutorial began, and the Easy Difficulty level's attack had improved significantly.

Jung Won-sik targeted the Tutorial's floors without much difficulty. In addition, he was promised a monetary reward outside and got support and advice from top challengers.

It wasn't dangerous to enter the Easy Difficulty level, especially with perfect attack equipment that was used even by the Hard difficulty level challengers.

Although the Tutorial wasn't that social at the time, people still met.

Easy difficulty had many challengers, similar to Normal difficulty level, so I would often meet people in the waiting room.

For those people, Jung Won-sik was the object of envy.

His safety was unconditionally secured on the stage, where all sorts of dangers lurked, and after he cleared the stage, he sliced steak and ate it while others nibbled on jerky in the waiting room.

Naturally, people flocked around him. People wanted to target stages with him.

Even if it was a stage where solo play was required, people used Jung Won-sik's attack to target it.

In such a life, Jung Won-sik was as pleased as anyone could be.

Jung Won-sik, born with a golden spoon, was used to winning people's favor easily. He liked hogging the spotlight.

Along with the special situation made by the Tutorial's existence, Jung Won-sik felt as if he had become a hero in a fairy tale.

After finishing the Tutorial, Jung Won-sik's life became even better. He came out on Earth and didn't live as an Awakened.

He continued living a wealthy life as he had before entering the Tutorial. There was only one difference.

Jung Won-sik had a powerful and young body compared to ordinary people. In a world where accidents sometimes occurred due to monsters, he had a great advantage.

Above all, he had a sense of superiority, believing he was different from others. He was satisfied with his powerful individuality.

Usually, by making use of such abilities, people received attention. He drew envy from the world and enjoyed it: money, power, popularity, and high social status.

Everybody thought he was untouchable, and he enjoyed himself.

Jung Won-sik was very satisfied with his life, but he was also worried. Traces of past anxiety and fear lingered in his mind.

He made an unforgettable mistake when he just began the Tutorial.

[Jung Won-sik, 33rd floor: Even so, aren't you a loser? There's no chance of you clearing the Hell difficulty level anyway. Why do you all like him so much?]

It was just a childish comment. Someone else was getting attention, and Jung Won-sik was jealous that the person was considered powerful by everyone.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: I'll remember your name. I don't know how many years it'll take, but once I'm out, I'll find you.]

Jung Won-sik didn't think much when he had first seen the message. There were too many violent people whom he had met before.

The problem was the flood of messages after that.

[Jung Gi-joon, 51st floor: Get your hands off the message window right now and step back. One finger of yours will disappear after each passing moment.]

[Goo Dae-ho, 53rd floor: LOL]

[Lee Won-il, 17th floor: You're in Easy Difficulty, right? It hasn't been long since you arrived, has it?]

The people who were chatting with Jun Won-sik sent him personal messages. The content implied that Jung Won-sik had f*cked up.

He was worried because he thought he made a big mistake at that moment.

[Lee Joon-suk, 90th floor: Phew...]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: No, don't bother touching someone who's getting better.]

[Lee Chul-min, 98th floor: I came here because I heard there was a person here who wanted to kill himself in the worst way possible.]

Jung Won-sik lost contact with all the Hard difficulty challengers he knew, but he saw Lee Ho-jae as a mere challenger.

After looking back at the old writings in the community, he was sure

that Lee Ho-jae, the challenger, was a real nutcase.

Immediately, Jung Won-sik clung to Park Jung-ah, the head of the Order of Vigilance. He begged her to let him know how to relieve his anger somehow and asked her to make them reconcile.

He was brushed off.

He then contacted Kim Min-hyuk, the deputy head, but the only thing that came back was that he couldn't help him. They also asked him not to contact them as much as possible because they did not want to be involved.

After all other attempts failed, there was only one way left for Jung Won-sik.

He soothed himself. He tried to forget his mistake, reassuring himself that it would be impossible for Ho-jae to clear Hell difficulty.

Unfortunately, his mistake was not forgotten.

Lee Ho-jae proved his presence by always stinging Jung Won-sik like a thorn set firmly in his heart.

While eating, he lost his appetite, and sometimes he couldn't sleep a wink even though he was lying down in bed.

While he was having fun, he thought of Lee Ho-jae and his mood became worse.

Days passed and even years, and it had slowly reduced.

Just when he thought his memory was fading. "He came out... He really came out..."

When Lee Ho-jae appeared at Seoul Station, Jung Won-sik held his face and groaned quietly.

While he was thinking about how to get through this, Seoul Station

exploded. Jung Won-sik looked at the television for a moment, feeling puzzled, then took out his cell phone and dialed.

“Secretary Kim, please find me a ship to China.”

He was ready to go abroad. It'd be great if that monster didn't remember him, but if he did, Jung Won-sik had to hide. If he was not allowed to hide, he would use his status as an Awakened to move to another country.

He packed up his things while making plans. Night approached, and he was about to go to bed, anticipating his journey that would take place the next day.

At that moment, a split appeared in the air.

The face he had seen on TV a little while ago walked out of thin air, a sight that he couldn't believe. The man coming out had a broad smile on his face.

“I told you I was coming, you b*stard.”

* * *

“Stand up straight,” I said to the shivering b*stards.

Why can't they even stand on their hands?

“Don't shake, keep your legs straight.”

Damn it. I was supposed to beat them up.

I couldn't even touch them because I was afraid they'd die if I hit them.

“Wasn't it seven? Why are there only four now?” Hochi asked from the side.

“Three are dead.”

It's a pity. As an Awakened, there were cases of death in battle. Why'd you have to die? Y'all should have stayed alive until I came out.

While scolding the four, Kim Min-hyuk, who had been to the guild in Seoul, returned.

Kim Min-hyuk looked at me, then at the four people standing on their hands. He asked in a puzzled voice, "What is this?"

"They're the ones you gave me the addresses of earlier."

"...You already caught them?"

Of course. I could get their location in 5 seconds by searching the Internet. What a good world this was.

Kim Min-hyuk shook his head, turned away from the four, and headed for the kitchen. He seemed to be retrieving the snacks in advance.

"Ughh..."

While we were talking, one made a strange noise and fell down. Huh, you can't bear a half-hour handstand?

"Are you an Awakened?"

It was not a matter of will. They couldn't resist my order to do a handstand. So if they really collapsed, it meant their arms didn't have any strength left and couldn't support their body.

"Let me see, you... Seventh, Jung Won-sik?"

"Yes, that's right. Actually, I tried to contact you several times, but..."

When Jung Won-sik was physically unable to maintain his handstand position, he began to talk, as if he had escaped the punishment of doing a handstand. He seemed to have asked for a lot of help here and there.

Kim Min-hyuk's name was also mentioned. Kim Min-hyuk's shoulders flinched as he did something in the kitchen.

But he should contact me if he wanted to make up, why bother Kim Min-hyuk? I didn't get it.

Contrary to what he was saying, I grinned broadly. I made them sit back.

"Okay. Everybody's reflecting, right?"

Four people nodded eagerly.

I spoke in a calm voice like a kindergarten teacher would to a child. "Then from now on, don't blabber without thinking. What you say without thinking can hurt others. I was hurt, but I let it go. I'm a merciful person you see."

I heard Hochi say, "Don't spout such nonsense," but I ignored him.

"Now, since I'm done with self-reflection and punishment, I should let you go back home, right?"

Maybe because I was speaking with a smile, there was a glimmer of hope in the eyes of the four.

Ah. I think I can understand why the God of Hope goes around talking at moments like these.

"Then, time to go back home."

I clapped my hands. The shadows of the four rose and devoured their hosts.

The four men screamed as they were swallowed up by the shadow, but soon got overpowered and sank under the shadow.

"...Are you sure you sent them home?"

“That’s right. They’ll arrive in about a month.”

Though for them, it’d be as long as three years.

I let out a chuckle. “Did you like it?”

“Uhuh. Good. I’m happy. I’m extremely happy. It’s thrilling! It’s the best! Hah!”

A ten-year-old burden had been lifted off, and I threw myself on the sofa with joy.

“Hah. I loved it.”

The pleasure I received from taking revenge on those b*stards was much larger than returning to Earth.

It was refreshing. I’d been waiting for this moment for so long. I waited for this day, imagining it over and over again. I wanted to bully them myself, but they were too weak for that.

If you die easily, to whom will I show my love?

So I let them experience the same thing as me at the time.

Let them hang in there for three years without any information, no promise of when it would end.

If you come out of your right mind, I’ll admit my fault. See you in a month.

The revenge wasn’t over yet.

“Crazy man.”

That’s too harsh, haha.

Hochi commented while looking at the pages of the comic book he was reading. “You’re a hundred times worse than the villains out

here.”

“I know. I feel the same.”

I acknowledged it. I don’t know what kind of villains there were, but I was a bad guy.

“Why bother the weak? Poor things.”

“Hey, what does weakness matter? It has nothing to do with being strong and weak. They pissed a person off, so they’re paying for it. I’m fair to everyone.”

Hochi shook his head, clicking his tongue. “No wonder you’re a lunatic that’s been targeted by the gods.”

* * *

“Huh?”

“What’s wrong?”

I was in a happy mood, sitting face to face with Hochi on the sofa, when a strange situation occurred in part of Pyongyang.

One sign of life had disappeared.

“Nothing. I think Yong-yong overdid it.”

“What do you mean?” asked Kim Min-hyuk, who had been quiet.

I sent Grandma just in case anything happened, but it’s too bad.

“I think the G-class in Pyongyang is dead.”

Chapter 300

Seoul (8)

“The G-class is dead?” Kim Min-hyuk was puzzled.

“Is it normal for it to die like that?”

No, it wasn’t. If it died, it died. It couldn’t be helped.

“Joon-suk said that the G-class would be hard to handle even if you came out.”

“Lee Joon-suk?”

“Yes.”

Well... I’ll ask him myself later.

“You said the G-class in Pyongyang was a Ruler, right? What the hell is a Ruler?” Kim Min-hyuk curiously asked again.

“Well... How should I explain this?”

“You can explain it any way you want. I’ll try to understand.”

Kim Min-hyuk was intelligent when it came to matters like this.

“First of all, there are some ways to get more than a certain level of power at once.” I decided to tell him the fundamentals first. “There are two ways to do this: using a source or using faith.”

“What’s a source?”

Damn, this guy doesn’t even know the essentials. I’ll just explain the

source later.

“I think it’s a bit too complicated for you right now. I’ll explain that later. Anyway, there are ways to raise your power through source and faith.” Firstly, from the source. “There’s a way where you have to devour the source and overcome your desires.”

In most cases, the person had to have a certain level of power before devouring the source. If the Spirit King, who coveted the source’s power, devoured the source, he would be able to control it with his power without any problems.

Or the person would have to overcome their desires as I did.

“The second way is where the person will absorb the source but will get devoured by their desire. They’ll become a monster, and after eating countless lives, they can escape the hold of some desires.”

These people were called Rulers. At least, that was what they called themselves.

“So, the G-class in Pyongyang was a monster that swallowed one or two planets?”

It was probable. Of course, there might be slight variations; it may have eaten less or a bit more.

Kim Min-hyuk asked me, wanting to know more about the Ruler’s power or ability, but I was unable to answer with much.

I’d never met a Ruler. Kirikiri had made it clear that the centipede-like Ruler I saw in the Tutorial was a fake, a failure.

Also, there were cases where a Ruler could use his power and ability to become a god. This ability was challenging to express in one or two words.

“Then, what is faith?”

“It’s the same as the faith one has in religion.”

I explained about faith. Kim Min-hyuk quickly understood the concept of the sects, which appeared in the late 50th floor.

“Then, can anyone be a god?”

“No.”

I would know. One would only gain the power of faith if they reached the minimum standard. Even if ordinary humans gained the power of faith, how could they wield it?

First of all, they needed to know how to wield their powers. Kim Min-hyuk continued to ask, very keen about learning how faith compared to the source, gaining power, and what kind of power was created by faith.

Were there many kinds of faith?

“I don’t know if it’s accurate, but there are two main types of faith.”

“Two kinds?”

“Uhuh. One is the faith we normally get from others. The other is what one receives from themselves.”

One of the differences between faith and source was that the power received depends on who the being was. No matter who was being empowered, the source’s power wouldn’t change much, but faith was different.

The more faith sent by higher classes, the stronger the power. It even depended on the relationship between gods. In a way, it was natural.

A faithful believer and a believer who rarely prayed, couldn’t offer the same amount of faith.

There was no way that a superhuman, like an ordinary human, would have the same faith as a god. The God of Slowness had mentioned that there was a god that respected them. And I remember the God of Slowness telling me this fact with great pride.

How much power of faith did those who'd become gods have? It may have started with such a question.

Seregia was the one who'd first talked about faith in myself.

It was a hypothesis that Seregia had put forth when I was wondering about the power I had, even though there were no sects on the 60th floor. She believed faith in oneself could also be faith.

She said it was only one person's faith, but it wasn't directed towards anyone else. Hence, it could be a great power. And she proved her hypothesis by making me achieve my powers.

"So... what kind of power do you have?"

"Both of them. I devoured a source once, but it was taken away."

I had once got a source from the 59th floor, but I didn't retain it after clearing the floor. Of course, the power would be restored someday.

It wasn't that strong, and with my current power, it wouldn't matter much, but I couldn't just let it go.

"Are you... a... God?"

"Yep, I'm practically a God."

* * *

The Association's vehicle stood out.

Even though it was the Association's vehicle, one in charge of monster raids in the city, it was military-ready, designed to make it easy for other vehicles to recognize and move out of the way.

Lee Sung-eun, the team leader, opened the car door with her coat draped over one hand. The weather was as chilly as ever.

Inside the vehicle was the Association's combat team. Fortunately,

everyone seemed to have come except for her.

Standing beside the door, she said, “I’m sorry I’m late. Shall we leave right away?”

“Let’s wait for a little. Our youngest hasn’t come yet.”

Team leader Lee Sung-eun nodded. It wasn’t a tight deadline, and she couldn’t complain about waiting for others because she herself was late.

The warm air released from the heater made her frozen hands itch. While thinking about living a warm life, Lee Sung-eun, the team leader, found something strange.

It could be called a belated discovery. The atmosphere in the car was awful. It didn’t seem like there had been a quarrel between the team members.

It was more like they were going to a funeral home.

Oh Sang-jin, who headed the association’s three-person team, had his head down and his hands covering his face, his body still.

Team leader Lee Sung-eun was shocked to see he was crying. The other team members were also acting strangely.

Some team members held their heads against the window, others sighed, and some fiddled with their cell phones with serious faces.

She was confused. One of the team members sitting next to her said, “Please understand. Our team leader used to be in the Order of Vigilance.”

Lee Sung-eun, the team leader, wondered what the matter was and what had happened

She was going to ask what was wrong, but just in time, a team member opened the car door and came in. The team member took something out of the envelope and handed it out to them.

Lee Sung-eun also accepted.

“I’ll take one Cheongsimhwan too.”

(T/N: Cheongsimhwan is a pill one takes to calm their hearts.)

Team leader Lee Sung-eun laughed inside. It seemed ridiculous to see Oh Sang-jin, the team leader, standing up and taking a Cheongsimhwan.

Of course, they all thought about Lee Ho-jae, and it was reasonable to be nervous, considering that he was an Awakened, the strongest one.

But why were Awakened, ones who were in the combat team, scared to this extent?

The visit was not even about arresting or punishing Lee Ho-jae.

It was just to inform him of what happened at Seoul Station and its damage and ask him to be careful. It was a visit that would start with a conversation and end with a conversation.

She explained it clearly to the team members.

“So that’s the only way out, huh?” team leader Oh Sang-jin, who forgot about his Cheongsimhwan, muttered with a frown.

He asked Lee Sung-eun, “Team Leader Lee, why were we suddenly thrown into this mess?”

“What are you talking about? Thrown in?” she asked when he asked about why the team leader had thrown them into this.

What was he trying to imply?

“Oh, hell, if you don’t know,” said the team member who was sitting in the driver’s seat.

“I’m moving back to the highway. There’s a section that’s being

restored ahead,” Oh Sang-jin said, throwing the Cheongsimhwan wrappers he had in his hands into the driver’s seat.

“Don’t go.”

“Why? There’s a lot of traffic.”

“Yes, go to the place where there’s traffic. Let’s reach as late as we can.”

Looking at Oh Sang-jin, the team leader who was usually confident, waver, Lee Sung-eun felt reluctant.

The association’s vehicle left the association’s parking lot filled with anxiety

* * *

In the morning, Yong-yong and his party came home.

When asked why she had returned so late, Grandma replied that it took time to soothe Yong-yong, who had begun to cry.

I could understand.

Yong-yong’s eyes opened slowly. I didn’t know why he had cried so much. Maybe it was because he didn’t keep his promise to me.

Yong-yong tried to explain to me what happened. He seemed to be choking on tears, but he tried to keep talking till the end. I hugged his small figure.

“That’s why I hit...”

“Did you play?”

“Uhuhhh, yes...”

Yong-yong, who was withholding his tears and trying to explain,

eventually buried his face in my chest and began to cry. I hugged him tightly and patted him on the back.

“What happened to him?”

Seregia sat on the sofa, acting innocent. Naturally, my eyes turned to Grandma, but she shrugged her shoulders.

“It was too weak for me to act.”

Then there was nothing they could have done. I knew this would happen. I couldn’t even blame Yong-yong for not being able to hit humans for fear of killing them.

Of course, he was good at controlling his strength, but he couldn’t help not being able to sense how weak his opponent was.

“...Dad.”

“Yes, Yong-yong?”

“Can’t you save it?” Yong-yong questioned, pointing to the body of the monster lying on the floor.

It was a mess. Blood and impurities were all over its rough skin. Blood still leaked out, wetting the living room’s floor.

Perhaps, because it’d been so long since he’d seen such a thing, Kim Min-hyuk hardened his face and hurriedly left, under the excuse of going to the market.

“Why this again?”

Now that it was in this situation, it was easier to just absorb it.

Yong-yong didn’t answer and buried his head back in my chest. This was a total disaster.

While thinking, I reached out to the monster’s body.

“Return.”

With a bright light, the body began to move. The previously flat body swelled, and the blood on the floor floated into it.

The broken bones and ruptured muscles returned to their original place. The restored monster looked like a human with paws and wings.

“Argh! Save me!” the monster screamed as soon as it was revived.

Ah, it’s talking.

When the monster saw Yong-yong in my arms, it fell on its legs. The old lady, who was standing behind, stopped it from rushing back.

“Cute,” Yong-yong said quietly, watching the monster that kept screaming and trying to escape.

Oh my god. Yong-yong, that thing is not cute.

It resembled a normal adult woman with paws and wings. It was bizarre rather than cute. The giant centipede monster we saw last time looked more spectacular.

“Daddy, can i keep it?”

I thought about it for a while. The reason I revived it was to soothe the depressed Yong-yong and experiment with it later.

But if I gave that to Yong-yong as a gift, I couldn’t use it. I pondered on it for a while, then finally decided. “You have to raise it well.”

Yong-yong grinned cutely.

There were still tears trailing down his cheeks, but it was nice to see him smiling brightly.

“You shouldn’t let it run away or die. You have to take good care of it.

You can't harass it just because it's weak."

The monster, completely overpowered by grandmother, looked at Yong-yong and me, scared.

I resumed talking. I was already worried about Yong-yong's attitude toward humans. I was going to try to change that.

In the past, raising pets may have helped children develop emotions and social abilities.

I hoped that this would help Yong-yong.

"Oh you can't let it go wild either. You need to educate it properly."

Yong-yong nodded energetically. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but I decided to leave it to him for now.

I placed Yong-yong down on the floor, looked at Yong-yong running over to the monster, and turned to Lee Joon-suk, standing awkwardly in the corner.

"Long time no see."

"Ah, yes... Hyung, long time no see."

Lee Joon-suk stood nervously at the side of the door.

"What are you doing there? Come here, I have a lot of questions for you."

Chapter 301

Seoul (9)

Lee Jun-seok felt that at this moment, the person who was most embarrassed on Earth could not be anyone else but him.

A G-class had appeared in Pyongyang. Lee Joon-seok stayed near it to watch over it. He was the only one who could detect the G-class' moves, escape from it, and quickly inform Seoul of the news. So, Lee Joon-suk roamed near Pyongyang for several days.

He learned that Lee Ho-jae had exited the Tutorial.

The Tutorial had also halted. It was said to be one of the minor problems that occurred when Lee Ho-jae came out.

To Lee Joon-seok, no matter what Lee Ho-jae did, it wasn't weird. Even though he heard that Lee Ho-jae came out, Lee Jun-seok did not leave Pyongyang.

Lee Ho-jae was Lee Ho-jae, and the G-class was a G-class. And many people still lived near Pyongyang.

It was safe to say that most North Koreans lived in Kaesong's vicinity, which was close to the border.

In the case Lee Joon-seok wasn't present and the G-class started to move south, many people would be wiped out instantly.

Lee Joon-seok was just waiting for Lee Ho-jae to be sent here because of Kim Min-hyuk.

After hearing the news of Lee Ho-jae's appearance, Lee Joon-suk began to consider attacking the G-class.

How could he get rid of it?

The other day, he sincerely told Kim Min-hyuk that it would be hard for Lee Ho-jae to catch the G-class even if he came out. Of course, Lee Joon-seok thought that Lee Ho-jae could kill the G-class.

It would be possible if he focused only on killing the G-class. The problem was the damage that would occur in the process of killing it.

Considering the power that the G-class might have, if one made full-fledged efforts to catch it, it would create a mess, not only in Pyongyang and Seoul, but also in China.

What good would it be if all of them died to save the city's people in contact with the G-class' area in Pyongyang?

That was why Lee Jun-seok insisted on giving up Seoul more than anyone else. Just giving up part of Seoul, Gyeonggi Province, and Gangwon Province would exclude them from the G-class' area.

The G-class was famous for never going out of its area.

But Lee Ho-jae came out.

With Lee Ho-jae's personality, he wouldn't just give up on Pyongyang's G-class. He'd try to fight, somehow.

The collateral damage that took place had to be reduced as much as possible.

Lee Ho-jae probably didn't care about the damage, so Lee Joon-suk thought he had to find a way.

While flying over Pyongyang repeatedly, something flew and clung to his back. Lee Jun-seok shook his body, but what was stuck to his back refused to fall off.

"Cute!" exclaimed the being on his back.

He felt a sudden uneasiness at this surprise attack but was also curious about the young voice.

“Yong-yong, you shouldn’t do that.”

He heard another voice. It was a woman’s voice that brought a sense of coldness with it. As soon as Lee Joon-suk listened to the sound, his body cringed.

“Okay!” the young voice sounded, and whatever was stuck to his back detached.

Then he flew past Lee Joon-suk, towards Pyongyang. Lee Joon-suk’s breath hitched, and he chased after them.

Soon, he saw a body that seemed to have been squeezed out of something in the heart of Pyongyang, a crying child beside it, and a woman soothing the child.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

“Joon-seok buddy, did you say that I wouldn’t be able to catch the G-class?”

“Oh, Hyung, that’s... that’s... yeah, I did. I’m sorry! Forgive me!” Lee Joon-suk replied, squeezing his eyes shut.

When I saw him, I decided to let him go. Since he told the truth, I’d spare him this time.

Before coming in, he didn’t panic much when he saw Kim Min-hyuk and my group, maybe because he’d already experienced so much in Pyongyang.

Anyway, Lee Joon-seok did not make a fuss by saying, “What do you mean?” or “I never said that.”

It was good that he accepted it quickly.

“Joon-seok.”

“Yes, Hyung.”

I scratched my chin, looking at him, who still had an anxious look on his face.

How should I frame this? I don't know.

I decided to bluntly ask, “Why are you so weak?”

Immediately, I saw Lee Joon-suk's face shrivel up. Well, what could I do? It was the truth.

“What's your level?”

“201.”

201 was high enough. It was higher than what I had before I got stuck on the 60th floor. But it was still too weak.

“How did you level up?”

“Level up? What do you mean?”

“What level were you at before you reached level 201?”

Lee Jun-seok rolled his eyes and answered, “Of course I was at 200.”

Oh, my God. From Level 200 to Level 201?

“Then before 200?”

“That's... that was 199, of course.”

I sighed, shaking my head. In my case, my level had been stagnant

before level 100.

Then, I forgot about it, but sometimes I found that my level had gone up by 50.

Kirikiri explained that the system updated my level only after taking some time to check on my current level. However, in Lee Joon-suk's case, it seemed that it updated every time he levelled up by one.

I didn't know if I should call that stupid or great.

Level 201 would have been hard to reach, but he raised his level by repeatedly challenging the Hard Difficulty Level's 91st floor.

It was a very laborious task.

Lee Jun-seok stared at me with a puzzled look on his face, asking if something was wrong.

If you were going to do this, I wish you had asked me for advice earlier.

He had never asked me anything because he was too competitive. Thinking of his hardships, which could have gone as far as dying without even crossing level 201, I felt very sorry for him.

"Joon-suk, make some time soon."

"Yes? Okay, I will."

When I trained Hochi later, I'd let him roll around a bit with me. I knew that Lee Joon-suk was quite high-leveled.

Hochi would have an excellent teacher to observe and learn from.

[Who did you say was gonna train me?] asked Hochi, lying on the sofa reading comic books.

I ignored him. I don't think I should let that guy be alone. He needed

to have more self-confidence in this cruel world.

Kim Min-hyuk opened the door and called Lee Joon-suk as he did so. I thought he had something to say.

After telling him to go, I turned my attention to Yong-yong and the mantis-like monster.

Yong-yong was elated. He especially liked the Mantis Ruler and kept touching it here and there and staring at it.

The Ruler was struggling, looking as if it was going to die.

“Yong-yong.”

“Yes.”

“Since Yong-yong is going to raise it from now on, you should also build a house for it, right?”

Yong-yong nodded his head, his eyes sparkling at my question. “I’ll make one!” he said and ran up to his room on the second floor.

I watched his back for a moment and turned to the mantis.

“Hey, come closer.”

“Karak-Kararak!” The mantis let out beast-like noises.

“Use human language, or I’ll tear your wings off.”

“Yes.”

I had a lot of questions about this guy. First things first. “Why are you half human and half mantis? Were you originally human?”

“No, it’s not like that. I just imitate the people who live here,” it answered clearly.

It's a greenling, huh.

"Then why do you roam around with those front legs and wings?"

"This is... my identity..."

"Don't talk nonsense and switch to a human arm. I don't want to see it."

"Yes."

The front legs changed into human arms. That alone was much better to see.

Why would it take the form of a human woman and have the front legs of a mantis?

"Can I leave the wings like this...?"

"Whatever." The wings didn't matter. "I'm going to ask you a few questions from now on. Your future depends on how sincerely you answer them."

"Will you... will you let me go?"

"Of course I will. Help me, and I will save your life. I told you before. I'm going to keep you as my son's pet."

A look of despair, as if its world had collapsed, flashed on its face

I felt that, somehow, if Yong-yong kept it as a pet, it would definitely die.

* * *

I coaxed the mantis into saying that if it told me useful information, I would just let it go. Of course, that was a lie.

Filled with a desire for freedom, it began to talk excitedly.

“Ah, so, you’re the one who went nuts in America a few years ago?”

“Yes.”

There were so many weird things about the G-class that had appeared in the U.S.

It had appeared in the waters of the city area, and there weren’t any traces of monster or human bodies left after the eradication.

Only that the U.S had announced that they had succeeded in the task.

The U.S might have actually compromised with the monster, or secretly brought out nuclear missiles, and the Awakened were actually killed by the atomic effects, and not the monster.

Or there wasn’t any G-class monster there in the first place. Such theories were also heard in the Tutorial.

However, listening to the mantis, the situation at the time was entirely right. It said that it came to its senses when it was on the eastern coast of the U.S.

It was in the middle of the sea, with numerous fleets and Awakened men around it. I remembered the centipede-like monster I had seen on the 80th floor.

The monster had achieved ‘completion’ on the spot after eating the mana thrown by Yong-yong and Hochi.

This one had also devoured a lot, and it seemed to have reached ‘completion’ during the battle, as a result of eating the Awakened and the U.S. Navy.

“Then?”

“I came back. I was just reborn, so I felt dizzy when this all happened.”

Supposedly, the mantis, which had been near the eastern coast of the U.S, had been living among humans.

It had lived a rather hectic life.

“You didn’t think to go find the other Rulers?”

“Ugh... Ugh... Don’t say that. Why would I go find them? To get eaten?”

Ah, right. The mantis was a newborn Ruler. There were many who wanted more power.

“The gods can’t come here, and the Rulers can’t either. So I was stuck on this planet. I tried to live quietly.”

And if possible, you’d build up your strength little by little, right?

I understood. For it, the Earth must have been a perfectly safe haven.

“How do you know about gods or Rulers?”

“I remember the time when I was a monster.”

It said that it had memories of the days when it was a monster. When I asked about the other Rulers that pushed themselves into this planet;

“It’s akin to dropping soldiers all over the enemy camp in a mobile game, just that there are few monsters like me. All contributed in creating chaos. Even before monsters became Rulers, it was hard for them to be killed with the power of the Earthlings.”

This was helpful. We could figure out how the Rulers managed and spread out their troops, and where their meeting place was.

The mantis’s value had increased in my eyes.

“Ah, that’s right. I used that thing too. The gate-generating item I got last time,” Hochi, who was listening from the side, added in. Hochi

had been happily targeting the 89th floor, which was meant for the management of the dungeon as a servant to a Ruler.

The mantis, which suddenly grew still, widened its eyes at Hochi's words.

"...oho, are you a Ruler too?"

Hochi ignored the mantis's words. I had a more important question than that. "Do you have a cell phone?"

It had just talked about mobile games.

"Of course. How could I live among humans without a cell phone?"

"Well... Give it to me."

The mantis was worried about its cellphone, but after I threatened it a bit, it meekly handed it over to me.

"...Password." It unlocked the cell phone and handed it back to me again. As soon as I got the cell phone, I went to the phone book.

There were many names listed in it.

[Kim Jeong-dam]

[Jang Taeggi]

[Hwang Jeong-cheol]

Maybe because it had been in Pyongyang, there were many Korean names. English names and Chinese names were also present.

Among them, I found a familiar name.

[Park Min]

I'd seen this name before. I was retracing my memory to recollect whose name it was, when the doorbell rang.

Ding-Dong!

The people who had been wandering around the place for a while seemed to have finally hit the doorbell. They hadn't come in and had just walked around, so I thought they were sent to monitor my movements.

But that wasn't so.

Kim Min-hyuk, who was talking to Lee Joon-suk in the kitchen, approached the intercom. He grabbed the receiver, spoke for a moment, and then pressed a button to open the gate.

"Who is it?"

"Uh, it's those kids from the Association's side. I think they came here because of the Seoul Station incident."

Chapter 302

Seoul (10)

“Is this the name of the Association’s President?”

“Yes!”

The mantis didn’t stop its explanation, even when people from the Association had arrived.

Instead, it explained more desperately, since it thought that the time allotted for speaking would be reduced. It talked about how it met him and what talks and deals they had made.

“Well...”

It didn’t come as a surprise that the mantis wasn’t attached to humans. From all the information I received from Kirikiri, and from the stages, I confirmed, multiple times, that this was normal.

If there was a good chance of success, all humans would be willing to do business with Rulers. For the sake of their own safety, humans would even sell their families and countries. There was no way that the mantis wouldn’t do the same.

Furthermore, they were intelligent beings and didn’t feel bound by human society or rules. They felt threatened here on Earth, where only humans existed.

It was more or less natural. Anyway, the mantis’s value increased once more in my mind. This bug was pretty smart, eloquent, and well-versed. It was a considerably good pet for Yong-yong.

Regardless of whether I was listening or not, the mantis continued gossiping beside me.

Soon, the people of the Association arrived in the living room. The mantis stared at them as if telling them to go away.

Its mouth was still at work, whispering nonsense. I sent a blow to its head for scaring the people needlessly.

“Ow.”

“I’ll listen to you later, so don’t worry and wait.”

* * *

There were five people from the Association: team leader Oh Sang-jin, four members under him, and Lee Sung-eun.

They looked at the woman kneeling on the floor of the living room with doubtful eyes, but no one explained what she was doing.

(T/N: It’s the mantis, but in human form. In case you didn’t realise xD)

The two team leaders came forward as representatives to introduce themselves.

Lee Ho-jae asked Kim Min-hyuk, who was also listening to the introduction, “Hey, who’s Park Min? Is he the Park Min I know?”

Lee Ho-jae’s question confused Kim Min-hyuk. This man never had any interest in anyone.

Does he not remember the name of the first challenger who cleared the Tutorial?

Park Min was a challenger who had been supported by the entire Order of Vigilance. In fact even Lee Ho-jae had once given Park Min potions and equipment.

Park Min was a famous challenger, not only because of the support he had. He cleared the Tutorial and became even more famous.

There was no one in Korea who didn't know his name except for the man sitting on the couch.

Why in the world is he asking who Park Min is?

People from the Association had come to say hello.

When Kim Min-hyuk turned his head to the side, his eyes fell on the people from the Association. He tried his best to mask his embarrassment.

Kim Min-hyuk quickly talked about Park Min because he could understand how they felt.

He was the first Korean challenger to clear the Tutorial, and now he was the president of the Korean Awakened Association.

“Oh, right. That was him.”

Lee Ho-jae looked at the mantis. Seeing that, Kim Min-hyuk decided to come forward and introduce the people of the Association. He introduced team leader Lee Sung-eun and Oh Sang-jin again.

Lee Ho-jae raised a question that arose in his mind after hearing the team leader's introduction Oh Sang-jin. “You were in the Order of Vigilance?”

Oh Sang-jin was a former member, so he was so nervous before and looked so scared at this moment.

He was from the Order of Vigilance.

“But why aren't you with the others? Why go to the Association?” Lee Ho-jae asked casually.

Kim Min-hyuk began to feel the same sting of pain from a little while ago. Within the Tutorial, the Order of Vigilance had a special position.

In its early days, the Order of Vigilance had almost the same influence

as the national government. There were many reasons why people did not protest much against them.

First was because of Lee Ho-jae's strength. The second was because the Order of Vigilance tried to keep the order somehow. The third was because they tried to help people rather than hurt them.

The last reason was that there was no way to protest against them. No one would gain anything by rebelling.

The Tutorial was a place where people could not gather except for special circumstances, such as tournaments. For the people there, the society wasn't the entire Tutorial, but the waiting room in which they all were sent before clearing a floor.

Unless any individual was forced to do something irrational, there was no need to rebel against the Order of Vigilance. It was unrelated to any individual.

It was the Order of Vigilance members who were unhappy with the Order of Vigilance's dominance. They argued they could do more with their influence and power. And some tried to place themselves as the leader of the Order of the Vigilance, even though it was impossible to do so.

Splitting and independence attempts took place in the Order many times. There was once a time when such a situation lasted a while. However, under the influence of this independent group, people's discontent followed.

Compared to the Order of Vigilance, which provided goods almost free of charge and didn't interfere unless someone committed a crime, the new independent groups forced people to pay, interfered with one thing or another, and abused their power.

Naturally, a decision had to be made on the day of Great Harmony.

The independent groups soon admitted defeat. They remembered the independent group's members who were beaten like dogs on the day of Great Harmony.

Even before Lee Ho-jae entered the meeting, they had surrendered and reached an agreement with the leaders of the Order of Vigilance.

Team leader Oh Sang-jin belonged to such a group. For that reason, he did not return to the Order of Vigilance, and even after coming to Earth, he stayed in Korea, away from those who were part of the Order of Vigilance.

After surrendering, team leader Oh Sang-jin once spent time with Lee Ho-jae in a small tent.

Of course, the atmosphere had been far from harmonious. He was punished and experimented with until the end of the day of Great Harmony.

At that time, Lee Ho-jae was just getting a clue about the mana circuit on the sixth floor.

Naturally, the subject of the experiment was human anatomy. The experiment had not been carried out by cutting open Oh's body.

Lee Ho-jae made an incision on his body and wanted to visually check the reactions of the surrounding muscles and nerves when mana flowed.

Oh Sang-jin's only role was to check Lee Ho-jae's back's reactions and inform Lee Ho-jae. Of course, there was no physical pain for Oh Sang-jin, but mentally, he had a painful time.

Even Kim Min-hyuk did not know about this. And Lee Ho-jae himself did not remember it. Team Leader Lee Sung-eun, who came with him, did not know either. The same went for the members of his team.

It was a traumatic moment of the past that only team leader Oh Sang-jin remembered. Thanks to that, when team leader Oh Sang-jin sat on the couch facing Lee Ho-jae, he shivered without making eye contact.

Sometimes the team members whispered and tapped on his shoulder, asking if he was okay, but Oh Sang-jin was frozen from shock, and couldn't respond.

Regardless, team leader Lee Sung-eun firmly did what she had to do. She talked about what happened at Seoul Station and listed the aggregated damage.

There had been numerous casualties and property losses. After getting a stern warning, the listening party said it would never happen in the future.

Finally, she made it clear that this was only the Association's decision. If the government tried to punish Lee Ho-jae, the Association would ignore the principle that the Awakened would defend him and would no longer be involved.

Considering how many times they had heard about the incident at Seoul Station through the news and heard from team leader Oh Sang-jin in the car about how crazy Lee Ho-jae was, it was a reckless move.

However, Lee Sung-eun thought she should still deliver what she had to say. And there was also a difference in Lee Sung-eun and Oh Sang-jin's perceptions.

Team Leader Lee Sung-eun saw the burned Seoul Station but also knew there had been no actual deaths. All who had been taken to the intensive care unit survived in the end.

Lee Sung-eun thought that Lee Ho-jae was a reckless person, but he was not a crazy person who killed people. Team leader Oh Sang-jin thought Lee Ho-jae was the world's craziest person.

That was the difference.

"Hmm..."

So when Lee Ho-jae held his chin in one hand and hummed under his breath, their actions were different.

Lee Sung-eun calmly waited for Lee Ho-jae's answer while Oh Sang-jin quickly got off the couch and knelt on the floor.

"I have nothing to do with the Association! I resigned already!"

It was an instant reply.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

“I have nothing to do with the Association. P-please, save me...”

Why are you asking me to save your life?

Oh, he probably has a story for this. The stories of those who came from the Association were not significant.

It would have been just another boring story. I felt that we should end our conversation here.

“Team Leader Oh Sang-jin, what are you doing?!”

“First of all, you need to go back home.” I jumped up from the couch and sent the screaming man home.

The Association members sprang up in surprise, but I gestured to them to sit down again. But they didn’t sit back, so I forced them to sit down.

“Hey, what did you do?” asked Kim Min-hyuk from the side.

What do you mean?

“I told you. I sent him back home.”

“...You knew where his house was?”

I didn’t know. But he did.

Following the reverberation of his powers, I found the location of the man I just sent back.

He was in an ordinary house in Seoul. I wondered if he had reached safely, but when I heard him faintly talking to someone in his home, I guessed that he had been sent to his house.

“I did a good job, don’t worry.”

I looked at the people from the Association, who were now one less in number.

To be honest, he should have said anything but that he had nothing to do with the Association. That was just nonsense.

(Note: In case you don’t understand Hojae meant; He meant Oh- Sangjin should not have said he that he had nothing to do with the association as he obviously did)

“I have a favor to ask.”

“I will do my best,” one of the men said in a quivering voice.

Of course, I knew he was scared, but somehow I felt embarrassed. People were watching us, and it was a bit weird to be treated like this in public.

“Well, I’ll be grateful, anyway. You don’t have to do it.”

It felt like a burden, and I hated it.

“All you have to do is deliver a message. To your Association’s President.”

The man who had joined hands with a G-class had to be dealt with. Of course, the G-class was kneeling next to the couch.

I had to double-check the facts it had said from the Association’s President.

“First of all, I’ve already dealt with Pyongyang’s G-class.”

Next to me, Kim Min-hyuk whispered, “Don’t you think it would be better to let them know about it later?”

But I ignored him. It didn’t matter much.

“And tell the President that if he wants to see its face, he’ll have to come here.”

Saying that Pyongyang’s G-class had been dealt with would instill the idea that their deal may have been revealed.

“Lastly, if he dares to run away, tell him I’ll catch him.”

Chapter 303

Seoul (11)

After the talk, the Association members were sent out.

“Is it fine to do it like this?”

“Nothing can be undone.”

I’d said everything I wanted to, and I sent them out because I had nothing more to say.

“No, I was talking about Park Min.”

That didn’t matter either. There was no need to talk about it anymore. I was going to be the one to judge and punish.

It wasn’t urgent, so I let him come and find me himself. Park Min had only two options: find a new way to deal with the mantis or come here in fear.

The former would be good if he could figure out something new, and the latter, he’d just have to deal with it.

“What about the government? You made that mess in the middle of the city yesterday,” asked Hochi.

When Hochi, who usually had no interest in such things, asked this question, I was a little surprised.

“From the novel I’m reading, I got to know that the government would usually explode at times like this.”

“What kind of novel is that?”

Hochi replied that this happened in almost every novel like a cliché.

Kim Min-hyuk explained, “Maybe they won’t act right away. Arresting the Awakened who committed a crime usually requires cooperation from the Association.”

This meant that the government’s count of Awakened was low.

Their army was inadequate to subdue the rebellious Awakened in the heart of the city.

Come to think of it, the fact that the Association said it wouldn’t intervene between the government and me meant that it could ignore the government’s request.

The man I sent home earlier was brave.

He had a good story to present to others. He could say anything he wanted without worrying about me getting angry since the government didn’t bind him.

“The judiciary will discuss punishment. But it’s impossible for the decision to be enforced. There’s no way the police can move alone. Maybe they will come up with a reasonable compromise.”

Instead of just letting me go for the Seoul Station incident, they would ask me a few things like trying to get me into pro-government groups.

Kim Min-hyuk explained some of his theories. They were plausible.

“It’s gonna take a while for them to get moving, regardless.”

“Right. They have to gather opinions internally and reach an agreement. You’ll have to pay attention to the media and the public to check on the situation.”

Then there was nothing bothersome left now. That was a relief.

“It’s been years since the Awakened had the power in their hands, and

the government is used to compromising one way or another, so they won't come up with an absurd proposal. They have brains, and they know what an angry Awakened can do. Of course, even if they come up with a reasonable offer, you..."

"I don't care."

Kim Min-hyuk mumbled, "Yes, that's where the problem will arise."

It wouldn't be a big problem.

"The first thing you'll have to worry about is the public."

Kim Min-hyuk had explained the Korean citizens' situation. Protests and public criticism of the Awakened had intensified.

"Thanks to me, it's going to be a little quiet."

"...Isn't it just getting worse?"

"Of course. You can be mad at a dog who's supposed to be guarding the house for not doing what it was supposed to do. But if the dog grows out of control and doesn't recognize people, you'll be scared before getting angry."

Kim Min-hyuk nodded with an impressed look.

"Even though you said dog metaphorically, it suits you."

This b*stard.

"But we still have to do something. You can't just turn your back on the people." Kim Min-hyuk said firmly.

As he said, we must solve the problems of the public. Leaving them as they are would be a loss in one way or another.

What should we do? I wondered if there was some creative idea, but as always, nothing came to mind.

It would be better to go along with the most common way—the most frequently used method on the 61st floor.

“Announce it to the people. I’ll cure them of any disease. Just 30 people a month on a first-come, first-serve basis. Oh, even if they’re dead, I can still save them.”

First-come, first-serve, regardless of the severity of the disease.

“...Is this possible? Did you bring any Elixirs?”

Of course, I had some. But it wasn’t meant to be used here. Even without Elixirs, I could cure human diseases. I am a god after all

Kim Min-hyuk, who had been thinking over my proposal for a while, asked in an anxious tone, “What if there’s backlash?”

Kim Min-hyuk talked about many plausible cases. If I continued being good, I knew what would happen.

People may blame me for not treating more people even though I had the ability. Besides, there may be those in power who want to ignore the first-come-first-serve order. There was no room for trouble.

I heard Kim Min-hyuk’s explanation, but I didn’t think it would be a big problem.

Volunteers who helped others out of goodwill were often treated as servants.

Humans are those who have become social through relationships, and a service done from goodwill could always reverse this relationship, making the receiver arrogant.

But that was the story of the powerless. Unfortunately, people couldn’t ask me for anything.

I’d already proven my strength by clearing Hell difficulty level and burning Seoul Station. And I would continue to show more.

People would know. Naturally, I didn't need to prove my power. Of course, there would be many desperate people. Some may beg for mercy and some may be enraged for their relatives who were about to die.

But as long as I gave priority to solidifying my relationship with them rather than giving credit to their desperation, there wouldn't be any change in our relationship.

Instead, their desperation was my power.

"Their resentment could be big enough to cover everything."

Kim Min-hyuk kept trying to make me understand the consequences of the deprivation and anger of those who couldn't make it to the first come, first serve.

I didn't ignore it because I didn't understand it. Of course, the resentment would be enormous.

It wasn't bad to be the center of the gossip. Helping isn't something that goes unnoticed.

If the topic heated up, it would naturally lead to mudslinging. Each side would argue and criticize the other's opinions.

It would be enough for me to stay out of the mud. Of course, the question of why I won't save everyone even though I could would still remain.

I had a reasonable answer for that.

'You do not have faith in me.'

That was a fantastic answer.

With that answer, I could classify me and every other human being differently, and bind all humans.

I could pass on the fault to people.

There would be many who criticize me. The more desperate they are, the more they regard me as their only hope, and the more they sanctify me and protect me.

The explosion at Seoul Station would also turn into a symbolic event that meant something, and not just my whim.

An ignorant man fills his ignorance with his imagination, and soon, he assumes it to be the truth.

“What should I do with this? Huu...”

Kim Min-hyuk eventually gave up persuading me. Instead, he seemed to be brainstorming how to deal with this matter.

“In the second month, you’ll be healing the 31st person first, right?”

“No.”

Of course not.

“In the second month, we’ll ask for thirty people again. On a first-come-first-serve basis.”

“...then the 31st person from the first month?”

A bummer for them.

The waiting list cannot be extended to the following month. If the waiting list got too long, people would stop struggling for salvation and dismiss it as someone else’s business.

The feelings that would appear wouldn’t be desperation, but jealousy and loathing. Every month, everyone should be able to participate and have expectations.

“...No matter how much I think about it, that’s crazy. Wouldn’t it be

better to do a raffle instead of first come, first serve? It'll be a real mess if we do it like that. Whether it be online or offline."

It would be a mess, yes.

"The selection itself will be difficult. Hundreds, thousands of people are coming in in a second, so how can we decide the order? If there's anything else we can do..."

"Let's draw."

Let's just go do a lottery. I'd have to sort out the order of people every month myself. That would be annoying.

"This should be enough."

At this rate, faith would naturally grow when left alone.

My power and symbolism were enough, and the method of transfer would be the miraculous act of healing.

I would be left alone but would also get faith.

When faith and a connection with believers get established, a religion would be built by giving rewards and care to some believers, as long as I show my presence and powers a few times.

It wasn't difficult. It was only a matter of time, after all. If you spend a lot of effort, it will settle down quickly, and if you spend less, it will only take a little longer.

Religion was what humans built after all.

All the gods had to do was prepare a story that would be the foundation of their religion.

It was amazingly easy to ignore the problem of time, although I had felt it several times on the 61st floor.

And of course, there's no god who was pressed for time. That's why even those monsters became gods and ran wild.

After talking to Kim Min-hyuk, I saw the mantis quietly kneeling beside me.

Perhaps because of me telling it to be quiet when the association had arrived, it remained silent even after the people left.

Would this mantis become a god on Earth if it had a bit more time?

Perhaps it was because of this that it had decided to live among humans and get used to life on Earth.

"Mantis."

"Yes! Shall I tell you how I met with the president of the Association?" the mantis asked me as if I had waited to hear this.

"Why did you have mantis forearms and wings?"

It had a human figure, even if it was mimicking Earthlings. Why had it been half-human and half-mantis again?

"Were you originally a mantis?"

"No, I liked mantises."

"In what way?"

What's good about mantises?

"Daddy! It's ready!"

As we were talking, Yong-yong was coming down the stairs from the second floor. I glanced to see if he had prepared the mantis' house.

"I saw it in the grass, and the female mantis..."

Yong-yong, who was approaching, quickly hit the mantis on the back of its head.

* * *

I had already dug up all the information about Rulers from the mantis. Then I handed the mantis over to Yong-yong.

Yong-yong had prepared a small bug box from back when he did his elementary school vacation homework.

It had strings that let him hang it around his neck. When Yong-yong opened the box, it sucked up the mantis like a squeezed plastic bottle would suck air.

It was a box with all kinds of protective effects on the walls, making the mantis' body smaller by spatial distortion and forced transformation.

It was handy.

Smaller than a miniature piece, the mantis slammed the walls and shouted from the inside of the box.

“You told me I’d be let free! I gave you all the information! It was valuable information!”

It shouted, but it only sounded like a mosquito buzzing, either because its body became smaller or because the box dampened the noise.

Still, I decided to answer.

“Oh, sorry, I lied.”

The information given by the mantis was useful. To be honest, it was more useful than I had expected.

But I didn’t want to let it go. Yong-yong would be sad.

The mantis jumped and shouted with a shocked look, “How could a god lie like this?!”

“Oh, but I can.”

My divinity had little to do with honesty. If necessary, I was willing to get beat up or even humiliated.

Chapter 304

Seoul (12)

“A god must not lie!” the mantis shouted.

How did it know about the gods? It was a monster until recently.

I asked.

“I heard what the Ruler said!”

I see. I got it.

“Why can’t gods lie?”

“Every moment of life after ascending to the throne is proof of one’s divinity.”

It was natural, huh? If one didn’t do that in the first place, they wouldn’t even gain divinity. Oh, was this an exception for a monster-turned-Ruler?

“You shouldn’t go against your words because every action and word has its own will. You shouldn’t say anything that goes against yourself, especially lies. It was said that divinity accumulates slowly, and if you made a mistake, the divinity could even collapse. It’s different from the days when there was no cost for this.”

When he narrated the story, I realised I knew it well.

It was a true story. What the mantis had said was a long explanation about a god’s faith in himself. It was common for a person to betray their values or conscience for petty gains.

It was typical of humans. Humans always cheated and put on masks. It

wasn't a bad thing, though. If they acted within limits, it was all fine.

But it was not the same for gods. A slip of the tongue that humans could just let go of was fatal to a god.

If the act completely contradicted one's own divinity, it was even more fatal. For example, the God of Duels cannot engage in cowardice for no reason. It was simply unacceptable for him.

Such behavior was intolerable, and if he did so, some of the divinity he had built up so far would vanish.

Because of a god's characteristics, being able to become a god was considered a matter of great prestige.

A god's behavior and treatment were predictable.

If one goes beyond knowing divinity and gets hold of the concept of being a god, their knowledge will know no bounds.

I wondered which Ruler the mantis knew. I assumed it to be a young god who had just gained divinity. A new god made sure to defend one's divinity and make it increase.

The gods who obsessively tried to stick to the meaning of divinity were relatively low-level gods. They seemed to constrain their own behavior to how they interpreted divinity.

The higher gods did not—like the God of Hope.

During a conversation with me, the God of Hope said that he was hope. Even among the gods, there was a difference in their attitude toward divinity.

Perhaps that proved the difference in the cost.

(T/N: Cost referring to cost of losing divinity, might be less or more depending on their indifference.)

“By all means, a god shouldn’t tell lies! It’s true! You’ll get in trouble if you ignore it! You must keep your promise!”

“Yes, but not me.”

My divinity had nothing to do with honesty.

It didn’t matter if I changed my words and actions for my benefit. After all, as long as I had faith in whatever I did, it wouldn’t matter if I lied.

On the contrary, deceiving the enemy was beneficial in gaining the light of divinity, not a loss.

I tapped on the wall of the box. Like a goldfish in a fishbowl, the mantis fell in shock.

“For your information, making fun of others like this doesn’t matter to me.”

Instead, it was a win. I chuckled at the sight of the fallen mantis.

“Ahhhh! Too cruel!”

The mantis remained in its fallen position, shaking its legs, screaming in anger and frustration.

What do you mean, too cruel? I just had fun.

* * *

Yong-yong prepared a lot for the mantis.

He had briefly returned to his room after putting the mantis in the box. Then, he came down with a bunch of junk.

I think those were the items that Kim Min-hyuk had brought to where we lived, but Yong-yong must have remodeled them.

“This is a water bottle and a rice bowl. A rocking chair, bed, and desk.”

It looked like the furniture in our flat had been shrunk for this purpose. The box now looked like a miniature dollhouse.

Yong-yong created a habitable environment inside the box. Sadly, the box did not have a plumbing system.

“And here’s the bathroom.”

All the furniture was modern, except for the bathroom where you couldn’t even flush. He only had the sand to put in a small teacup.

Was it good to act like a cat and cover bad things up with sand?

“...How shameful,” the mantis sat down and muttered.

Yong-yong was surprised. He apologized and promised to make a proper toilet.

I had no choice but to say sarcastically, “What’s shameful? What’s shameful is guy who doesn’t even sh*t?”

This guy was not a human being. Although it looked like a human being, it was a monster whose physiological processes could be ignored.

It was also questionable whether there were any physiological processes occurring in him in the first place.

“Cheap! If you’re gonna be cheap, I can be cheap too!” the evil mantis spoke in vain.

I looked into the box for a moment and got up from my seat. “Now, shall we start?”

“Can’t we just stay a little longer?” Kim Min-hyuk stopped me when I was about to go.

We sent the visitors back, and I had heard enough information from the mantis.

The mantis in the box was a Ruler to some extent.

It was time to start again.

“Please...”

“Why?”

“Move a bit more slowly. Please give me some time to rest.”

When I saw Kim Min-hyuk’s haggard appearance, I wanted to ask if he had something to do, but I kept my mouth shut.

Why was he so tired in just a day? Was there so much to clean up?

“You’re going to catch another G-class in a day? We have to get permission from the authorities before we go. Then there’s raid procedures, evacuation orders...”

His explanation continued.

“It’s alright. You don’t have to do that.”

I didn’t need it.

Kim Min-hyuk replied with a sigh, “As a result, I’ll have more work to do. I’m not telling you not to go. I’m telling you to slow down. Hey, go eat lunch.”

Kim Min-hyuk tried to stop me, but I ignored him.

Why would I need lunch?

“I’ll eat lunch.” Seregia poked Kim Min-hyuk’s side with her finger.

I thought she had been in Grandma's hand in the form of a sword.
When had she reverted to a human?

"You're not coming?"

Seregia nodded. I could feel her willingness to go on strike if I tried to take her away. I decided to leave Seregia. If I needed Seregia, I could just summon her.

"Then, just give Seregia lunch. I'll be right back."

"You returning late is not a problem. I'd rather you take your time..."
Kim Min-hyuk said bitterly, tearing his hair out.

Oh, come to think of it, there were some things I wanted to ask Kim Min-hyuk before he left.

"What is it?"

"Please secure a gate nearby. I've got something to do with the remodeled gate."

"...Huh?"

Kim Min-hyuk looked at the ceiling with a desperate look on his face.

I'm sorry, but I have one more favor to ask.

"And I don't know exactly where, but there are some guys who sell my name on the Gangwon-do."

"...Ah, them?"

"You know?"

Kim Min-hyuk seemed to know who I was talking about, which was unexpected.

"There are some sellers in the countryside who sell Awakened names.

Of course, I've heard of those who sell your name."

"Please call them here, too."

"By when?"

"As soon as possible."

Kim Min-hyuk had mixed expressions on his face, but he nodded.

On the surface, he was showing that he didn't want to, but I knew he would do as I asked.

"Ah, we should also announce the capture of the Pyongyang G-class. It bothers me when the tough guys try to take the praise first."

Revenge was easy, but it was annoying to change people's perceptions.

"I've already taken care of that. There was a piece of breaking news earlier. It'll come out when you turn on the news, do you want to check it out?"

"No," I answered Kim Min-hyuk and looked at my party.

Grandma and Old Man were in the subspace. I wouldn't have to take the two.

Of course, Yong-yong would follow me.

"Hochi."

"Yeah?"

"Come with us."

Hochi turned his head for a moment and then turned back to the novel he held in his hand.

For some reason, the actions of Seregia, who was sitting at the table waiting for lunch, and Hochi, who was silently protesting, seemed to overlap.

Was it just me, or were the two getting closer?

“Hey, you should go.”

“Why?”

“You know dungeons well.”

Unlike the mantis in the box, the G-class that I was going to visit was a proper one, which meant that there was a high probability that it was in a dungeon, making use of the Earth’s source.

And Hochi knew this type of dungeon well.

He practically cleared the 89th floor himself, where dungeons were the central theme.

Although Yong-yong helped, he only liked to decorate the dungeon and collect subordinates. He had little interest in managing the dungeon.

“If that’s the case, I’ll go. Ha.”

Hochi flipped his novel over and stood up with a haughty smile.

He seemed inwardly pleased.

I watched the scene and thought perhaps there was a good reason why Hochi was always unwilling to do anything.

I had always demanded that he should become stronger faster. I’d been driving him up the wall.

“Why are you so slow?”

Even if Hochi showed a growth rate above mine at that time, I would not have been satisfied and would have wanted him to do even better.

I was also on the edge of a cliff.

But the memories of my immoral acts would remain with Hochi.

That's why I wondered if Hochi wasn't excited about learning something new.

Come to think of it, Hochi didn't know what he was good at compared to Yong-yong or me. [1]

Of course, there must be something that Hochi was good at. Maybe he was good at more things than me.

But I didn't know what it was, and I hadn't even thought to look into it.

"What? What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

As expected, parenting was difficult. I decided to think about this problem later. It had randomly come to my mind, but it was not something to be taken lightly.

"Can't you let me go?!" the mantis in the box raised its hand and asked.

"No."

"Please!"

You can't ask me to do that.

I grabbed the box and shook it up and down.

"Urghhhh."

Inside, the mantis flew, hitting the walls, ceiling, and floor. While I was teasing it, Yong-yong grabbed onto the box.

Then he looked at me with a grim look on his face. “You can’t just bully it because it’s weak.”

Uh...

That was what I had said to Yong-yong earlier, allowing him to raise the mantis. I had nothing left to say, so I apologized to Yong-yong.

I apologized to the mantis, too.

Note/s

[1]: Yong-Yong’s specialty being the cause and effect thing back at the tournament (still quite not sure whether he manipulated cause and effect or time), not sure what Hojae’s is maybe the whole having faith in yourself thing?

Chapter 305

Antarctica (1)

It was a cool place. Antarctica, where white floors stretched till the horizon, was refreshing to look at.

The bright blue sky above was beautiful. Compared to Seoul, the view here was pretty good. The clean air was also a plus. The temperature was low, so I regretted not bringing Grandma.

She would have liked it if she came. I debated whether I should summon her here.

“It’s around here. Hyung, I could feel its power from here. It was so strong I didn’t approach,” Lee Joon-suk said.

Kim Min-hyuk sent Lee Joon-suk with me, saying he didn’t need him.

Honestly, Lee Joon-suk was just a burden, but I brought him here because he said he had been to Antarctica a few times.

The G-classes lived in desolate and remote places.

Among them, the most famous habitat of the G-class was none other than Antarctica.

Kim Min-hyuk recommended this place because there was no need to issue an evacuation order since there weren’t any people.

Perhaps, because Lee Joon-suk said it was nearby, monsters flocked around us. Of course, the G-class wasn’t among them.

To be more exact, they were mobs.

“It’s a good idea to spread monsters like that around the dungeon. The

disadvantage is that the dungeon's location will be exposed, but that doesn't matter if it was already known anyways. First of all, they'll act as a guard against intruders, then every time those monsters die you are notified at the center of the dungeon, so you can prepare to fight against the intruder in advance," Hochi remarked.

I hadn't even asked. This guy sure was excited.

Yong-yong, who was next to him, praised Hochi, saying, "Uncle, that's great!"

My son was so kind. Hochi grinned as if he was pleased with the praise. He wanted to smile coolly, but the corners of his mouth twitched excitedly.

Hochi continued to explain, "It set up a barrier. It's expensive, but it's a good bargain."

Hochi's behaviour was funny, but I decided not to laugh and earnestly listen.

It wasn't that I needed to know information, but I didn't want to cut off Hochi, who was passionately explaining it.

"It's not a barrier that prevents us from realising that the dungeon is here, but one that instills fear and anxiety in us, so that we won't come any closer."

Upon hearing Hochi's words, Lee Joon-suk spoke up, "So what you're saying is that we aren't just dealing with the monster, but also with the dungeon?"

Hochi nodded in confirmation. I was surprised that Lee Joon-suk knew about the dungeon. So, I asked him.

"I've been in dungeons in the Hard level a few times. It was a dungeon-target stage, but I thought it was just a game configuration type stage, so I just let it go..."

Interesting.

In Hard difficulty, there was a stage targeting dungeons. It had a simple, clear goal of overthrowing and attacking.

However, in Hell difficulty, there was a stage where we had to run the dungeon ourselves. Of course, it may mean that I should experience the opposite side to overthrow it easily.

Through running the dungeon, the Hell Difficulty challenger would learn how to get through the dungeon and why the Rulers wanted it.

Indeed, there was a wide gap between Hell and other difficulty levels. They provided a different direction for the challenger to grow.

Anyway, that wasn't a matter to be concerned about, right now.

Lee Joon-suk had also cleared the stage where the Dungeon appeared, so it seems that there would be no more halting.

I'm glad I brought him here.

"Then, shall we go in?"

"Yes?"

Ignoring Lee Jun-seok's question, I waved my hand in the air to break the spatial barrier.

The empty barrier distorted like broken glass, and soon, the hidden space appeared. The entrance to the dungeon began to appear.

"What the hell is this..." Lee Joon-suk murmured.

What do you mean? It's a barrier.

While watching Lee Jun-seok's confused appearance, one question came to mind.

Why does he know so little?

“Why didn’t you become an apostle?”

If he became an apostle, he could have known something.

“You told me not to become one.”

What a simple man.

There may be other reasons, but right now, this was the most satisfying answer.

“Good job.”

While Lee Joon-suk answered my question, the space distortion finished. The entrance to the dungeon was completely exposed.

“Well, that was not a very good choice.”

“Why?” I asked Hochi.

“This type of entrance is not recommended. It’s less durable and won’t scare the intruder. But that doesn’t mean that it would make the intruder careless either.”

The entrance to the dungeon was reminiscent of an ancient Greek temple.

It seemed to be marble, and the polished walls and intricate decorations showed its careful construction.

However, it was not an entrance that would draw ridicule or carelessness from its opponent.

The overly beautiful appearance would make intruders nervous.

“It made a palace.”

The dungeon that Hochi knew had a constant stream of enemies, but there were no intruders in this Antarctic dungeon.

Sometimes a guy like Lee Joon-suk would appear, wandering around the valley, beating back a nearby monster. But that was it.

So it didn't care much about the intruders.

"Hmm."

I didn't like it. I couldn't believe I was stuck with finding Rulers, gates, and monsters around the world, causing confusion and preparing to suck up the energy of my home planet.

My stomach felt upset for no reason.

"Let's go in."

"Can you leave me here?!" asked the mantis in the box around Yong-yong's neck.

"No."

"I'll stay at the house from earlier! I won't run away and will stay still!"

"No."

The mantis sat down, eyes filled with tears.

Yong-yong saw that and apologized to it. "Don't worry. If anything happens, I'll protect you."

I was pleased to see Yong-yong speaking kindly, but on the other hand, I was also anxious.

I was worried because my son was too kind.

* * *

After entering the dungeon, Hochi's explanations got worse.

It was roughly like this.

“That light is a little more expensive than other lights, but it’s possible to switch it on and off from the dungeon center. Most importantly, intruders can’t pull it out and use it as a substitute for a torch.”

“...Yes.”

And when a trap popped out:

“It’s an explosive trap. Once it explodes, it’ll stop working to reassure the opponent. And then it starts working again when someone else approaches it. Usually, it’s used in case a guide disassembles all the traps. The person standing behind the guide is relatively careless.”

When a monster popped out:

“It’s a giant clipper, and it’s best as a gatekeeper in narrow areas. It’s not good to keep it with other monsters in the room. It has its own value.”

Of course, those explanations by Hochi were meaningless.

Whatever lights were on, whatever traps there were, whatever monsters stormed in, it didn’t matter to us.

“By the way, the monsters are brave.”

If it were an ordinary monster, it would have turned around and run away as soon as it saw us.

But the monsters here were all running towards us, asking for death.

“Monster management is also an important part of Dungeon management. But I think this dungeon uses items that keep monsters’ morale and aggression high. The price is so high that it’s too much of a loss compared to boosting monsters yourself, but they’ll have no choice but to use it when such a strong enemy attempts to raid.”

“...Yes, I can see that”.

I answered in that way.

Hochi didn't even react much.

He was so excited that he didn't seem to care about my answer. Yong-yong also no longer praised Hochi's explanations.

As I walked along, listening to boring facts, I felt a little sleepy. I sped up my pace.

It wasn't to hear a little less of Hochi's explanation.

As I walked ahead, a door appeared.

“Dungeons usually consist of two forms of passages and rooms. The room beyond these doors is usually a trap room, a battle room, a reward room, etc. The compensation room is a little unusual, but the intruders...”

Bang!

I opened the door roughly.

It wasn't because I wanted Hochi to shut up.

There was a monster waiting for us in the room. It was a monster with a rather unusual appearance. It was a wolfdog with a human body.

“Oh. This monster is intelligent. It knows how to talk and is usually hired to be incharge of dungeons.”

“Welcome.” As Hochi talked, the wolfdog greeted us.”The Lord is waiting for you. I'll show you around. This way,” the wolfdog muttered, beginning to take the lead.

After looking at its back for a while, I decided to just follow it. There seemed to be no need to decline just to avoid trouble.

“Who’s the Lord?”

“Dungeon Lord. I’m talking about the Dungeon’s operator.”

Hochi solved my doubt.

Lord.

Kirikiri said that the monsters born from the source, after gaining sanity, are called Completers or Rulers.

That seemed to be the origin of this word.

I wondered if the Ruler was waiting for us at the end of the road that the wolfdog was guiding us through.

It guided us along the hidden paths of the dungeon. The structure was quite complicated.

Hochi continued to explain the composition, but I didn’t want to store any more meaningless information in my head.

I walked, blankly repeating, “Yes, yes, I see, good.”

Soon after, our party arrived at the most splendid entrance. The wolfdog opened the door and stepped aside.

“Welcome. It’s nice to meet you.” A man greeted us, just like the wolfdog had a few moments ago.

It wasn’t a Ruler.

How very disappointing.

“I knew you’d come at any time, but to think you’d arrive so soon! I didn’t even think about it. So, I was a little late in greeting you because of the late preparation. Nice to meet you, my name is Thomas Feltchuk. You’re all...”

“You’re not an Awakened,” I said, cutting off the man’s introduction.

“Yes, that’s right. I wasn’t invited to the Tutorial.”

“But you’re good at Korean.”

“That’s because you don’t only have to empower monsters and traps from the points you get from the dungeon extractor. You can also strengthen yourself. I bought language skills.”

No wonder.

He was not an Awakened, but I felt that he was too strong for a human.

“I don’t know what the reinforcements are, but it seems to have done a lot for you.”

I could tell.

A good Awakened would find it hard to touch the fingertips of Tomato... Timothy or whatever his name was.

It’ll be worth a try if he matched Lee Joon-suk, who was standing next to me.

Thomas smiled awkwardly and politely pointed to the table, perhaps because I didn’t say anything else.

The table was served with a scrumptious feast. It was not meant for a few people to eat, but for dozens of people, like a buffet.

“You came from far away, did you eat?”

I looked around the room: tableware, furniture, and its interior.

According to Hochi, all of this was purchased from the energy extracted from the source extractor.

Kirikiri had explained that Dungeon's agent sends some of the source energy extracted to the Dungeon's real owner, the Ruler, and manages the Dungeon with the remaining energy.

Now that I see it, the amount of energy it had left seemed to be more than I thought.

I finished thinking and approached Thomas.

Thomas had a confused look on his face, but he didn't back away.

A relaxed smile lingered on his lips.

I didn't like it. I brought up my hand.

Thomas raised his, thinking I wanted to shake hands, but my hand ignored his and kept going up.

I grabbed Thomas by the back of his head and smashed his head on the table.

Bang!

Whatever it was made of, the table cracked and made a sound close to that of wood breaking.

As the table split, the food and alcohol that was on top of it fell down to the floor. Without letting go of Thomas, I stepped back a few metres.

Fortunately, Thomas did not die. My strength control was becoming more adept.

At this rate, when the seven people whom I had sent to void, returned a month later, I could grind them for a longer time.

I lifted Thomas up to my eye level.

"Hey."

“Phoo-hek.”

Rather than answering, Thomas spat out blood and broken teeth.

He looked as if he hadn't come to his senses yet.

“Hey, can't you hear me? Are your eardrums busted?”

“Suddenly, suddenly... Why...”

I think I was a little too rough.

It was a relief he was alive.

“Who allowed you to do business here?” [1]

“...What?”

Note/s:

[1]: who let him setup the extractor and use the energy for his own means

Chapter 306

Antarctica (2)

“Hochi, go check the extractor. Let’s see what he has done.”

At that moment, a man opened the second side door to the right and went into the room precisely at the center of the dungeon, near the dungeon’s extractor.

Thomas could neither stop nor hold back the man trying to reach the center, which never allowed outsiders inside.

The extractor was the dungeon’s everything.

It was not only responsible for the play log, but the dungeon’s management and status of monsters spread around the globe.

Giving up the extractor was tantamount to giving up the whole dungeon.

“Why are you crying? Do you think it’s unfair?”

It was unfair and unjust. Thomas couldn’t accept the current situation.

Thomas Feltchuk was a German-born scientist.

He had a Ph.D. in astronomy and was a scientist who’d devoted himself to pseudoscience.

Most of the followers of pseudoscience pretended to be scientific and use logical theories. Still, it was quite unusual considering that they had never received professional training in the field.

Thomas Feltchuk was somewhat of a prodigy in the field. It could be called a mere boast.

His theories were not that absurd, and even a renowned astronomy doctor supported his idea.

It was what raised the validity of pseudoscience. But on the other hand, it also pointed out loopholes in pseudoscience's flawed logic.

It wasn't a smooth religious life.

When Thomas first started with pseudoscience, and his name appeared in the magazines, academic seniors who had never seen him before criticized him.

What surprised Thomas, though, was that his colleagues, who once sided with him, did the same.

It felt wrong when his colleagues, who usually treated him like he was invisible, gave interviews and voiced their condemnation of Thomas's pseudoscience.

Of course, that was just Thomas's personal views. Soon, Thomas's career was like rotten food thrown out by the roadside.

Somehow, people in the Academy sent texts such as "I'm disappointed" after obtaining his number.

But Thomas was happy every day.

When he went to a meeting, he liked seeing people look at him with respect. He liked to make speeches as if he were in a high position.

It felt good to be treated like that—to be noticed. People listened to his every word as if they were God's words, acting thrilled and anxious.

The criticism from the Academy and his colleagues was also bearable.

At first, it hurt his mentality, but he got used to it over time.

Thomas even enjoyed the blame soon.

Every time he was criticized, Thomas felt like a villain from a famous comic book. He was the centre of attention and interest.

When he first accepted the pseudoscience group's proposal to pay off his debts, he had a lot of regrets, but when he looked back, it was the right decision.

One day, when he was spending his time like that, a cataclysm occurred. Monsters appeared from all over and began to run wild.

Naturally, everything stopped. There was no longer anyone to criticise Thomas.

They were all about to die, so they couldn't afford to be interested in criticism.

In a world where existing values collapsed, Thomas was just an older man without acquaintances or friends.

He blamed the world for changing, and the people who left.

At that time, he heard God's voice in his ear. Frankly speaking, he was surprised.

He had committed himself to pseudoscience, but he didn't believe God existed beyond the universe and watched over him.

God was pleased with Thomas, who confessed his faults, begged for forgiveness, and suggested Thomas become a prophet of God—like Noah, who saved people and animals that believed in him from a great flood and punished humans stained with sins.

Thomas could not resist the proposal to become the prophet of God and lead the few who would remain on Earth.

It would have been the same for him, even if it hadn't been God's suggestion. So he became the owner of the dungeon in Antarctica.

Operating the dungeon was like a game.

Thomas controlled a dungeon with a hologram that emerged at its center and messed around with it here and there. It made him feel like he was playing a game.

Thanks to that, Thomas was able to shake off his guilt quickly.

Rather than agonizing over how many people would be hurt and killed by his own choices, he pondered how effectively he could harm the city.

The more damage he did, the more the people died, the more joyful Thomas became.

There were Awakened people who had cleared the Tutorial, but they were not a threat to Thomas. They could only prevent small monsters.

Over time, the amount of energy collected at the dungeon core gradually increased.

After giving all the energy needed to give to God and to run the dungeon, excess energy remained. From then on, Thomas began to invest energy in himself.

His aging body quickly became young and healthy. His recovered youth made him feel great joy just by taking a walk in the dungeon.

As Thomas became healthier, his greed grew. A few years later, he could break glaciers with a few swings of his fists and could fly in the sky.

Among the numerous monsters in Dungeon, none were stronger than Thomas himself.

Thomas set up portals and began to wander from place to place in the Antarctic dungeon. He would be waiting at the site where the attack was scheduled, just to watch the raid and the soldiers and Awakened, who fled in confusion over a low-level monster's appearance.

He began to feel omnipotent after seeing their fierce struggles. He knew the secret behind the world that no one knew. He controlled the

monsters wrecking the world.

Even the Awakened couldn't be compared.

Thomas was like a god. It wasn't precisely wrong, since he was God's agent.

He felt confident when he confirmed the Awakened identity that had wiped out a group of monsters near the Dungeon.

He was well aware of who they were. Lee Ho-jae and his party were the Awakened of Korea's Hell Difficulty.

Thomas thought about bringing them in.

It was also fun to look down on humans with overwhelming superiority, but the excessive gap in their strengths made him bored.

He wished that he had a suitable subordinate and companion. He wanted someone to talk about topics he couldn't share with others.

So he prepared dinner and faced the group of Awakened.

And as if all of his past was a lie, Thomas, who'd been flying in the sky, fell to the ground.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

"About 42 billion points."

"That's all?"

I didn't know how many points were usually used in the dungeon, so I couldn't tell if this was good.

"The target for the 89th-floor stage was 100 million points. If we collected all the planet's source on the 89th floor, it'd be about 100

billion points.”

The total points from sources of the planet was about 100 billion? Forty-two billion was already missing from here.

“You’ve sucked up a lot. Hey, hey.”

I slapped him on the cheek and poked his eyes to see if he had regained consciousness. I was getting used to controlling my power.

“Hey, how could you not run away, huh?”

It was incredible. I thought this guy would disappear as soon as we got into the dungeon. I wondered if he was keeping himself hidden until the end, but he even guided us.

It wasn’t a trap.

“Did you think I’d be equally happy if the guy who was controlling the monsters on Earth told me he was happy to see me now? I don’t understand.”

Thomas opened his eyes but couldn’t answer me. He didn’t even seem to understand me.

Had my plan of strength controlling failed?

I looked at Hochi. “What do you think? Can you make do?”

“Of course, though, there is some security.”

“And?”

“I’ve had it all cracked,” Hochi said with a grin. He was not only motivated but also competent, perhaps because it was his favorite field.

It was strange.

“Then we won’t need this one.”

After pulling off Thomas’s neck from his body, I got up from my seat.

Over the past decade, he’d been such a brute. I couldn’t believe he’d hurt tens of millions, perhaps even hundreds of millions of people.

“There are a few more dungeons like this?”

“Yep. Leaving aside Pyongyang and Antarctica,” Lee Joon-suk told me.

Maybe because it was hard to understand the situation, Lee Joon-suk had been struggling for a while and had gone around the dungeon with Hochi to adjust.

He hadn’t experienced it directly in Hard difficulty, but he quickly adapted because he had been through something similar.

“With four more dungeons like this, the Earth’s source would be almost exhausted.”

“I don’t know. This dungeon could have been exceptionally mined.”

Still, there wouldn’t be much left. I understood why the gods were reluctant to extract the source of planets. The consumption rate was too fast.

The dungeon had mined half of the planet’s source for just over a decade.

I didn’t know exactly how much power the source of that would be, but Kirikiri had replied that it was incomparable to the power drawn through faith for a long time. In just a decade, they were trying to kill the source that had produced faith stably for thousands of years, no, tens of thousands of years.

From the gods’ perspective, I wondered if the source’s extraction would be seen as illegal fishing that would destroy the ecosystem itself by wiping out even a small fry with a thick net.

They couldn't do this crazy act in their territory, so naturally, they would hide in other people's territory and do it like a Chinese fishing boat.

I'd heard that planets with extracted sources would decline rapidly, and that new civilizations would not be born easily.

But what happened to a half-extracted planet?

I didn't know. I asked Hochi, but he was clueless as well. I could once again feel that there was still a lot of information I didn't know.

"Stop the extractor first. Let's think about it later."

"Okay." Hochi turned back to the room with the extractor.

Hochi, who had been walking one step at a time, suddenly halted.

"Stop."

I heard a voice from behind me that made Hochi stop. And behind me was Thomas's body, who was decapitated.

A headless Thomas stood up from his seat.

I could recognize it with a glance. He was a Ruler and, at the same time, a god.

He was a Ruler who couldn't even compare to the Mantis inside Yong-yong's box.

We'd finally met. Before dealing with the Ruler, I looked at my party. Hochi was shaking his feet as if he was confused by the fact that he'd stopped for a while.

Lee Joon-suk... was kneeling down and vomiting blood.

Why was he so weak? Yong-yong ran towards Lee Joon-suk in surprise. He could treat Lee Joon-suk on his own.

Turning away from my party, I looked at the Ruler, who was covering Thomas' body.

“Who's trying to shut down my dungeon?”

When Thomas died, I said I'd stop the extractor, and at that time, the Ruler popped out. Or was the Ruler just taking time to get here?

I was curious and had a lot of questions. So, I talked with a bright smile just like Thomas, whose head had been separated from his neck.

“Now that the boss is finally here, it's time to talk.”

Chapter 307

Antarctica (3)

“The boss is finally here.”

A man came out to talk about the damage dealt.

The Ruler looked dull, perhaps because he was in Thomas’ decapitated body. But his mobility and momentum proved that the Ruler’s power didn’t come from the skeleton.

“Eck-hek-hek.”

Thanks to him, Lee Joon-suk was constantly coughing behind me.

Lee Jun-seok, who was spitting blood, seemed to have calmed down a bit with Yong-Yong’s help. Now, he choked out dry coughs instead of blood.

I was annoyed.

When the Ruler saw Lee Joon-suk fall, he clicked his tongue and muttered, “That little friend of yours is too weak.”

I felt the same. Yong-yong took action after taking care of Lee Joon-suk for a while, placing him in the box where the mantis was trapped.

Since Yong-yong designed it himself, it would be safe. However, trapping Lee Joon-suk in a narrow space with the mantis would be hazardous.

The mantis had fallen to pet status in just one day, but it was still a human-eating monster.

Lee Joon-suk must be a coveted prey, so it wouldn’t be good to leave

him there for a long time no matter how transparent the box was.

Yong-yong looked down at the box as if he could read my concerns. “You shouldn’t fight because your house suddenly got cramped. I’ll get him out of there in a second.”

The mantis did not attack Lee Joon-suk. It was too afraid to do that. Rather, the mantis held onto Lee Joon-suk and tried to hide behind him.

It was still in plain view, though.

The Ruler looked at the box and then at Yong-yong and questioned, “That kid. Is he a dragon? I think I’m pretty close.”

“That’s right. Pretty, isn’t he?”

I didn’t receive any objections. The Ruler looked at me for a moment, then turned to Yong-yong again.

To be exact, he looked at the box hung around Yong-yong’s neck—at the wriggling mantis in the box.

“I wish I had eaten that idiot in silence. I don’t know why it ran away, but it got what it deserved,” the Ruler said with a grin.

It seemed that he was the one who had known the mantis before. This was good news. Later, I could compare the information we heard from the mantis with that of this guy.

I thought we’d go into battle as soon as the Ruler showed up, but he was unexpectedly calm. Was he not interested in the dungeon?

Let’s take it like that for now.

“Why didn’t you try to find it again? It was easy to find.”

“It’s easy to find, but there’s no way for me to get out of the dungeon. If I went out of the dungeon, I would have to give up because the

Hundred Gods' Temple would have an excuse to come after me."

I knew it. But inside the dungeon, it could show up like this, like the Pantheon's Gods who came to the 61st floor.

It was interesting. I needed to find out about the Temples' rules soon. Without knowing the details, I could only speculate on what was allowed for them.

"I was thinking of raising this guy and catching the mantis later," the Ruler said, pointing to Thomas' body.

He intended to grow Thomas and bring the mantis to the dungeon.

"I'm afraid he's dead."

"Why didn't you save him then?"

"No point." The Ruler shook his head.

"I chose this one because he was simple. He had no thoughts and was primitive. Normal amounts of hedonism and selfishness. He was easy to use, but I can't use him anymore."

"Why?"

"Because he felt afraid."

"Fear is quite a common emotion."

It was so primitive that it was hard to find anything to compare.

"That's the fear that exists behind. But the fear in front is a little different."

I didn't quite understand, and I wasn't interested. I wanted to say something, but nothing came to mind.

It wasn't good if I didn't say anything. When collecting information by

eliciting the words of the other party, it acted as a significant weakness.

“Don’t you know?”

“Huh?”

“If you’ve been through a world created by the gods, shouldn’t you know the difference between being chased by fear and being blocked by fear?”

I wasn’t interested. I was curious about something else.

“You must know about me.”

“Of course. I heard a new god had appeared in the Tutorial. I expected to meet you someday because this is your home planet. And...”

“And?”

“The disgrace of the Hundred Gods’ Temple is the most talked-about thing in recent years, so it can’t be unknown.”

That was why he was so calm. If he knew what had happened between the gods and me on the 61st floor, he might have expected me to come to the Dungeon and make a big fuss.

“Did you expect me to come?”

What is this Ruler thinking?

Before I came, this dungeon was utterly defenseless against me. Was he just going to throw away the dungeon because he’d already extracted enough energy? Maybe he wanted a proper compromise?

It appeared that the Ruler was trying to talk calmly.

“Yes, shall we talk about it? Now that we’re sharing the same zone, we’ll have to clean up each other’s territory,” the Ruler said and

waved his hands toward the floor.

The food lying on the floor and the smashed table vanished, and instead, a small table and two chairs appeared.

Summoning. The Ruler brought furniture prepared in another dimension.

The ability seemed great because of the shift between dimensions, but it was akin to using a space attributed to individuals, similar to an inventory.

The Ruler said while sitting in a chair, “God of Horror.”

I had no choice but to sit in the chair and ask back, “What?”

“Horror, that’s my title.”

The Ruler even gave his name. At this point, I was utterly confused.

Why do these guys believe and approach me in a friendly manner?

“Your name?”

“Why would I let you know that?” I questioned him.

The Ruler smiled despite my sudden change of attitude, and replied, “You’re also a newborn. There’s a lot you don’t know yet.”

I didn’t think it was necessary. Either way, he began to explain.

“Gods are not meant to be hidden. Just knowing and recognizing you is huge. What’s more, if your opponent is a god, that’s even better. Some of the new gods even go to the gods they know to promote their identities.”

Oh, come on.

He was explaining obvious stuff as if it were the truth of life. He spoke

like an old man.

I never asked you anything, did I?

He seemed to think his opponents were ignorant: an attitude of condescension and self-flattery. It wasn't an attitude I liked.

In any case, the Ruler highlighted himself as a senior god and hinted that he could give useful advice.

He thought we were going to compromise through talking.

"Now, tell me your name."

I'm sorry, but I don't mean to give you my name.

I wasn't interested in the sad benefits of informing him. Above all, I didn't intend to reveal my identity and let him analyze me.

Lastly, "It'd be good if I'm the only one who knows my name."

The Ruler laughed aloud. "You're young, after all. Whatever. Sooner or later, even if you don't want to, you'll find me and let me know."

He's getting on my nerves.

"Let's talk, then. First of all, it's about each other's territory. I need to know what you're doing. If you're not interested in this planet, I can introduce you to another."

"No, there's something we need to talk about before that."

"What should we talk about first?"

Why did this guy start without the most important thing?

"Put out everything you've eaten from Earth so far."

Of course, I didn't intend to return it. It was better to start from here.

"...what?" The Ruler had a ridiculous look on his face. "For what reason? You stupid little God, you still seem to be bound by the ideas of a mortal. You don't have ownership because it's your home planet. There is only one factor in the world of gods that determines everything."

"It's power."

I didn't want to listen to him, who only stated the obvious. I let a shadow rise from under his feet and tied him to it.

"It's a spectacle! It's a spectacle! No matter how young of a god you are, why be this ignorant and reckless?!"

Even after being completely enveloped by the shadow, the Ruler continued to shout.

It was a fresh reaction.

"This corpse is just a body I'm temporarily using. The use of an incarnated body is the basic means a god uses to govern many dimensions. Even if you kill this body, I won't be affected. It's just one useless hand and foot missing."

The incarnated body was no different from the gods using apostles.

However, unlike clones, an incarnated body was also a part of the god. It was safe to say it was like an alter ego.

The Hundred Gods' Temple and the Pantheon gods, who were unable to enter the realm of other gods, chose to increase their sphere of action using apostles.

The Ruler was misunderstanding two things. I was not ignorant of incarnations, and I was confident.

Few people had more knowledge of incarnations and cloning than I did. I was even on par with the few gods associated with it.

“You will regret it! How dare you be so rude?! To create a new... on...”

His words cut off for obvious reasons. Little by little, his shadow was devouring his body.

“Let me ask one question to our knowledgeable senior god.”

The perfectionist had a ‘dark’ face. I wasn’t talking about his skin color. The skin had been dull from the start since it was a corpse.

But his loss of focus and trembling lips, apart from the skin color, made the expression ‘dark’.

The mantis said he remembered when the source ate him and made him a monster.

If the Ruler was also the same, he must be feeling it: the same feeling as when the source’s power consumed him.

“If the incarnation in front of me is eaten, will your body be safe?”

An apostle, or incarnation, is part of a god and yet separate at the same time.

If they wanted to say the incarnations weren’t them, they could cut off the link, but on the contrary, they could also accidentally link themselves to the incarnation just by mentioning it.

If the connection between the incarnation and the body remained, it was a piece of cake to take advantage of the link.

In my opinion, showing their incarnation to others was tantamount to establishing one’s weakness.

The god of horror had talked about limbs, but I’d rather take out the heart and let it wander separately.

The shadow, once tied to the incarnation, began to be gradually

pushed out. I think he'd finally made up his mind.

Instead of being held in vain by the incarnated body, the God of Horror chose to use his main body.

“Yong-Yong.”

As soon as I called Yong-yong, I sensed him taking the others across the space.

The God of Horror immediately took on his form. As he roared, the world fell apart.

The dungeon instantly disappeared. We were no longer in the dungeon, and the Antarctic was melting.

The place where I stood would sooner or later melt completely and sink under the sea. The Old Man would enjoy watching this scenery, but Grandma probably wouldn't.

In the aftermath of the explosion, snow flew around and blocked the view. The thick steam created by melted snow and ice also played a part.

Standing in the Antarctic's glacial zone, the image of the great God of Horror loomed over the white fog.

At last, a Ruler with a god's title had appeared on Earth.

[You stupid thing! You will have to pay for your audacity!]

From up there, I could sense a significant loss of power. The battle of divine beings was relatively primitive.

There was no such thing as an abstract and ideological struggle that I'd imagined as a human being.

The gods, unable to interfere with each other's existence, ironically used old and basic combat methods.

The most definitive answer, and one I favor quite a lot, was to crush and kill the opponent with overwhelming strength.

“Zit pop.”

Chapter 308

Antarctica (4)

I was excited. I'd prepared for a battle against a god for a long time. You could even say that I yearned for it.

To achieve my goal, I had to fight against the gods. Even if I could peacefully persuade the Temple's gods, I still needed the power to do so.

The battle between the gods was, after all, a physical battle.

And in my opinion, nothing I had compared to Zit pop in terms of pure physical force...

It was a technique I'd developed by chance while training on the 30th floor.

Since then, I'd been using it whenever I needed it. It was a handy and useful technique, which never lacked power.

But it had very apparent drawbacks. Zit Pop was an explosion.

It was very suitable for sweeping away massive numbers of enemies, but it was inappropriate to use against a single opponent. The power was not concentrated on a single point, and the explosion's radius was too broad.

The light and heat that burst forward burned not only the enemy but everything around as well.

I couldn't use it unless I intended to blow up a planet. To use it effectively, I needed to reduce the range of the explosion. But it wasn't easy.

The most obvious solution was to limit the range and set up a barrier to prevent the explosion from leaking out; however, if the explosion could not escape the barrier then it is highly likely that it would not break the enemy's defenses either.

The only solution I came up with after much consideration was to reduce the Zit Pop's affected area.

Instead of using it as a bomb, I used it as a bullet with overwhelming heat.

I distorted the space surrounding the firing trajectory to prevent heat from escaping, minimising the surrounding area's damage.

Of course, that wasn't all.

Since then, I focused on increasing the launching speed by increasing the momentum and further boosting the energy required for Zit Pop itself.

There were numerous trials and errors, but I was able to produce satisfactory results. So, I was pretty sure I'd achieve victory by firing a series of Zit Pops at the Ruler.

"Zit Pop! Zit Pop! Zit Pop! Zit Pop!" [1]

It became a technique that no longer banged or exploded, but its name was still Zit Pop.

(T/N: This line is with reference to the original name, Sibam Kwang {Kwang = Bang}, basically, a play of words, since it was used for explosion. For more info, you can visit the site namu.wiki/w/시밤광 And no, I am not changing the name even though I really want to.)

The solidified line collided with the Ruler's attack, which was approaching me.

Bang!

Oh, it exploded. Zit Pop penetrated the attack and went further, even

beyond the body of the Ruler.

Part of the Ruler's body fell off and crashed to the ground, making a sound of water rushing outwards.

[Can't be... This can't be...]

The improved Zit Pop had a small area of damage, but each time it was used, it caused fatal damage to the Ruler.

As a result, the Ruler, who was in the form of a giant, was in a mess. He began panting less than a minute after the battle had begun.

[Now that it's come to this... This planet.....]

The Ruler prepared for the final attack by reciting lines that often came up in comics for little kids, where someone struggled to protect the Earth from the opponent who wanted to blow up the Earth.

It was a laughable attempt.

“Seregia.”

I summoned Seregia, and she appeared in the sky.

Seregia, in the form of a giant sword, appeared above the Ruler's head and fell.

Bang!

She drilled through the Ruler's defense, pierced his body, and hit the ground. The impact caused the water to gush out. The water that touched my body was lukewarm. No, it seemed a bit hot—hot enough to burn an average person.

The glacial zone, due to Seregia's fall, had completely shattered. There was no point in trying anything more.

The glacial zone had melted, and the seawater was bubbling, maybe

because the water was boiling.

If an environmental group concerned about global warming saw it, they would be enraged.

In the distance, a tsunami was forming, starting to roll outwards. The damage to neighboring countries was likely to be enormous.

First of all, I used my powers to prevent the aftermath. I came close to the Ruler, who had been pierced by Seregia.

The Ruler attempted to tell me something, but when his mouth moved, no words came out.

It was natural. Seregia's blade was, in itself, her presence and her will.

[Save me.]

He couldn't say anything, so he conveyed his words through his will. It would have been a significant blow to say such a thing with his will, but he seemed quite desperate.

[I was stupid. I will respect your decision. I will leave Earth,] he blurted. His words held a frantic urgency.

He was very obsessed with life.

[If you spare my life, I will pay for it. I promise on my name. Please don't kill me.]

I grinned at the remark. He was saying strange things.

"Why would I kill you?"

[Thank you, thank you very much. I will repay you.]

The Ruler continually expressed his gratitude. Of course, he would continue to live on. He would continue to live on because he'd become a part of me.

“Get up.”

The Ruler’s shadow reflected in the water began to creep up his body.

[What... are you doing? What is this? Wait! Wait! Give me a chance! Please!]

The Ruler sank under the shadow as if he were in a swamp. He attempted to get out, but Seregia had already overpowered him, and thus, the shadow quickly seized the limbs of the Ruler. [2]

[Please, please! Please!]

It was useless to pray. In less than a few seconds, his vast body had disappeared entirely.

The cries of the Ruler now rang within me.

[Please!]

It’d take some time to digest this. I wasn’t sure how long it would take since it was my first time absorbing this kind of entity.

Either way, I felt proud. Not only did I feel full, but I also felt a rare sense of victory.

Though I had chased the gods from the 61st floor and captured the apostles, it had been too bland.

Even though the Ruler was not as strong as I expected, I could quench my thirst after waiting a long time.

“Are you that happy?” Seregia, who returned to her human form, asked. Somehow, her gaze was one as if she were looking at a pervert.

I think there’s a misunderstanding.

I didn’t make any more excuses. It was time to clean up now that we had dealt with the Ruler.

First of all, I decided to pass on some responsibilities to Seregia.

“Seregia.”

“Yes.”

“How could you fall like that? You destroyed Antarctica.”

She ignored my words. I sighed and looked around.

The white glacial zone extending beyond the horizon had shattered, and underneath, the blue sea was visible.

The seawater bubbled in intervals. There was a massive wave in the distance.

I erected a wall to keep the waves from escaping, but it wouldn't completely block everything. There would be significant damage to neighbouring countries.

Maybe it'd affect the entire planet.

I looked up at the sky. I'd been sensing a gaze for a while now.

The earth was a common area of the gods from the Hundred Gods Temple.

Usually they wouldn't have been able to see our battle within the dungeon because it was within the Ruler's realm. But since the dungeon was smashed by the Ruler in the very beginning, the gods could watch the fight unobstructed by barriers.

I thought about whether it would be wise to show more of my power here. Of course, it wasn't a wise idea.

It would not be good for the people of Earth. I wasn't good enough to bear the risks for those I've never met, not even for my status.

Even if this caused a giant tsunami and significant damage, it did not

cause my reputation any problems.

It would rather be helpful even. Since ancient times, natural disasters symbolized events that humans could not resist.

Those who suffered would resent and fear the tsunami, but they would also worship the gods that caused it.

I kept thinking about it. If we left like this, Kim Min-hyuk would die of overwork or stress.

The Kim Min-hyuk I knew was a guy who would care even if I told him not to. It seemed like his life's biggest goal was to make sure that an absolute majority of people do not live unhappy lives.

Of course, I didn't care what kind of life goal Kim Min-hyuk had and how he lived. It was just that I had received too much from him to ignore his wishes.

I sorted out my thoughts.

Yeah, let's do it that way.

“Return.”

After a brief look at Antarctica, which began to return to its previous form, I moved to the place where Yong-yong was waiting with Seregia, who had returned to the form of a sword.

From this, the Hundred Gods Temple would have found that I could engage in time manipulation, as well as cause and effect manipulation.

It wasn't a prudent judgment to show my abilities at this point.

Well, I'll let this time pass, I'll do it for Kim Min-Hyuk.

“Huh? You’re already back?”

I nodded. Kim Min-hyuk opened his laptop and furiously typed. Was he sending an email?

“I made an appointment with the guys who used to sell names in Gangwon-do. He said he would come to Seoul this weekend. There are no portals around here, so I think we need to secure one in Seoul. I’ll talk to the Association. Park Min is supposed to come here later, so I think we can talk about it then. You’re still going to treat people with that raffle.”

You’ve been working hard.

As I thought, it was worth it.

“Did you just look at it? Good job, there’s no need to hurry up with a G-class attack. Let’s get some rest for a few days, talk to your party, and then go again. Start with the lunch we didn’t have earlier,” Kim Min-hyuk said to me while looking around, asking why my party hadn’t come with me.

“I already did it.”

“Huh?”

“I defeated the G-class.”

To be exact, it was attacking the dungeon and fighting the Ruler.

I thought it would be better to tell Kim Min-hyuk and the others that I’d eradicated the G-class. It was easier to understand.

“I’ve defeated the G-class already...”

I took Lee Joon-suk out of my pocket and handed it to Kim Min-hyuk, who looked baffled.

Since he was smaller than the doll’s size, I picked him up with my

hand and handed him over. Kim Min-hyuk was so surprised that he almost dropped Lee Joon-suk.

“I’m here to leave him. He passed out in the middle. I’m sure Yong-yong treated him well, but I thought I’d better leave him here.”

The mantis was in bad shape, but it would try to escape if we left it here. I just decided to keep it in Yong-yong’s box.

“Uh... that...”

Kim Min-hyuk rolled his eyes before asking urgently, “You’re leaving me behind? Hey, where are you going now?”

“Russia.”

“Why Russia?”

There was a G-class there. Unfortunately, the Hundred God Temple witnessed the death of the Ruler in Antarctica.

The information was bound to be leaked to other Rulers. It was highly likely that the Ruler whom I met in Antarctica knew what happened on the 61st floor of the Tutorial.

They had to be dealt with before the Rulers who had dungeons on the Earth notice and flee.

We needed to collect the energy left in the dungeon and find out if there was any information.

There were so many things to do, but I’d get nothing if the Ruler withdrew the dungeon itself.

I had to move quickly.

“I’m going to Russia to find another G-class. I’ll take care of everything by the end of the day. Then, I’ll come back.”

“...Kill me, just kill me already.”

Notes from Imagine:

[1]: I imagine hojae with both of his hands as finger guns rapid firing Zit Pops.

[2]: I wonder how strong Seregia is to be able to defeat a ruler on her own (and completely dominate it at that). Though it was mentioned by Ho-Jae if Seregia's ability to seemingly disappear was at a higher level than his (If i remember correctly).

Chapter 309

Seoul (13)

Unfortunately, we never encountered a Ruler in the Antarctic dungeon. Had the ruler run away, or was it just too stupid?

Nothing significant happened.

Two more agents of the Ruler, called Dungeon Road, were caught, but agents were seen in the other dungeons. There was even a dungeon that withdrew its monsters and other things.

It was comforting to know that I could recover all the extractors.

If I knew it would end up like this, I would have wiped them all out the day I returned to Earth. Of course, doing so may not have changed the results by much, but I still would have liked to have done it.

“I’m home.”

“I’m sure he came back earlier. When did he leave again?” Kim Min-hyuk hurriedly hung up his phone when we entered. He had a miserable look on his face.

Either way, we all dispersed as soon as we returned to the accommodations.

Hochi went up to the living room couch, Seregia to the kitchen, and Yong-yong to the second-floor room with the mantis.

“Africa.” The last dungeon I visited was in Rwenzori, Africa. Unfortunately, it didn’t produce anything worthwhile, but Hochi loved experiencing the scenery.

“Oh, for your information, I’ve cleared everything.”

“What?”

“G-class. None of them are on Earth anymore. Isn’t that good?”

“Good work... Huh?”

Kim Min-hyuk put down his cell phone on the table and blankly looked ahead. The vibrations continued, checking to see if he was still on call. There was a loud noise as the vibrating cell phone hit the table.

Kim Min-hyuk reached out and hung up the phone. Then, without a moment’s delay, another call came in.

No matter how many times he hung up, the calls kept coming in.

Kim Min-hyuk, who had been pondering for a while now, decided to turn off his phone altogether.

“Something wrong?”

“No,” Kim Min-hyuk answered, seemingly having given up. “I don’t know anymore. Let’s just get it done tomorrow. The important thing right now is that the G-class Monsters are gone. If there’s anything wrong with the article, we’ll just correct it late,” Kim Min-hyuk replied.

“Did you do any damage?”

“None. Just a bit in Antarctica.”

Although I tried to cover up the situation, damage to neighbouring countries was unavoidable. However, I minimized the effects. There was no damage elsewhere.

There couldn’t be anything because I took care of things properly this time.

“That’s enough. I don’t care about the little things. If we look closely,

what's left is property rights issues and unauthorized entry. It's a violation of international raid regulations."

Kim Min-hyuk thought about it for a while before saying, "I don't know. It's what you did, so take care of it yourself."

That's a lot of work for me.

Even though Kim Min-hyuk ordered me to do it, he would still be the one to take care of it in the end

"Joon-suk?"

"Sleeping upstairs. I just laid him down because I heard there's nothing wrong with his health. Is he okay? Or should I send him to the hospital now?"

"He'll be alright."

Yong-yong examined him, so of course, there would be no problem. Yong-yong was as good as me in this. Unlike me, however, Yong-yong was better because he would take more care of the other person. I decided to take care of Joon-suk when he came to his senses later.

There was a bit of a mystery. Lee Joon-suk, who stayed on the 90th floor for years, was very competitive.

He desired strength—maybe to come after me. Either way, he was ambitious back then. However, Lee Joon-suk, who I met again on Earth, showed little enthusiasm.

Even when he ran into me, he didn't show much interest. Of course, I was glad to see him after a long time, but I wanted to check his strength. However, he couldn't prove his strength.

He did not regret his lack of power. It didn't seem like he had a new desire for challenge, so I wondered if this was the Lee Joon-suk I knew. He was one of the few I talked to when I was trapped on the 60th floor.

I thought of solving his problems to repay the gratitude from that time. If I could motivate him again, Lee Joon-suk would be a useful guy. Such talent was hard to find.

I couldn't believe he worked on a floor for nearly ten years on his own volition.

I couldn't do such a stupid thing. It was foolish, but I had to find a way to make him grow.

My experience made me quite adept at helping others grow. The only case that failed was Hochi's.

All the other guys who went through my hands were doing their part.

"Park Min was supposed to come later. Now the Association is going crazy."

"The Association? Why?"

"Why not? It's because someone wiped out the G-class in Pyongyang."

I shrugged. If I came after the association's head now, the association's work would be poured on Kim Min-hyuk.

Let's fix that later.

"The gate you wanted, is it urgent?"

"Yes, no."

"...Is it urgent or not?"

"Not really, but I want you to take care of it quickly."

While watching Kim Min-hyuk's angry face, I briefly organized my thoughts.

Was there anything else I had to do? I couldn't think of anything.

“I will also go to my room and rest.”

Kim Min-hyuk sprang to his feet. “Yes! Go and lie down! Get out of here! And please don’t get up until tomorrow!”

That’s too much.

Some people thought I was causing trouble even though it was all for the good of humans.

“Yes, it would have been good if you had handled it over a week. Finishing it one day is too much.”

How unfair.

* * *

It was quiet when I entered the room, and I laid down on the bed. I could feel cozy while lying on thorns, but it was still comfortable to lie in bed.

Was it a habit?

I opened the subspace and took out the purple crystal, an item I got after clearing the 100th floor of the Tutorial.

It was one of the reasons why Kirikiri said that I needed to clear it. As I looked at the purple crystal for a moment, a message appeared in front of my eyes.

[Summoning Stone]

It was a simple item. The compensation for clearing the Tutorial varied depending on the level of difficulty.

But the name of the rewards were all the same: a summoning stone.

After clearing the Easy difficulty level, the summoner can call up one of the Tutorial potions.

After clearing the Normal difficulty level, one can summon one item they purchased in the store window.

After clearing the Hard difficulty level, one can summon one item received as an additional reward during Hard difficulty.

I wondered what it would be like in the case of Hell Difficulty, but this was it.

[Summon Stone]

Description: A reward for the challenger who has endured all the trials of the Tutorial. You can bring back a relationship you made in the Tutorial.

It was an interesting item. I could summon someone who was not an item. After clearing the 100th floor, I put it off.

First of all, I needed to solve the problems on Earth. But now it was time to think about the summoning stone.

Who should I summon? Multiple faces and names came to mind.

There were plenty of people who I wanted to meet and talk with again. Just thinking about it made my heart throb. Although they were short relationships, they were profound.

The first person that came to mind was Idy.

When I had a lot of concerns about my identity, she gave me direction, and we were together for the longest time.

For the first time, I found someone to rely on. But I promised Idy that I wouldn't do it. Summoning her now would break my promise to her.

Also, I couldn't be sure it was my 'Idy' who would be summoned from this summon stone.

I thought about friends who would be happy to see me again, like

Myong-myong and Cheonsa-Cheonsabaeg. [1]

However, I decided against using the stone to fulfill a momentary longing. If I achieved my goal, we could meet again later. They would even have memories of meeting me. That was how one more option was crossed out.

The next thing I thought of was Godmother. I met her on the 19th floor while training to become an apostle for the God of Devotion.

But on the 61st floor, I met her again, in the guise of the God of Sacrifice.

If the Godmother from back then was the clone of the God of Sacrifice, she was worth summoning and nurturing. Since she seemed to be a faithful believer in the God of Devotion, it wouldn't be easy to persuade her, but I thought I could do something about it.

Or I could just dissect her.

It was a really attractive option, but I decided to move on.

Kirikiri had said I needed this summon stone, but she probably didn't say it with Grandmother in mind.

Lee Hyung-jin came to mind next. I couldn't help but think about it. Lee Hyung-jin was probably not who or what Kirikiri had in mind.

It was an old regret of mine and an unsolved question. What the hell happened on that 17th floor? I'd thought about it for a long time.

In my opinion, Lee Hyung-jin could quickly clear the 17th floor. It just required the ability to beat the illusion.

The illusion wasn't aware of the items Lee Hyung-Jin had, and there were many things the me from back then didn't know.

(T/N: Me from back then refers to his 17th-floor illusion self.)

I gave him a few tips, but I wasn't very involved. The concern at the time was not that he could not pass through the 17th floor, but that he could find out the information on the 61st floor and no longer climb up.

However, he died shortly after entering the 17th floor. I couldn't easily digest the fact.

In the end, it raised my expectations of the 17th-floor's illusion ever since.

It was not because of my memories of the 17th floor, but its power to kill Lee Hyung-jin.

So before Lee Yeon-hee challenged the 17th floor, I checked everything in a paranoid manner and made her enter with overwhelming power. Of course, Lee Yeon-hee faced a major crisis on the 17th floor, but she was careless. It was not because of her lack of power.

Lee Hyung-jin was different from Lee Yeon-hee. It was not about their bodies, magic, or techniques.

Qualitatively, the two were different challengers. Lee Hyung-jin was an early challenger. He was a challenger from when information was scarce.

He was informed of the stage but not given careful advice. What I gave Lee Hyung-jin was just a list of what happened on the stage.

Even that information was limited to what I went through, and was told by my standards. It was something that could never be considered perfect.

I didn't put much effort in developing him. Lee Hyung-jin's ability to grow was entirely his own.

However, even with the lack of information, Lee Hyung-jin survived to the end and climbed the floors with quick movements and a determination to survive.

Of course, Lee Yeon-hee was also a great challenger, and she had excellent stats from the start since she was a former national archer.

However, in terms of mental abilities such as mental strength and concentration, Lee Hyung-jin would not be far behind me.

On the contrary, many aspects of him were better than me. His only downfall was his fear of pain and death.

Comparing Lee Yeon-hee and Lee Hyung-jin confirmed that the scale leaned toward Lee Hyung-jin.

“Should I save Hyung-jin?”

It was questionable whether I could revive the challenger and summon him. But whether it was possible or not, it was worth a try.

The idea still lingered that the dead one might not be the one to come out through the summons.

Nevertheless, I had no choice but to worry. That was how much regret I had.

I couldn't decide quickly, so I'd been putting it off until now, but it was still not easy.

After a long time of lying on the bed, I could give up my lingering regret for a moment. There must be a good reason why Kirikiri had repeatedly stressed that this was absolutely necessary.

And given the effect of this summon stone, it was easy to notice what Kirikiri wanted from me.

[Do you want to use the summon stone?]

“Yes.”

At my answer, the purple crystal began to shine brightly.

I didn't say anything else, but the summon began, as if it could read my thoughts, bringing forth the one in my mind. Smoke rose on the floor. It was a conventional form of summoning.

Out of all the people who I could've called, I summoned the Hell difficulty manager, Kirikiri.

It was Kirikiri.

“Hi!”

Through the smoke, fluffy rabbit ears popped up and greeted me.

Chapter 310

Seoul (14)

“Appear!” Kirikiri cheerfully explained.

What do you mean by ‘appear’?

I looked at Kirikiri, who had just appeared in the room, turn to her side as I lay in bed. Perhaps because of my unsurprised demeanor, Kirikiri pouted her lips. Then, she pushed my body away and laid on the side of the bed.

“Inconvenient.”

“Get up if you’re uncomfortable,” she said and made me move.

Kirikiri was not a stranger, but she wouldn’t be happy if I was doing anything else while she was explaining. At the very least, I had to feign attention in front of her.

Because I got up from my bed, Kirikiri brought a chair from the corner of the room, put it in front of the bed, sat down, and smiled at me.

It was unexpected. I thought she’d continue laying on the bed or sit on the floor. Kirikiri, who was sitting on a chair felt strange, out of place even.

Was the reason she rolled around on the ground, not because she didn’t have any manners but because she was on the fields?

Once again, it was unexpected. At that moment, I heard footsteps from outside the room.

In a few seconds, Yong-yong opened the door and ran in.

He clung to Kirikiri.

“Hi!”

“Hello!”

Are you gonna do that again?

It took a long while for Yong-yong and Kirikiri to finish twirling with their hands crossed and expressing their happiness before we could start conversing.

* * *

“You’re not surprised at all. Heng.”

“There’s nothing for me to be surprised about,” I said to Kirikiri, who had Yong-yong in her lap.

In the first place, I was the one who thought Kirikiri should be summoned, so why would it be surprising?

“How’s the Tutorial?”

“A total mess, haha.”

I didn’t think she should have laughed and talked so carelessly.

That being said, the situation was bound to be a mess. From the challengers’ point of view, the Tutorial was suddenly brought to a halt and locked up.

“It was too dangerous to keep the challengers in the waiting room. They’re planning to move all of them to a nearby residential area.”

That would be better. The longer people were trapped together, the more stable they would be. Above all, the waiting room on the Korean server was quite a good place to live.

When Kim Min-hyuk was there, the first goal of the Order of Vigilance was not to clear the Tutorial but to create a better environment. Of course, it was a few years ago, but the foundation they built at that time was not going anywhere.

The Order of Vigilance, who played the role of a manager, was still there, so it would run well.

“Do other servers have problems?”

“Yes, I don’t think the Day of Great Harmony can solve them.

The Day of Great Harmony gathered challengers and forced them to solve their own problems. Due to the nature of the Tutorial, there were certain problems that could only be solved when challengers met and discussed together. However, if the party causing the problem became a majority, the Day of Great Harmony would no longer be meaningful.

“We’re discussing whether to put apostles in.”

“Apostles?”

There have been several occasions of apostles entering the Tutorial—all of which were on the Hell difficulty level’s stage.

“You remember the Dragon we met on the 50th floor? Maybe it’ll be let in.”

“Oh, that coward dragon.”

I remembered the dragon from the second half of the Tutorial. The dragon said it belonged to the Hundred Gods Temple and was not an apostle of any god. I could trust that it would do well on its own.

I remember the first impression it made was terrible. He was weak and terrified, but the dragon faithfully did its job. The dragon chose stages that were of great help to me. I gained a lot back then, but the experience became more useful after being trapped on the 60th floor.

If I had passed the 50th floor meaninglessly, I might not have made it to where I am now.

“Give me Yong-yong.”

“Yes.”

Yong-yong dozed off while sitting on Kirikiri’s knee. I thought that it may be because it was time to sleep.

Because of last night, he must be exhausted. He couldn’t sleep because he went to catch the mantis and sobbed the entire time. I took Yong-yong from Kirikiri and hugged him tightly.

“Ehem ehem,” Kirikiri awkwardly coughed.

Having deliberately cleared her throat, Kirikiri spoke in a feigned serious voice. “According to your performance on Earth, the Hundred Gods Temple has decided to hand you the planet’s jurisdiction. The Earth is no longer under the Hundred Gods Temple’s joint jurisdiction, and all the gods have decided to give up their rights to the Earth.”

That was what I had heard from Kirikiri before coming out of the Tutorial. The Hundred Gods Temple wasn’t very interested in the Earth, so they could give me the rights to Earth. But I didn’t think they would hand it over to me for nothing.

Of course, I didn’t mean to refuse it.

“If you accept the transfer of jurisdiction, it will be dealt with immediately.”

“Of course, I accept.”

It was almost free. As soon as I said I would accept it, the eyes of the gods quickly disappeared.

Now the unpleasant glances were gone. Even though they were gods from the Hundred Gods Temple, they couldn’t directly watch me, but they could see how the Earth was moving and trace my movements.

The eyes of many gods, who were already fixed on the Earth, had made me feel very uncomfortable.

“I think there’s still one god watching the Earth.”

It was a familiar gaze. The God of Light. He was still looking at the earth, exuding off an aura of regret.

“Earth is no longer a zone of the Hundred Gods Temple, so it’s free for other gods to watch.”

“But now it’s my zone. I’d like them to stop looking into other people’s territory without permission.”

“The God of Light is always rude.”

After a while, the last remaining god’s gaze on Earth, the God of Light, disappeared. He left behind a few words before his presence disappeared entirely.

[Disappointed...]

[I’m so, so... disappointed.]

I knew what the God of Light had expected because it was obvious. He thought something would explode as soon as I got to Earth, but it was unexpectedly quiet, so I guess it was disappointing.

“Can’t you just hand over the Tutorial like this?”

“Of course not,” replied Kirikiri with a mischievous smile. “The Tutorial is extremely important. There are many reasons for that, but the biggest one is that you proved the Tutorial is handy. Above all, the need to foster apostles and provide means of self-defense on planets remains important.”

She shrugged her shoulders. “And in the case of Earth, it was easy to hand over the planet because not all of them were interested.”

It seemed like the Earth was almost like a nuisance. I asked about that.

“Earth is not a good planet to nurture faith in. When the Hundred Gods Temple first got interested, indigenous religions were already firmly established. Above all, the planet was highly developed and excessively polluted. No one was willing to take the loss and make it their territory, so it remained a common zone until the end.”

That’s true.

Faith didn’t require a high level of science. The existing religions on the planet were also slowly losing their effects as science and knowledge developed rapidly. In the meantime, it wouldn’t have been profitable to build a new religion and seek faith.

Even if one tried to show up in person and make changes, there would have been restrictions as it was a common area of the Hundred Gods Temple.

I thought that this wasn’t much different from a while ago.

“Of course, it had a large population, a long history of civilization, a diverse source, so it would have been a great place to extract the source from. Enough to risk invading the common zone of the Hundred Gods Temple.”

“Yes, I understand. It’s worth it.”

It was worth handing it over to me in just two days. I nodded absentmindedly.

Kirikiri said while nodding her head just like me, “Yes, yes, even more worth it, since it’s now a planet that’s on it’s last legs.”

“...Huh?”

* * *

The planet’s source depended on the history and the civilization of the

people living on it.

It was an unverified fact, but I was told that a planet whose source has been completely extracted would take a path towards decline.

I find it sufficient to compare the source to innate talent in martial arts. For the source to be present on a planet, it was more or less like a genius who was born with greater power than others...

When I asked Kirikiri about it, she said it was okay to think like that. When I checked the amount of source extracted from the dungeon we had visited today, I had already started thinking about this.

Too much of the source was already taken. Hochi said the total amount of source removed from the 89th-floor planet added up to about 100 billion points.

However, from the dungeons on Earth that we had checked, four times that number had already been taken.

“It was already a sick planet. But it has seriously deteriorated over the past few years.”

The monsters’ invasion destroyed the environment. Wild beasts, which were targeted by dungeons, went extinct, and the surrounding area was left contaminated by the destruction of power plants. The situation was even more grave because not only did nature suffer, but humans suffered significant damage as well.

The monsters caused severe economic damage, and the problem regarding the reduction of the population was still unresolved.

The aftereffects cut off international travel, leading to the supply of fuel and food decreasing. Of course, humans cannot tolerate the lack of something. As usual, the population took this as a threat to their survival, and started campaigns to get their hands on resources.

They cut down trees from all over the country to make up for the lack of fuel, and all plants and animals were hunted down, regardless of their species, to solve food shortages.

The situation significantly improved after the Awakened's numbers increased, which slowed the monsters' offense. But humans were still unable to recover from all the damage from the cataclysm.

"How much longer can they hold out?"

"From my personal estimation, about 500 years?" Kirikiri mused.

Five hundred years was too short even if it may seem like a long time for humans. It meant that there would only be a few generations left until the end of the Earth.

The destruction of the earth was a reasonably familiar problem for humans. Before introducing the Tutorial, many scholars assumed that the planet would fall in about 500 years.

How many novels and movies were there in the Apocalypse World View set on Earth 100 or 200 years later?

It could be destroyed in about 500 years. The prospect would come and go from people's minds.

There were worsening environmental and resource problems, the growing threat of nuclear war, and unexpected monsters.

If they couldn't help it, they may give up. Anyway, 500 years from now was not their problem. But I was different.

"Ah, I still have to think about the destruction of the earth."

I didn't like doing these kinds of things. But I was the only one who could think about this problem right now.

"What are your recommendations?"

"The Great Leaf. It could provide a place for humans to stay. Of course, you'll need to pay the price."

It was an option for now.

Let's just keep in mind that there is a means of last-minute evacuation.

* * *

After the story of Earth, the topic shifted back to the Tutorial. After a long explanation, Kirikiri rose from her chair.

I thought she was going back, but Kirikiri just stood up and stared at me.

“You want something else from me?”

“Yes!” Kirikiri answered, stamping her feet.

Only then did I understand. “You want a cake?”

“Yes!”

I left Yong-yong in bed and went down to the living room on the first floor with Kirikiri. Only Hochi was in the living room.

“Where is Kim Min-hyuk?”

“He’s gone.”

That’s how Hochi greeted Kirikiri. Kirikiri rushed towards the snack bar of the living room’s table, uninterested in anything else.

Seregia had finished many snacks, but there was still something left, perhaps thanks to Kim Min-hyuk’s continuous food supply.

I sat on the sofa and tried to turn on the TV by using the remote control. But the TV didn’t turn on.

“Kim Min-hyuk pulled out the cord earlier, should I put it back in?”

“No, thanks.”

There was nothing to see even if we plugged in the cord that had been pulled out.

Now I'll just have to worry about the Tutorial again. Today was almost over, and Yong-yong was asleep. I wanted to move again from tomorrow onwards.

"Hm, it womp bwe eashy." said Kirikiri, munching on a chocolate pie.

"What?"

"It's going to be hard to care about the Tutorial. You have to care about Earth, too."

There was nothing to care about.

Now, it was my territory.

I drove out the Rulers and their men.

"The earth is no longer under the protection of the Hundred Gods Temple. That means you have to replace their role by yourself. It's not going to be easy."

* * *

At the Korean Awakened Association.

Park Min hit his face on the desk in his office. He couldn't find an answer.

When Lee Ho-jae returned to Seoul, he had never thought that things would go this way. However, Lee Ho-jae's move was shocking.

He destroyed Seoul Station, showed his powers, and disappeared with Kim Min-hyuk.

Of course, people knew he was staying at a mansion near Seoul, but it was not made known to the press.

He immediately killed Pyongyang's G-class that night.

It was such a vain ending compared to Park Min's grand plan to keep the G-class in Pyongyang and increase profits.

Before he could get out of the shock, Ho-jae began to deal with the other G-classes one by one.

Before lunch, information came in that they had killed the Antarctic's G-class.

Thomas Feltchuk.

There was a G-class located in Antarctica, and he was someone who served under the G-class. He was also the first to introduce the G-class, which had moved to Pyongyang. He thought that the strength Thomas had wouldn't be inferior to Lee Jun-seok.

Instead, he thought that Thomas would give him a good blow. The death of Antarctica's G-class meant that he was dead.

It was hard to believe.

Kim Min-hyuk informed us that he had dealt with another G class in Russia while wondering if this was a true story.

There was a rumor that all G-classes had been killed before evening.

In countries near the G-class area, there were loads of rumors swirling around, saying that the G-class location was ruined and that monsters wandering around the neighborhood had been killed instantly.

The photos in Park Min's hands were proving that such information was not just a rumor.

It was a picture sent by the American Association. Several photos showed Antarctica's condition.

It looked like there had been a powerful explosion from the miserable

sight of the ice lands. Next was a picture of it slowly returning to its original state.

These pictures were real, not fabricated.

“He’s like a real god.”

The plan must be revised completely. Somehow, he had to stick to Lee Ho-jae now. He will make a new order.

It was not impossible for Ho-jae to actively cooperate with the president of the Association.

But...

“He said that? Kim Min-hyuk, head of the guild?”

“Yes.”

What happened this morning was a problem.

Lee Ho-jae moved Lee Sung-eun and the others to their homes.

When Park Min heard that, he thought Lee Ho-jae must have known Lee Sung-eun’s home address.

Kim Min-hyuk was next to Lee Ho-jae.

It was possible.

However, Oh Sang-jin, who returned late, said, “Guild leader Kim Min-hyuk seemed to have no idea about that.”

That was the problem.

If Lee Ho-jae can read the other person’s thoughts or find out information, it’s no use running away later.

He could find out that Park Min had used Pyongyang's G class and even tell what he had planned while contacting the other G-class.

Reading other people's thoughts was a god's power, but he had blown up Antarctica. There was nothing more strange than seeing the pictures of it being restored.

Most of all, reading other people's thoughts was something he had experienced several times while meeting with the Tutorial Manager.

If Lee Ho-jae's ability was similar to that, there really seemed to be no way to survive.

He had to make an appointment to visit Lee Ho-jae right away.

What was he supposed to say when he got there?

Even if he prepared a well-organized lie, how could he deceive someone who could read his mind?

How else could he persuade a man crazy enough to burn Seoul Station?

'Do you need help?'

An unfamiliar voice rang in Park Min's head, who was tearing his hair out.

The voice was so hushed, he didn't even notice it at first.

'Do you need help?'

"...What in the world?"

"Yes?"

"Nothing, go out."

Park Min hurriedly sent team leader Oh Sang-jin out of the office.

He asked back to the being questioning him in a quivering voice, "... Who are you?"

The voice answered slowly, 'Your hope.'

Chapter 311

Seoul (15)

Eventful was the best word to describe this year.

Although spring wasn't over, many events have already occurred that caused people to tremble in anxiety and fear.

First, the Tutorial stopped as soon as this year began.

But I didn't know if the word 'stopped', which the media used, was appropriate.

Although challengers had stopped returning to Earth, there may be something we didn't know about going on inside the Tutorial.

The number of people entering the Tutorial had decreased. As a result, martial arts academies and Tutorial preparation courses were suffering.

Recently, those who dreamed of the Tutorial, and treated it as a chance to reverse their lives, felt deprived of the opportunity they were supposed to be given.

No one knew when the Tutorial would resume. Maybe it would never.

However, every day was frustrating for those who gave up their studies and livelihoods to enter academies or were training their physical fitness for the slim chance of becoming a Tutorial challenger.

The more severe problem was that there were no returnees from the Tutorial and a decrease in new Awakened.

Since the cataclysm, humanity had steadily restored power.

Last year, the South Korean government announced that all of the nation's systems had been restored to normal, and the accident rate caused by the appearance of gates and attack of monsters stabilized.

Still, monsters remained throughout the country, but the safety of large cities like Seoul, Gyeonggi Province, and metropolitan cities had been secured. Protection around railroads and highways linking the cities improved.

Studies showed that the population's quality of life was improving rapidly every month, and netizens often said that things were becoming better.

Of course, this significant recovery was because of the decrease in the number of monsters.

There was no denying the countless bloody campaigns led by soldiers and the Awakened to protect the people. The fact that such Awakened would no longer come from the Tutorial led to serious concerns.

What would they do if monsters started to appear again? The supply of Awakened has stopped entirely, which increases the value of the Awakened that already exist.

The second problem was the emergence of the G-class monster in Pyongyang. It was ultimately subjugated, but it stirred chaos throughout the country.

The airports and ports filled with people rushing to go abroad, and the highway heading to Busan wasn't very different from a parking lot.

Questions about stopping evacuations and pushing ahead with subjugation had been raised. In the process, intense criticism was poured on the guild, which had been silent.

Experts speculated that this incident may lead to the worst outcome, especially when taking into account the rise in Awakened's value.

People feared the Korean Awakened who had returned to Korea may go abroad again.

It turned out that there was an intense backlash on the Korean people within the guild since most of its members were overseas citizens.

The third problem that had rattled Korea this year was the emergence of the Awakened Lee Ho-jae. As soon as he appeared, he exploded the square in front of Seoul Station, where many people had gathered. But little had been discussed about that incident.

Because after that day, that happened.

People were anxious instead of angry because the explosion revealed a power beyond imagination but produced no deaths. And early that day, the guild announced that Lee Ho-jae, the Awakened, had alone defeated Pyongyang's G-class.

It was too unrealistic to accept.

People were confused about how the G-class could be dealt with so easily and quickly, and whether it was right to subjugate it like this.

They got more news without even confirming whether the Pyongyang G-class was dead.

Early in the morning, G-classes were slaughtered every two or three hours, and eventually, all G-classes whose locations were known were destroyed before evening.

The government of each country was moving quickly, contrary to the reactions of those who were still confused even after a week.

Sankei News reported that Japan had already offered the largest-ever contract.

In the midst of this the Korean government announced that it will award an honorary medal to him, which raised concerns about the government's impractical actions and the need to retain Lee Ho-jae.

-wakdbe [1]

They're not going to give him the Medal of Honor to be patriotic, are

they? I hope not, really.

-skrkdmd

If I were him, I would go abroad.

The damage to monsters in Korea was not serious anyway, so it wasn't hard to handle them. In Southeast Asia, the Awakened were almost treated like kings.

-alnrldlkwnd

I expect him to go to the United States or China.

-rmsep dlwjdehaus

Isn't it that overwhelmingly strong for the Awakened? Not long ago, the other Awakened said that it was impossible to attack Pyongyang.

-vmdisd

I didn't think it would matter if they just released all the Awakened and signed only one person, Lee Ho-jae.

-xozmffj

In the first place, there were only a few who contracted with the Korean government.

-dcjjj

If he signed a contract, what would happen if he exploded again?

-ahfmrpTek

But was it true that the G-class was defeated?

Wasn't he just trying to f*ck with the government? It was almost

impossible to check because the G-class didn't move much.

-xozmffj

The same events played out in other countries such as Russia and Brazil.

-rrrrnrnr

In other countries, they called him God's warriors and the hope of humanity.

Why do Koreans not believe it?

-rmsepcn

But why did he blow up Seoul Station?

* * *

"Yes, why did he make it explode?"

Kim Min-hyuk, who was reading the article's comments, murmured.

There was an easy way to become famous: be treated as a hero by the people.

He clicked his tongue. It was just a pity.

"What."

"No, nothing."

When Kim Min-hyuk did not answer, Lee Ho-jae also turned his head as if he was not interested.

The two were now at the Sangam World Cup Stadium.

In the middle of the vast football stadium was a gate that had lost its light and appeared translucent. It was a closed gate, from which no monsters appeared.

“What do you say? Is this good enough?”

“Yes, it’s alright.”

It wasn’t alright. Although damaged, the World Cup stadium itself remained.

The location was good. One cannot even see anything amiss if they just put a lid on it. The Association had come up with the best they could when Lee Ho-jae asked for it.

“The president of the Association is carrying out the procedures of his father’s death?”

“Oh, he was fighting cancer. Maybe we should postpone our appointment until after the funeral.”

“Okay, then. We don’t have to meet him.”

As delays continued to stall the appointment, Park Min confided in Kim Min-hyuk about his relationship with the Mantis in advance.

When Park Min first met the mantis, he noticed that the mantis was relatively weak for a G-class. He confessed that he tried to increase his influence and widen the Association by meeting with Pyongyang’s G-class and succeeding in conquering it.

It was too much for the Association’s Awakened alone, but he thought it would be possible if it included the Guild’s Awakened, Lee Joon-suk, and Lee Ho-jae, who was expected to arrive soon.

His confession matched well with the testimony of the mantis.

“No, his efforts weren’t bad. Just that his ambition was a little bigger than his skills, so it’s hard to say anything. More than anything else, it’s like pulling someone out of mourning. Let’s leave him alone.”

Lee Ho-jae gave high marks that Park Min did not attach himself to the Ruler, but instead dug a trap to hunt the mantis. Of course, his purpose was personal gain, but it was the same for everyone.

He was going to see if he had told the truth or had any more information to hide, but he felt it was too much work to question the person in charge.

“For now, I’ll have to decorate it.” Lee Ho-jae said while looking around the empty soccer field.

Then, structures and furniture began to appear in the air. A ceiling appeared around the gate, and a wall was erected. A building appeared in the middle of the soccer field at once.

“Like a god...”

“Because I am a god,” Lee Ho-jae replied to Kim Min-hyuk, who looked dazed.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

The reason why a gate was needed was simple: to create a path to the Tutorial. To be more precise, make a way to the 60th floor of the Tutorial.

The gate wasn’t necessary, but it was better than nothing.

“It may take some time.”

“How long?” asked Kim Min-hyuk.

To be honest, I couldn’t guarantee it either.

“At best it could be a month, but it could also be never.”

I had to connect my area on the 60th floor of the Tutorial with this

place, but the problem was that I couldn't be sure how long it would take to locate it.

I expected it to resolve within a few months, but it was hard to be sure.

"That's too long. Is it something you have to do right now?" asked Kim Min-hyuk.

Of course, it was something that I had to do right away. It was very urgent.

For me, my area on the 61st floor was more important than the Earth or the people on the Earth.

Without the Old Man and Grandma, there was no one to take care of the place.

I wanted to have it connected to here as soon as possible. There wouldn't be any problems right now, but I felt weirdly uncomfortable.

It was similar to how I felt when I didn't close the front door of my house, and didn't turn off the stove.

It also included specific measures to get ownership of the Tutorial from Kirikiri.

I wanted to make a connection with the Hundred Gods Temple before I dealt with them directly.

"If there's any problem, then..."

"Tell Hochi. He'll take care of it."

While I was busy, I decided to fix and hand over the earth's dungeons in return for Kim Min-hyuk's favor.

As Hochi liked dungeons, I thought he would do Kim Min-hyuk's favor well.

“Hmm...”

Kim Min-hyuk seemed somewhat dubious.

Was he nervous?

That fellow was always so worried that it was hard to tell.

* * *

“Of course, just call me.”

At Hochi's confident answer, Kim Min-hyuk was somewhat relieved.

Hochi shut the novel he was reading aloud.

“You don't have to help me right now. If there's a problem later on, then...”

“No, I just happened to finish reading all the novels here.”

Kim Min-hyuk thought about the number of novels and comic books he had in here. It wasn't enough to finish reading in just a week.

Of course, it was a little different for Hochi who didn't sleep and read all week.

“Should I get you some more books?”

Kim Min-hyuk thought that he'd read almost all the novels already in the bookstore, but he was willing to find him new novels if Hochi wanted it.

“Nah, I've read enough, so I'll do something else.”

Kim Min-hyuk felt uneasy again.

What do you mean something else?

“I’m going out.”

“...where?”

“To buy something delicious.”

Kim Min-hyuk felt his heart pound.

Hochi shouldn’t be in front of people now. It’d be crazy.

“...Can’t I just buy it for you?”

Hochi shook his head firmly.

“I wanted to go to the restaurant and try it myself. I want a drink! Yong-yong, you’re coming too, right?”

Then Yong-yong, who was sitting on Hochi’s lap, nodded and stood up. Kim Min-hyuk’s anxiety spiked.

“Seregia, let’s go. I’ll buy you something delicious.”

Seregia, who had been sitting quietly on the sofa, jumped up from her seat as if it were natural.

Kim Min-hyuk grew beyond anxious and desperate at that sight.

[1] The text was really written like that. As for why we do not yet know.

Chapter 312

Seoul (16)

Fortunately, Kim Min-hyuk was able to persuade Hochi. He didn't dissuade or stop him from going outside. He just prevented him from taking the wrong way, saying he would bring him to a delicious restaurant he knew.

However, Kim Min-hyuk felt he had overcome one big crisis.

If Hochi had gone outside and walked down the street, gazing and searching around for different kinds of restaurants... It would have gotten crazy to the point where Kim Min-hyuk didn't even want to imagine the situation that would take place after that.

Kim Min-hyuk took Hochi, Seregia, and Yong-yong to a nearby Korean restaurant.

He had been there quite a few times before. They had seats in individual rooms, so they wouldn't have to encounter other customers.

They weren't concerned about spreading rumors because of the thorough training the employees there received.

Fortunately, it was not mealtime, so they never ran into anyone else in the restaurant. However, they had no choice but to interact with the staff who guided the group to the room.

And so, they chatted a little bit.

"Isn't that him?"

"I think you're right."

"Hey, he's the guild leader. I've been to the guild before. I'm sure it's

that guy.”

“How interesting. People like that live in their own world.”

Of course, Kim Min-hyuk had to eat to live. The others didn’t have to.

Kim Min-hyuk was also an Awakened, so he could hear the staff’s murmurs from the room’s corner. The others must have heard it, but they went into the assigned room without a care.

Kim Min-hyuk came out separately and asked the manager not to spread rumors on SNS. The manager assured him that it would not happen, but Kim Min-hyuk was dubious.

After talking to the manager, Kim Min-hyuk entered the room late, and Hochi was already ordering food.

“From here to here, please,” Hochi said, dragging his finger from the menu’s first to last page.

The puzzled waitress looked at Kim Min-hyuk instead of Hochi.

Kim Min-hyuk asked Hochi on behalf of the employee’s innermost thoughts. “...Are you planning on eating everything?”

“Of course.”

Hochi was sure. Kim Min-hyuk was about to ask the employees to bring everything, but then he remembered some course menus on the menu.

Even if they ate all day, they couldn’t possibly finish.

Hochi said with a smile as the waitress went out, “Ha! I wanted to give it a try.”

Kim Min-hyuk murmured inwardly, “I knew it.”

So instead of ordering the whole menu, he just let them order to their

tastes.

“Good job,” Seregia praised Hochi.

Her posture was upright.

Seregia, who enjoyed sprawling across the sofa, seemed annoyed by how she had to sit upright.

“But at this rate...”

Kim Min-hyuk thought it was a relief that nothing had gone astray. Accidents could have happened many times, just coming this far.

Fortunately, so far, everyone had been calm, not creating any major accidents, either because of their desire for delicious food or because of the excitement of coming outside.

Come to think of it, Yong-yong was exceptionally quiet.

“Uncle.”

“Yes, Yong-yong?”

Just in time, Yong-yong called out to Hochi. Kim Min-hyuk was most worried about Yong-yong.

Children often made a fuss in restaurants.

If Yong-yong brought out the mantis, it wouldn’t end up simply as a disturbance, but something far worse.

“Can’t we have the mantis with us?” Yong-yong said, pointing to the mantis trapped in the box.

Hochi readily gave consent.

“Yes, you can. Let’s eat together.”

‘No!’ Kim Min-hyuk wanted to shout out aloud.

Sitting side by side with a G-class monster? Kim Min-hyuk wouldn’t be able to bury it no matter how much he paid onlookers and reporters.

But before Kim Min-hyuk could even open his mouth to persuade them, Yong-yong had already taken the mantis out.

Kim Min-hyuk couldn’t bring himself to tell the child to put it back.

* * *

The food came out, and the meal was more peaceful than Kim Min-hyuk thought it would be. It was especially impressive to see the mantis eating with manners.

“You eat human food well,” Hochi commented.

“I usually eat everything nicely,” the mantis answered.

The fact that it was eating with etiquette was a big blessing. It’d be even better if humans weren’t part of its diet.

Anyway, they were all enjoying the food, and Hochi had fun eating.

Seregia and the mantis really ate well.

Whenever Yong-yong became interested in the employee serving the food, Kim Min-hyuk’s whole body froze, succumbing to a terror, but it never turned into a big problem.

Of course, Kim Min-hyuk was not able to eat properly because of his nervousness and anxiety.

He was nervously chewing on his food when the door opened again.

He thought there might be a new dish that a waitress was bringing in, but instead, an old man entered.

The old man introduced himself as the store's owner and thrust a pen and paper at Hochi.

"I'm sorry, but may I ask for your autograph? I've been a fan since you were a professional gamer."

Hochi picked up the pen and paper and thought for a moment. He didn't say that he wasn't Ho-jae.

He was not Ho-jae, but his clone, but it was more troublesome to explain that he was a completely different being.

It would just make them more confused by explaining.

'Ah, how am I supposed to sign?'

Hochi didn't even know how to sign autographs. He grabbed the pen.

Hochi was somewhat excited.

Suddenly, someone took the pen away from Hochi, who had been thrilled and was debating how to sign it.

"What are you doing?"

It was Lee Ho-jae. He snatched the pen away, signed the page, and returned it to the owner.

"When did you come?" Hochi asked with a hoarse voice.

"Just now. This man asked me to sign."

Then the owner talked to Ho-jae for a while. He really felt like a true fan.

"Of course. I went there during the finals. At that time..."

When they heard that, they could tell the owner was a real fan.

The two briefly talked about the past.

The owner looked really stoked. He apologized for interrupting the meal, and left at the right time.

“What a surprise,” Kim Min-hyuk commented.

When Lee Ho-jae appeared and took away the pen, Kim Min-hyuk could feel his heart pounding once again.

He was worried that he might beat the owner up, but he had acted more rational than Kim Min-hyuk had expected.

“Why on earth did you think of this as a surprise?” Lee Ho-jae questioned as if it felt unfair.

Hochi, Seregia, and even Yong-yong looked surprised.

Yong-yong even looked a bit dazed.

Lee Ho-jae stroked Yong-yong’s head and told Kim Min-hyuk next to him. “You asked me to work, but then why are you working?”

Then he reached out and picked up a braised short ribs and disappeared again.

It was a sudden exit, just like his unexpected entrance.

It had been a short visit, but Lee Ho-jae’s appearance had made a big impact on the table.

He disappeared with a handful of braised short ribs.

Hochi and Seregia’s eyes were glued on the braised short ribs bowl.

Cheng!

The two chopsticks clashed in the air.

“You’ll yield this to me, won’t you? I haven’t tried any of it yet.”

“No.”

While watching the two of them swinging their chopsticks in a silly fight, Kim Min-hyuk called in an employee to order another braised short ribs.

He thought to himself, “...I can’t do this. If he leaves them alone with me, I’ll die of stress first.”

Lee Ho-jae had told Kim Min-hyuk to ask Hochi to do whatever he wanted. But Kim Min-hyuk had no intention of doing so.

It would have been good if they had just stayed calm in the flat, but Hochi and the rest didn’t want to do that.

If they were going to behave like this, he should have never let them out. He was sure there would be trouble somewhere.

Or maybe Kim Min-hyuk himself would explode under stress.

Kim Min-hyuk decided it was better to let Ho-jae get to work.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

I was back at the Sangam World Cup Stadium. It was strange to meet a fan of my professional-gamer self after such a long time.

When I was a professional gamer, I didn’t pay much attention to my fans. The most important thing to me was the game and my victory.

Now that I thought about it, it was not much different from the relationship between a god and their believers. However, the relationship differed in terms of faith, power, performance, and support.

It didn't seem like a bad idea to get together with my old fans. Some fans were so enthusiastic that I still remembered them, but the man I met at the restaurant was not a fan I remembered. He was probably one of the countless fans who came to the stadium.

Actually, at first, I assumed he was saying he was nothing more than that. When the man with thinning hair said he was my fan, I thought he just wanted to be friends with me. But after listening to what he said, I learned he genuinely was my fan from when I was a professional gamer.

He had said he was 36 years old—just a little old-fashioned and younger than me.

I could tell that I was quite old for a human. Considering all the time distortions I had experienced on the 60th floor, how old was I now?

I didn't know. It may have only been a dozen years or might have been thousands. However long it was, it was long enough to make it difficult to calculate.

Whenever I was engrossed in doing something, I ignored the time. It was an old habit of mine.

It'd completely escape my mind, and wouldn't realize until later.

My mental health or proficiency had not been affected by the passage of time, and my habits remained unchanged. The tendency to forget about time had become more pronounced since I turned into a god. Perhaps you could say it was a side effect of gaining godhood.

Changing habits was not easy.

“Quest Window.”

A hologram, akin to a system window, floated before my eyes. The Quest window contained the talks of the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple. And there was only one thing they wanted from me.

[God of Duel-Return of Powers]

[God of Light-Zit Pop! Blow it up!]

[God of Death-Thanatode Purification] [1]

Some gods offered simple conditions like the God of Duel. Some asked for something like the God of Death. And some even asked for something as absurd as the God of Light.

What was I supposed to do for the God of Light?

Should I go to a planet with no one there and make it explode? Or maybe I should show him the incineration of a sub-dimensional space?

[God of Order-?]

[God of Adventure-?]

Some gods had question marks behind their names. These gods haven't specified what they wanted yet.

It was tricky. I had to wait to ask for something while the gods could freely ask me to do whatever they wanted. If I didn't obey, they would make it so that I wouldn't get what I wanted.

If that had been the only way, I'd be happy not to do anything overall. But this quest window was made by Kirikiri.

I didn't want to take it. I didn't like it very much, and above all, I was unwilling to do these tasks and didn't desire anything from the gods.

In the end, I still accepted it.

"I still don't like it."

Suddenly, Kirikiri's face hovered over the quest window. She looked a little disappointed.

"Heng, I made it. The system didn't make it."

“That’s why I took it.”

If Kirikiri had not made it, I would’ve never accepted it. Another reason for receiving the quest window was that it made communication with Kirikiri easier.

“Can I enter?” Kirikiri asked.

I nodded. Kirikiri disappeared from the quest window, and after a while, she popped out of the air.

“Tada! I’m here!”

“What are you so happy about?”

Kirikiri looked around.

“Is this a temple?”

“Mn.”

I was going to use this place as a temple. It was still plain in many ways, but I could leave that to Yong-yong. I knew he would decorate it enough to lead us to a world filled with grandeur and beauty.

“Heng, how’s the quest?”

“I’ll start when I connect to the 60th floor. I think I can do the quests one by one.”

I had to fulfill the requests of the gods one by one. Just in case, I had to make sure their conditions didn’t become twisted.

There was no such risk right now, so I was going to solve the simple ones first. The first thing to deal with was the God of Duel.

In the God of Duel’s case, there was nothing to worry about. He simply wanted his power returned. That was all.

There has been no talk of the price of using the power so far or if the power could be revoked, or offering a new power. I only had to give it back.

Until now, the God of Duel did not seem interested in how weak the power would be, and what changes I'd made. This simplistic way of thinking alone showed how harmless the God of Duel was.

The God of Duel was a god who did not become the enemy of anyone unless they created a situation in which he had to fight. And with my nature, the God of Duel could not threaten me even if I became his enemy.

"You're not trying to fight, are you?" Kirikiri asked with a slightly worried look.

"No. Do you think I'm a gangster who'll challenge anyone to a fight? "

"...Heng."

What was with that pause? I feel like she does think that way.

Bitter. An acrid taste lingered in my mouth.

I asked the question I had prepared. "I have a question."

"What is it?" Kirikiri was still very lively.

"What does the God of Adventure want from me?"

"Heng-heng, I don't know."

I looked seriously at Kirikiri, who spoke in a mischievous tone.
"Kirikiri."

At my pressing voice, Kirikiri puffed out her cheeks. Then she began to engage in a serious conversation. "I'm worried about you."

"What?"

There's nothing to worry about. I don't think I'm going to be in huge danger again.

Even so, I was confident of getting through.

"You're taking one step—one step towards your goal. I expected everyone to give up on the way, but you came all the way here. I don't think you'll give up, change your mind, or break before you reach your goal."

The question grew bigger in my mind.

Then why?

"I'm worried about what will happen after you achieve your goal."

I sat in silence for a moment to think of the meaning behind her statement.

"Everything has an end. You, who always moves forward, will have to stop someday. Not because of a wall you cannot surpass, but because you will inevitably reach the finish line."

"So, what do you want from me?" I unconsciously answered in a slightly high-pitched voice.

"Heng-heng, don't be so angry," Kirikiri laughed playfully.

As always.

"You've always acted according to what you think is right. Naturally, you'll get the consent of the God of Adventure." Kirikiri, who left with those last words, disappeared back into the air.

The temple, which had been a little noisy for a while, was desolate again. My quiet sigh echoed in the temple. As expected, it was tricky.

Chapter 313

Japan (1)

“Ah, I’m so drunk.”

Don’t joke like that. Kim Min-hyuk managed to swallow the words that bubbled up to his throat.

Hochi was emptying his glass of soju and then stumbled drunkenly and slurred his words. Of course, this situation wasn’t real.

Even the average Awakened couldn’t easily get drunk, so Hochi couldn’t have gotten drunk after just a few glasses of soju.

Kim Min-hyuk endured Hochi’s behaviour with a patient heart, pretending nothing was wrong.

“Hey! Anyone can get drunk if they drink! Why are you looking at me like that?”

Of course, a person can get drunk while drinking. They may also behave differently than usual. However, he thought it wasn’t right of Hochi to pretend to be drunk even though he wasn’t.

Whatever Kim Min-hyuk thought, Hochi kept emptying his glass. He lowered his head and sighed loudly.

Hochi looked drunk as hell, and his acting was exceptional.

“Hey... I have a problem,” Hochi said.

Hochi was pretending to be drunk because he wanted to talk about this problem.

From what he read in the books, characters often talked aboutt their

troubles while drunk and revealed rather embarrassing stories in the open. Most importantly, there was no worry about being ashamed of them.

His train of thought was a side effect of learning about the world only through writing.

Kim Min-hyuk thought about ignoring Hochi's words for a while, but he finally decided to answer back.

"What problem do you have?"

"Career Problem."

That was a grave concern. Unlike Kim Min-hyuk, who was dispirited, Hochi was extremely serious.

"What should I do in the future?"

Kim Min-hyuk had nothing to say. He didn't know much about Hochi.

He was proud to know quite a bit about Lee Ho-jae, but the only thing he knew about Hochi was that he was Lee Jo-jae's clone, liked to eat, read novels, and was occasionally childish.

So Kim Min-hyuk gave him the best answer he could think of. "Would it be possible to live doing what you want to do?"

Hochi became more serious upon hearing those words.

* * *

Kim Min-hyuk eventually decided to give Hochi a job.

That was also a silent indication that he would rather throw a bomb at others rather than suffer from a stress-induced attack.

And after hearing Hochi's troubles, there was one thing he was sure of. Kim Min-hyuk couldn't leave Hochi, who was agonizing over his

future, alone at home. Even if Kim Min-hyuk tried to stop him, he was sure that Hochi would go out and try different things.

Kim Min-hyuk quickly looked for work for Hochi. He resolved the issues with the government, which he had considered most seriously.

Instead of letting Hochi do some work for the government, Kim Min-hyuk quickly got the government to agree to cover up the Seoul Station incident neatly.

A few days later...

Hochi, Seregia, and Yong-yong boarded a plane departing for Japan.

“Can’t we just fly straight there?” Seregia asked. She laid on her back with her pulled back to its limit. She was talking with her head turned to the side.

Hochi thought it was a little strange for her to ask that while she was having more fun eating in-flight meals earlier than anyone else.

“We can’t. We’re going with the Korean government.”

After finishing talking, Hochi glanced at Lee Joon-suk. Lee Joon-suk nodded as if he was right.

Flying without permission came under the jurisdiction of one law or another.

However, the biggest problem would be if the Japanese side perceived the unauthorized entry of Hochi and his party as a serious threat.

In that case, the situation would become very dangerous. For Japan, at least.

Lee Joon-suk was extremely anxious.

He had no idea why Kim Min-hyuk was sending them to Japan with him.

In fact, he had just gotten his hands on a bomb.

All the more so because Lee Joon-suk had seen Yong-yong cry in front of the corpse of a bloody mantis in Pyongyang.

No one knew who was going to die by mistake this time.

He had hoped Hochi would clamp down Yong-yong's behavior a little more, but Hochi didn't seem to have any intention of doing so.

Compared to Lee Joon-suk, who was in deep thoughts, Hochi was busy looking out the window.

He couldn't get enough of the scenery outside the window.

It was beautiful.

He wondered why the others were not interested.

The cool open blue sea made his heart cool just by looking at it.

Maybe it was because Hochi was born and raised on the 60th floor.

Yong-yong was too, but Hochi's position was slightly different.

When Hochi was born, the 60th floor was a place that had collapsed because of Lee Ho-jae's whims and he had to rebuild it from time to time.

It had always been dark, chaotic.

It was Hochi's daily routine to spend time in the rubble of some collapsed buildings.

Ever since Hochi was declared useless, he had always been stuck in the rubble.

At that time, Lee Ho-jae didn't even want to think of Hochi.

He may have wanted to treat it as if it had never happened.

Remains of buildings piled up in a corner because he was too lazy to rebuild after destroying them.

With that, Hochi thought his situation was no different.

Maybe that's why he was used to being trapped in a narrow place.

And when his eyes fell on the expansive view in front of him, he felt a strange emotion surging in him.

* * *

“Wow!”

He let out a gasp.

Was the airport supposed to be this noisy?

Hochi thought to himself.

A camera flash went off from the front.

It was distracting.

Seregia quickly disappeared.

The reporters and the crowd who witnessed it became more surprised, and shouts and whispers rang out.

Lee Joon-suk was looking at Hochi and Yong-yong with anxious eyes.

Of course, it was a welcome from Japan, but usually, Awakened people did not like the situation.

“Hello!”

Fortunately, it seemed that Yong-yong liked it.

Lee Joon-suk's heart was about to jump out of his throat.

At the moment, he was very nervous because he thought Yong-yong was going to do something else other than greeting.

His only consolation was that Hochi was holding Yong-yong.

Initially, he had to give a brief interview, but Lee Joon-suk tried to get them out of the airport as soon as possible.

With his subpar Japanese, he urged the bodyguards to move ahead. He claimed to be a guard and sent the party through the crowd.

Sometimes whenever Yong-yong gave a high five to someone's hand, a bead of sweat rolled down Lee Joon-suk's face.

Only after getting in the waiting limousine did Lee Joon-suk breathe with ease.

Although he had superhuman lung capacity, the lack of breathing from psychological pressure was inevitable.

"But is the airport always like this? You used to come to Korea very quietly," asked Hochi.

Of course, he always came quietly to Korea.

Kim Min-hyuk had never tried to expose his entrance to the public.

This trip was a huge sensation in Korea, too.

Hochi's dispatch to Japan was reported as breaking news.

The government tried to arrange a press conference, including them.

They even scheduled a visit to the Blue House and a meeting and planned to broadcast the entire departure process live, but all of it fell

through because of Kim Min-hyuk's fierce opposition.

In the end, the government had to be satisfied with putting the words "government supervision" in front of the party's departure to Japan.

"Because Min-hyuk isn't in Japan."

Hochi was quickly convinced.

There were a few more reasons.

Kim Min-hyuk had made sure that the Japanese government understood his intentions, but the Japanese government ignored it.

It wasn't a correct decision for this situation, but the Japanese government was in a hurry.

While the world was slowly stabilizing, Japan was still one of the countries classified as the front line.

It was difficult for them, considering that most of the people on the front lines were originally from third-rate countries or remote areas with few people.

In the meantime, the influx of Awakened was decreasing, and the Awakened people responsible for the Japanese front were starting to leave Japan one by one.

Even awakened Japanese have begun to stick to the goal of individual advancement rather than joining in melting the crisis.

The people thought it would be better to go abroad before it was too late.

The sun was setting.

It was so dark that he couldn't see it beyond the horizon.

That was the world's judgment on Japan, and the truth was.

“It’s my first time out of the country.”

Hochi mumbled.

Not really.

The South Pole was also a foreign place.

Anyway, this was the first time that Hochi had ever been abroad in his perception.

“I’ve been to Japan.” said the mantis, who was sitting quietly in the box.

“Oh, yeah?” Hochi asked in wonder.

And Lee Joon-suk felt gloomy inside.

He didn’t care about that.

The tiny collection box was hanging on Yong-yong’s neck.

The wart that looked like a winged female human being in that box.

This was going to become a huge mess in its own way.

‘I don’t care anymore. It’s going to work somehow.’

After thinking for a while, Lee Joon-suk finally gave up.

The mantis talked about its experiences when it came to Japan.

“The eastern coast of Japan is a disaster. Awakened people from different countries and groups form a military camp, and monsters pop up once in a while from the coast. It’s almost like a mobile game.”

A G-class monster referring to mobile games.

It was the end of life.

“Sometimes monsters come out in large numbers, or stronger ones come out. Humans call them ‘waves’.”

“Oh.”

Hochi was very interested.

The wave in eastern Japan was a very grave threat that had been mentioned a few years ago as ‘The reason for the end of East Asia’.

“Then I got mixed up with the Awakened. It’s so crazy when there’s a wave. Well, there wasn’t much talking or anything. We just ate all that we can see.”

The mantis recalled the days with a sigh...

Lee Joon-suk had no choice but to feel disgusted at the mantis talking in a nostalgic tone.

Among those who died in Japan were Lee Joon-suk’s former colleagues.

“You can’t eat anyone now.”

“Did you get caught?”

Yong-yong and Hochi said to the mantis.

Unfortunately, no one among them felt the same way as Lee Joon-suk.

* * *

“I’m sure.”

Park Min answered to the voice that asked again.

The voice asked Park Min as if it was dissatisfied.

‘Your voice sounds weak. What’s the matter?’

At the question, Park Min started to feel angry.

No matter how hard he tried to conceal his feelings, the god tried to bring out his hidden feelings.

Park Min asked back like a beast growling in a low tone.

“...what do you mean?”

God was amused to hear the voice.

‘Now it sounds better. That’s not weak, but I do sense hatred.’

Park Min didn’t say anything more.

Instead, a crackling sound came out of his mouth quietly.

‘Why can’t you be a little more grateful? I think I saved your life.’

The voice wasn’t serious, asking for a severe change of attitude.

Instead, it was a playful, teasing way of speaking.

The voice was right.

If Park Min had met Lee Ho-jae as scheduled, his head would have been pulled out at once.

Lee Ho-jae had no intention of hunting G-class in Park Min’s mind, and he could probably see that Park Min wanted to take advantage of the confusion that G-class would bring.

The result would have been the same, even if any excuse had been prepared.

The god spoke to Park Min, who was struggling in the office.

Let's make a deal.

The deal was simple.

Let's cooperate to drive out our common enemy named Lee Ho-jae.

First, the god made Park Min and Lee Ho-jae not meet, and Park Min decided to let them know Lee Ho-jae and his party's ways.

The god kept his word.

By murdering Park Min's father, who was lying in bed.

It was Park Min himself who wanted to avoid Lee Ho-jae.

However, he did not want to make such an extreme escape by his father's death.

'Are you sure you have the right information?'

He wanted to yell at him to get out of his head at once, with a hate-filled voice.

But he couldn't scream like that, since he would just be driving a knife inside his own chest.

He could not give the god's assistance up now.

The result was obvious if the god refused to help.

He would either hide somewhere and live as a fugitive for the rest of his life, or he'll die because of Lee Ho-jae.

He could have died at once by the hands of the God of Hope.

It wasn't because he was wasting his life.

Nor was it because of his ambition.

What had already been lost was too great.

To make it meaningless, Park Min had to win in the end.

There was no turning back, no breaking-off, no way out.

“...yes, only the three of them are going to Japan. Lee Ho-jae is still in Seoul. And he was said to out-of-town for a while because he had some work to do.”

Chapter 314

Japan (2)

As per usual, after Kim Min-hyuk arrived, he said, “How come you seem to be resting every time I visit?”

It was a statement I used to hear in middle school. How come you’re always playing games?

“I just came out, so I’m resting.” It was the same excuse I used in middle school. But it was true.

“No, really. Four times a day? Why do I only ever see you resting?”

Well, when I worked, I sped up the time. I just wanted to rest when it was time to rest.

Considering the time manipulation, it was highly likely that Kim Min-hyuk would see me resting when he visited.

I couldn’t explain it in detail, so I just shrugged and turned my eyes to the quest window.

“That’s the quest window, isn’t it? I see you looking at it often,” asked Kim Min-hyuk.

I had no choice but to keep looking into the quest window. It continuously renewed conditions. Maybe postponing the quests was the wrong decision.

“Amazing. Solving the Hundred Gods Temple’s quests and taking ownership of the Tutorial in return.”

“What’s amazing about it?”

“The fact that you do business with the gods.”

That was not a lot to be amazed at. However, becoming an apostle and getting power in the first place was probably a big deal for him.

Oh, had Kim Min-hyuk ever gotten a power skill? Probably not. He was from Normal difficulty level after all, so that was understandable.

[God of Death: Destroy the Ruler's Base in Thanatode and eliminate the Ruler]

It had changed again. Initially, the quest proposed by the God of Death was the purification of Thanatode.

Why was it changing?

Had the gods started to give out more difficult quests because of the power I showed in Antarctica?

That could have been the reason.

But I felt the quests were getting more and more violent. It wasn't just the quests given by the God of Death, but most of the quests given by other gods were becoming violent as well.

The quests to check, purify, search, and retrieve slowly turned into pursuits to destroy, eradicate, and murder.

There were factions in the Hundred Gods Temple: gods who defended the Rulers and the gods who didn't.

Kirikiri said the Hundred Gods Temple was bound to spread to the Rulers, and that there was a god who interacted with the Rulers.

There were two factions: gods who intruded into other gods' realm and blocked the Rulers who were extracting their source, and the gods doing business with the Rulers.

On the other hand, there were some gods who were similar to Kirikiri

and were not happy with the Rulers' work. They showed more of a neutrality or a wait-and-see attitude.

The complex relationships each god had, even outside of factions, were also intertwined.

The place where gods with violent relationships gathered was the Hundred Gods Temple. This system of gods helped to prevent them from causing problems.

But in this system there is a way to ignore the regulations: giving me quests.

This was going to be a mess. No matter how much I thought about it, I still felt the same. It was bound to be a mess.

First of all, I tried to understand the relationships between the gods by looking at the quest window.

I couldn't figure out which faction was making the quest and with what intentions, but I had to know which side had more power.

There could be a situation where I had to side with one of them after all. I read the quest window carefully and looked at Kim Min-hyuk again. Kim Min-hyuk had taken out his cell phone and was looking at something.

"What is it?"

"I'm having a meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister."

I glanced at Kim Minhyuk's cell phone. Hochi, Yong-yong, Lee Joon-suk, and people who appeared to be Japanese government employees, sat side by side on chairs.

I'd seen this scene a lot on the news: politicians pretending to be in a heated debate for the camera.

Wait, where is Seregia? I couldn't see her.

Yong-yong, who remained calm, was whispering in Hochi's ear. I couldn't hear the words over the cell phone.

"What is he talking about?"

"Yong-yong says he's sleepy."

Then Hochi and Yong-yong disappeared from the cell phone screen. Empty chairs remained in their absence. The Japanese Prime Minister and Lee Joon-suk seemed to be confused.

"Bwahahaha!" I couldn't help but laugh. It was quite hilarious to see the elderly Japanese Prime Minister and Lee Joon-suk look around, confused.

Secondly, I couldn't help but laugh at the sight of bodyguards rushing in and surrounding the Prime Minister.

"...You are having fun? I'm dying here."

Yeah, it's fun. It was strange that it wasn't funny for him.

"...Eventually, an accident took place."

"What's wrong with it? I think Yong-yong went back to the hotel for a while because he was sleepy."

It was wrong to try to turn them into political figures in the first place.

"I don't know... I just don't know," Kim Min-hyuk mumbled with his face scrunched up. He watched his phone for a while before heading back to the temple.

I'll take care of it.

* * *

When Hochi and Yong-yong met Lee Joon-suk again, Lee Joon-suk was in tears.

Lee Joon-suk said in a voice filled with resentment and sorrow, "You can't just go away like that."

"Hi!" Regardless, Yong-yong excitedly greeted Lee Joon-suk. While Lee Joon-suk was thinking about accepting his greeting or not, Yong-yong approached and patted him on the back.

"Haha, so cute."

The human figure, who was upset with Yong-yong, looked cute to him. It was amusing to see a small Yong-yong struggle to hit Lee Joon-suk's back because he was so short in comparison.

Unfortunately, whenever Yong-yong's palm touched his back, Lee Joon-suk's backbone jolted in pain. Eventually, Lee Joon-suk had to bury the strong complaints he had held in his mind all day long.

Instead, he timidly said, "People's attitudes will be different from yesterday."

"Why?"

"...You went away like that yesterday, so of course..."

Of course, Hochi didn't understand. Lee Joon-suk had to break it down and explain.

"It's considered impolite to leave for personal reasons suddenly. Even if you have important personal reasons, it's not at all a good idea to disappear without informing someone."

"Ahhh, I get it."

"So these are table manners," Hochi mumbled to himself.

It had a subtle difference, but he understood anyway.

"...And more than anything, yesterday's meeting was really important. It was being broadcasted live all over Japan. It was not a private

meeting, but a meeting with the Prime Minister representing Japan. The Japanese people may think we ignored them because we abruptly left.”

Public opinion.

Of course, Hochi was well aware of public opinion’s importance, but he couldn’t relate to it.

So Hochi had no choice but to face people without any complaints.

The Japanese, who he faced again following yesterday, had more hostility than Hochi had expected.

* * *

The travel to the east coast scheduled for tomorrow had been postponed. The entire schedule seemed to have been changed, or more accurately, cancelled. Inside the vehicle heading for the eastern coast, Hochi was delighted.

“Sweet!” Hochi exclaimed and gave a high-five to Yong-yong.

Lee Joon-suk... looked very serious, but even he had decided to turn a blind eye to this situation. He had no choice but to be glad that all the troublesome meetings were canceled.

They had faced people who had come to dislike them, but they were just a little bothered, not offended. Instead, they felt sorry for the Japanese. Lee Joon-suk didn’t express his bad sentiments about Hochi and the rest.

It was the right expression to say that he couldn’t. Hochi’s party would be a big help to Japan, which was in crisis.

He just swallowed back his words and lost the admiration that had risen in him yesterday. He felt slight contempt and annoyance as well as a strong sense of shame, humiliation and jealousy.

To Hochi, this was all a surprise. Surprisingly enough, he felt sorry for

them...

Lee Joon-suk's sense of belonging to the country was well known to Hochi. But he didn't know it had been strong enough to hurt his own feelings. It was almost as if he thought of the nation as his family or more.

"I can't be an Awakened."

"What?" asked Lee Joon-suk.

Before coming to Japan, Kim Min-hyuk had made a suggestion to Hochi, who was worried about his career.

"If you're worried about what you're going to do, why don't you try being an Awakened?"

It was a good thing to save people, a source of envy, make a lot of money, and it's a job that Hochi could do well.

There were many advantages.

Hochi also seriously thought about it. Most of all, Hochi was deeply impressed by the fact that he was told he could do it well. But now that he saw it, it was a little hard.

What kind of a human hero would he be if he couldn't empathize with humans? For Hochi, their praise and support would also be meaningless, alongside their criticism as well.

Suddenly, Yong-yong raised his head. The next moment, Hochi sensed it, too.

"This is the east, right?" Hochi questioned, pointing to the direction of the car's progress.

Lee Joon-suk nodded.

"Yes. Is something wrong?"

“Oh, was the... wave due today?”

“No, the wave doesn’t start on a set day. It only occurs at a certain interval, and the opening date is uncertain,” Lee Joon-suk explained quickly.

“What about the wave cycle?”

“It usually occurs for a period of two to three months.”

Hochi’s expression changed. He looked dubious. Hochi thought for a while and said to Lee Joon-suk, “If it showed up every two or three months, the Earth would have been destroyed.”

“...What?”

“Mantis, is that how it’s supposed to be?” Hochi asked the mantis in Yong-yong’s box.

However, the mantis hid in the closet that Yong-yong had put in the box.

“Maybe not.”

Hochi grabbed Lee Joon-suk’s hand.

“We’re going to teleport.”

“Yes.”

Lee Joon-suk had experienced enough teleportation in the Tutorial. He didn’t have to do anything. The next moment, they were all moved to the shore.

Unlike the sunny and bright part of the city, this place was dark with black clouds covering the sky. Screams and shouts came from all over the place.

Modern artillery were firing continuously, and Awakened men were

struggling to maintain the front somehow.

Monsters were crawling out of the coast endlessly. Lee Joon-suk used his skills as soon as he figured out the situation.

With the sound of falling thunder, a powerful lightning bolt was thrown toward the sea.

The Awakened and monsters couldn't use their power on the blocked front, so they attacked the distant sea.

The effect was sufficient. The bodies of monsters trying to climb ashore from the Pacific Ocean floated up to the surface one after another.

“Oh, he's strong?” Hochi mentioned in surprise.

Honestly, it was amazing. Lee Joon-suk was more powerful than he had thought. Thanks to this, the endless attacks by monsters on the coast were soon cut off.

Now the problem was monsters sticking to the front. Of course, the ones at the rear had been blown away, so the monsters on the front lines would be cleared up soon.

The less damage-dealers, the better.

“Soul Summon.” At this time, Hochi used a Power Skill. A little ghost, the size of a pinky, appeared beside Hochi.

‘Kuwaah!’ The ghost roared with an exaggerated yell, raising its short arm.

Of course, it wasn't scary. It was like the roar of a kitten.

“Long time no see.”

‘Kuaaaaah!’ The ghost responded to Hochi's greeting with another roar, and it flew to the front at Hochi's instructions.

As it flew away, the ghost split into parts. From one to two, two to four. In just a few minutes, it divided into thousands.

When they arrived at the front, the ghosts had spread all over the water. The split ghosts entered into the monsters' bodies one by one.

The monsters moving on the shore soon began to stop moving completely and started to gather in one place.

Humans open-fired at the monsters gathering at one point, ignoring even the front-liners, and then smoothly bombarded the monsters.

“All clean...” Hochi murmured satisfactorily.

Now it was time to deal with the monsters that remained in the sea.

“Telekinesis.” Hochi once again used his power skill. The water in the ocean slowly began to soar into the sky.

Soon the water rose as high as the buildings in the coastal city and completely revealed the underwater scene. Under the water, the gates on the bed were visible to the naked eye.

It looked like a barnacle. The gate was hidden under the sea and would've been difficult to extinguish by using physical prowess.

There were even some gates on the coast as well as on the far inland sea. It would be best just to stop it.

“Mana oppression. Mana seals.” Hochi directly interfered with the gate and closed the entrance of the space.

He had used it many times in the dungeons, so opening and closing the gate was a piece of cake. He cleared away all the gates and placed the seawater down again. He had dealt with gates that were quite far away, so the wave wouldn't happen again.

All the Dungeon Roads that led to the chaos in the first place were gone.

The shore was filled with silence. All the screaming monsters were dead, and the men who were supposed to shout victory were speechless, staring blankly at Hochi and the party.

The scene where the sea water rose overhead was an unimaginable show of power.

“There’s one more thing left.”

“I’ll do it this time!”

Yong-yong stepped out in high spirits. Hochi, of course, said yes. All of a sudden, the monsters’ bodies grew red.

The bodies of the destroyed and burning monsters began to move slowly. A huge magic circle was carved on the bodies that kept pulsating.

An unknown darkness crawled over the magic circle. The surrounding air had become heavy. The dark sky turned red.

All human eyes were fixed on the dark. Nothing could be pinpointed, but they couldn’t take their eyes off it.

Hochi wondered as he watched the darkness from the magic circle. If such a thing had appeared on Earth many times, the earth would have been destroyed.

Perhaps with just a single appearance, it seemed capable of exterminating all humans. Now that it had appeared, he was just glad they were here. On the other hand, he thought that this might have happened because they came here.

[Memories of the Dead. A host of vengeance. A parasite of life.]

The darkness, which appeared to mutter words that didn’t make sense, looked straight at Hochi and the party, ignoring all the humans around it.

Yong-yong spoke, facing the darkness, “Go in.”

The darkness seeped into the magic circle.

Chapter 315

Japan (3)

The darkness that appeared from the magic circle returned to it as if it were natural. It was a vain exit compared to the spectacular appearance.

“What was that?” Hochi asked, bewildered.

Humans, affected by the darkness that had just appeared, stood frozen.

Instead of answering Hochi’s question, Yong-yong focused on untying the box he had on his neck. He handed it to Hochi.

“Why me?”

“Take care of it, Uncle.”

“Yes, well, that’s not difficult.”

Hochi felt somewhat dubious. Yong-yong acted as if he was ignoring his question. Of course, Yong-yong wouldn’t have done that usually, so Hochi thought he was distracted.

Hochi didn’t see the mantis in the box Yong-yong gave him. Hochi peered inside, wondering if he could spot it, but he couldn’t find it anywhere. He shook the box lightly.

The door of the mini closet burst open, and the mantis rolled out.

“AH!”

“...Why were you hiding there?”

The mantis turned to Hochi, shouting, "I was scared!" It didn't feel ashamed in admitting that.

The mantis, who had explained his behavior, crawled back into the closet.^[1] Hochi shook his head and hung the bag around his neck.

"I'll be right back, Uncle."

"Oh, okay. But where are you going?"

For now, he was going to allow Yong-yong to go wherever he went, but he didn't know where Yong-yong wanted to visit. Yong-yong didn't answer Hochi's question again.

Instead, Yong-yong flew toward the magic circle that had just summoned the darkness. As Yong-yong approached, the magic circle flashed and disappeared along with Yong-yong.

"...Where did he go all of a sudden?" Bewildered, Lee Joon-suk asked about Yong-yong with a more perplexing expression than Hochi.

"I think he went after the darkness using the magic circle that was just summoned."

"Will it be all right?"

Hochi was confused, but he was sure it'd be okay because Yong-yong was a dragon.

If Lee Ho-jae had disappeared that way, Hochi would have been worried—worried for the unfortunate people who would encounter Lee Ho-jae. And Hochi wouldn't know what kind of accident Lee Ho-jae would have caused and when he would return.

But if it was Yong-yong, Hochi wasn't worried.

"We're done dealing with the wave, so it'll be okay if Yong-yong goes out for a while..."

“Gwuaah!” At that moment, a huge monster rose from the sea and roared.

Their surroundings began to change rapidly.

When the darkness appeared, the sky changed, and the air became heavy. A forest appeared where the coast had once stood.

But now, a forest appeared where the coast was. The middle of the ocean where the monster was seen became a lake.

No, it wouldn’t be accurate to say their surroundings were changing. To be precise, somebody summoned Hochi, Lee Joon-suk, and the other Awakened people from Japan’s eastern coast to a different place.

“Well!”

They were in the fictitious world that the monster had created. That monster, located in the lake’s center, had tentacles flying in all directions; it was a monster Hochi knew well.

The 40th floor of the Tutorial Hell Difficulty Level was a monster that seemed impossible to deal with without the help of a Hundred Gods Temple’s apostle.

This monster seemed like a carbon copy of the beast from the Tutorial.

Yong-yong’s absence didn’t matter. The mere fact that it brought Hochi into the world of its mind meant that it was different from the copy on the 40th floor.

“It’s kind of weird.” Hochi couldn’t believe this happened as soon as Yong-yong went somewhere. It was also strange that Yong-yong was not aware of that monster. Of course, Hochi himself didn’t notice until the monster summoned him to this world, but Yong-yong’s case was different.

Hochi, who had been pondering for a while, decided to call for the strongest reinforcements to cope with the existing problem.

“Seregia.” Unfortunately, there was no reply.

“Seregia? Seregia! Oh, crap.” There was no response.

Hochi scratched his head and said, “Hey, I think we’re screwed,” to Lee Jun-seok, who was looking at him desperately.

* * *

[POV: Lee Ho-Jae]

[Please.]

[Please.]

I was so sick of this. It was not easy to ignore the countless pleas.

[Please.]

It had been quite a while since I had absorbed the God of Evil. His ability and strength were insignificant, but fortunately, he knew a lot of useful information.

I was pleased, but there was one fatal side effect.

[Please.]

The pleas of the God of Evil rang in my heart. It was quite annoying.

Recently, it has become more frequent. It seemed that his absorption was almost over.

The God of Evil knew his remaining presence would soon disappear, and hence, he had been pleading even more desperately than before.

Someone came into the temple; it wasn’t an intruder. He came in too defenselessly to be an intruder. No barriers were invoked.

The time flow inside and outside the temple was completely different due to time acceleration.

Only three beings could come in here at will without touching the barrier: Yong-Yong, who could make a hole in the time axis I created, and Hochi and Seregia, who were not affected by the time axis at all.

“Seregia.”

“I’m bored.”

Seregia, can you please make an effort to at least attempt to be interested or perhaps pretend? This is the only thing I ask of you.

I prayed earnestly for it but didn’t say it out loud. I knew Seregia would simply ignore me.

“Other gods have intervened on this planet.”

I know.

Three on the Japanese side and one in Korea. Among them, the one in Korea was the God of Hope. They had been quite busy for a few days.

“Don’t I have to deal with it?”

“It’s alright.”

The gods’ intentions were apparent. It was like they were keeping a watch on Hochi or Yong-yong while I was building a passageway between the 60th floor and Earth.

That was all. It would be ambiguous to target me directly.

There were too few things on Earth that could bind me to the earth in the first place. My whole family was dead, and Kim Min-hyuk had the Old Man and Grandma.

Lee Joon-suk was sent with Hochi and Yong-yong.

“Why are the gods suddenly coming out like this?”

“Are you annoyed?” I asked Seregia.

She snorted expressionlessly.

“The gods behind this are, of course, not from the Hundred Gods Temple or the Pantheon. If they were, they wouldn’t be able to move like this.”

And the gods not affiliated with the temples, were usually from the Rulers’ side.

This was important.

“Let’s put ourselves in their shoes. Suddenly, a new god came out of the Tutorial they had made to keep the Rulers in check. And that god decided to do one favor each in return for the Tutorial. Of course, they’ll think that the god is going to attack them.”

It was true that opinions were divided within the temples, and there were signs that it would be a mess.

The mainstream opinion of the Hundred Gods Temple was “Anti-Rulers.”

Otherwise, the gods wouldn’t have made the Tutorial and try to nurture apostles.

“But one of those Rulers, the God of Evil, approached me to compromise, and it worked in vain.”

“Did you get any useful information?”

“I did.” I gained information about the relationship between the Ruler and gods, the gods’ ability and power, and their territory’s location.

The last one was the most important.

If I knew the Rulers' planets and dimensions' exact location, I could always go there and try to attack. My base of support, the 60th and 61st floors, ironically, were protected by the Tutorial.

Attacks were impossible on me, but the Rulers must defend themselves without knowing when and where I would appear. In the end, the Rulers had no choice but to take out the option of striking first.

A strike against Yong-yong and Hochi, not my floors.

"You must have known there would be an attack then."

"Of course."

Seregia stared at me for a moment.

I uttered the title that I hadn't used for forever. "Soldier."

"Oh my Lord, Warrior. I feel like it's been hundreds of years since I heard that."

It may have been more than that. Unlike me, who had a strange feeling, Seregia was quite serious.

"Warrior, that's a dangerous way of thinking."

I felt a little sorry because of Seregia's harsh way of speaking. She was still worried about me.

"It's alright. It's not what you think."

"Can I hear the explanation?"

"This is a trap for Yong-yong to lure his enemies... It's not what you think. It's to drive dumb pigs who don't recognize tigers into the cage of the tiger."

Unfortunately, this easy and convenient method was only possible when the pigs didn't recognize tigers.

I couldn't use it twice, so I needed to get out of the way so that the pigs could run more excitedly. Until the pigs enter the cage, they won't recognize the tiger.

"So, we just have to wait and see what Yong-yong will catch."

"I see. So you both know the plan?"

"Of course."

I explained the plan to both Yong-yong and Hochi. I explained to them in a message to go on a trip to deceive the God of Hope, who was hiding in Seoul's corner. Both would have understood.

At least... I knew Yong-yong would have. Hochi also usually acted like he didn't listen to me, but he listened to me closely.

On that day, he looked at me like a barking dog and started reading again, but that was just how he usually was.

* * *

[POV: Lee Hochi]

It has been strange since a while ago. Is this what Ho-jae was rambling about before?

It was strange to see a mighty monster wave as a coincidence. Powerful beings were also appearing one after another.

He couldn't think of this happening when Hochi and his party came to Japan by accident. On the contrary, when Hochi and his party came to Japan, this had happened.

After finishing organizing his thoughts, Hochi decided to explain the monster to Lee Joon-suk.

"It's the monster that appeared on the 40th floor of Hell Difficulty."

“...Isn’t it easy to defeat then?”

“On the 40th floor, two more Hundred Gods Temple’s apostles followed, plus the apostles of the God of Nature as well.”

Considering that, the power of that monster was not as strong as the 40th floor.

Lee Ho-jae, who had been clearing the stages between the 30th and 40th floors, could not even think of killing the monster alone.

When that monster first appeared, he ran away first.

“Ho-jae ran away...?”

“Of course.”

Lee Ho-jae didn’t care about his pride or how people viewed him; he only cared about winning. He would retreat or even lie and beg as if it were second nature, as long as he comes out on top.

Hochi went on to explain.

“It’s the kind of monster who drags the opponent into its world without the opponent noticing. In that world, the opponent undergoes the fear effect.”

There were many monstrous animals and plants in the forest. Some of them were so strong that the victims didn’t want to go in, but were still chased by them.

The one who was strong enough to survive the entire day would meet with the Spirit king. That monster looked twice as strong as the copy that had appeared in the Tutorial.

“...Is there any way? Weakness or anything?”

“I don’t know its weakness, but I have a master plan for victory.”

“What is it?”

“To hold out until Yong-yong returns,” Hochi said with a grin.

It was actually a perfect plan. Hochi was confident enough to avoid it and buy time. Upon hearing the plan, Lee Joon-suk staggered, rather than being relieved.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes... No, suddenly...”

Lee Joon-suk’s eyelids twitched. His breathing was so ragged that his chest hurt, and an uncomfortable feeling suffocating him.

Hochi had to hurry from the side to see if his arms and legs were shaking.

It was because of the monster’s mental attack. When faced with unbearable fear, the human body pushed itself to death to escape from the fear.

Lee Joon-suk and the other Awakened, who had been summoned along with the two, were facing the same predicament.

Most of them had already lost their sanity and passed out. In the meantime, some would occasionally have seizures or start screaming.

Hochi looked at them with pity for a moment and used his skill.

“Wings of Talaria.”

This rare fraud skill, presented by the God of Adventure to Lee Ho-jae, gave tremendous amounts of buffs to himself and his companions.

In addition, Lee Ho-jae’s had made some modifications to it that made it become a near-perfect all-rounder skill.

“Are you feeling better?”

“Yes...” Lee Joon-suk answered breathlessly.

The fallen Awakened also stopped screaming and having seizures as if the burden had been relieved a bit.

“Hyung... if there’s nothing else you can do but stall, can I try my hand?”

“You?” Hochi asked back in a worried voice.

“Yes, thanks to you, I don’t think I have any problems moving around.”

He was quite confident compared to before when he had been struggling. The plan was simple. Lee Joon-suk would attack the monster, and Hochi would assist.

“I’d like to ask you a question, can you protect people so that I can attack as much as I want?”

“Of course.”

“Because my ability extends in all directions, people can get hurt. So...”

“Oh, I can help with it.”

Hochi was confident that even the other Awakened’s hairs wouldn’t be hurt no matter what Lee Joon-suk did.

And even if Lee Joon-suk failed, Hochi actively supported Lee Joon-suk’s plan because he could wait for Yong-yong as initially planned.

“Don’t mind about the people; just focus on that monster. It won’t be easy. The monster’s body is so strong that it’ll be hard to cut through.”

“I can cut through,” replied Lee Joon-suk.

The excited voice made him feel surprised beyond expectations.

“I’m good at slicing.”

Chapter 316

Japan (4)

“Can I come out?”

While I was looking at the question window for any changes, Kirikiri’s face appeared on the hologram.

I allowed her.

“Tada-an!” Kirikiri popped out as usual. I had become used to it since she kept appearing in the same manner.

“What are you doing?”

“I need to ask you something.”

I could predict her question. More likely than not, her question was about the chaos happening in Japan.

“Why is Yong-yong so strong?”

Kirikiri’s question was a little unexpected. She seemed to be more curious about Yong-yong rather than the mess in Japan.

Why was Yong-yong so strong?

What kind of question was that? Yong-yong was always strong.

From the moment he was born, I nurtured him: from his diet to his living environment and language, I taught him everything myself.

Fortunately, unlike Hochi, Yong-yong had a burning desire to rise or win. I enjoyed teaching him, and he had exceptional talent. I was

unsure if the talent was due to his characteristics as a dragon or whether Yong-yong himself was a prodigy. But if not either of those, then it was thanks to my superior teachings.

It was challenging to figure out if he was strong because I raised him as my son or strong because I taught him. At the age of two, his powers were on par with Hochi's, and soon, Yong-yong even surpassed him.

The 61st floor followers were hard to compare to Yong-yong, and the Old Man and Grandma were far superior.

By the age of five or six, as I made the 60th floor independent of the Tutorial, I made him a room independent of my area. Considering that Yong-yong's room was not just a 'room,' but a massive space the size of a dimension, it was hard to guess how fast he'd continue to grow.

Of course, Yong-yong's growth was completely different due to how the time flowed in that dimension. But even considering that, it was surprisingly fast.

"Yong-yong was always strong."

"Uh... is he stronger than you?"

What is she talking about?

I flicked Kirikiri's forehead.

"Ahhh!" Kirikiri rolled on the floor, holding her forehead.

"What a crybaby."

"I'm not a crybaby. It hurts!"

I had hit her intending to inflict pain, but I hadn't expected her to get this hurt. The area on her forehead had turned red, which came as a surprise.

It was interesting.

How many more hits can I get in until she notices?

“Heng, Ho-jae hit me,” Kirikiri mumbled with tears in her eyes.

Rather than being sorry at the sight of her, I got annoyed.

“Don’t call me that.”

(T/N: She pronounced his name like: Hou-woo jae-aeee)

“Heng, my heart.”

At this moment, I seriously thought about hitting her again. Unfortunately, I decided to save it for next time.

It would be complicated if Kirikiri found out that I was hitting her not as a joke but as an experiment.

I changed the subject. “But why are you suddenly asking about Yong-yong?”

“Why, all of a sudden? That’s because Yong-yong is beating up three Rulers over there.” Kirikiri told me that Yong-yong was not just fighting, but that he was unilaterally crushing the Rulers.

Fortunately, Yong-yong seemed to be doing well. I was relieved. I wanted to do well on my own, but my anxieties had been holding me back.

“They look stronger compared to the Ruler Ho-jae fought in Antarctica. Are you sure Yong-yong isn’t stronger?”

Now was the chance. I flicked Kirikiri’s defenseless forehead.

“Agh!”

I felt a righteous feeling. She let out another cry.

“Wuuu... Ho-jae keeps hitting me.”

“You deserved it,” Seregia, who happened to be inside the temple, said.

Kirikiri, who was making a sad face, shouted at Seregia, “Seregia is always so mean!”

Seregia shrugged and took a chocolate pie out of her pocket. I wondered where she had come from, and it seemed like she went to the flat and brought snacks.

Seregia tore the wrapping paper of the chocolate pie and gave it to Kirikiri.

And...

“Do you want one?”

Her speech became informal. It was a significant change of attitude. Far from being offended, Kirikiri reached out her hand excitedly.

“Give it to me!”

“No.”

Seregia took a bite of the chocolate pie in her hand, passed Kirikiri, and sat down in the corner. Kirikiri sat on the floor blankly and looked at Seregia, whose mouth moved to chew.

Kirkiri shouted again, “You’re so mean!”

* * *

Thanks to Seregia, who had diverted Kirkiri’s attention, I could complete the experiment without any doubt, but I decided to stop the experiment there. It was dangerous in many ways to keep pushing Kirikiri.

Instead, I decided to ask Kirikiri one question.

“Yes, yes, what is it?”

Perhaps thanks to taking away a snack from Seregia and giving it to Kirikiri, Kirikiri’s face was in full bloom. It was good because she was very simple.

“There’s a god who needs information.”

“Some rookies cannot be told much information.”

“God of Remorse.”

Kirikiri replied, “The God of Remorse can only be given a limited amount of information.”

Information restrictions were said to be at stake.

“What kind of information restriction is that?”

I was no longer a challenger of the Tutorial, but I still had to restrict myself in giving away information? I didn’t need such information restrictions.

“It’s the same information restriction you had on the 60th floor.”

Damn it.

Again, restricting information through triggers was not a system for the Awakened of the Tutorial.

“What was the trigger?”

“Remorse.”

I didn’t want to think about it.

Kirikiri looked at me, clicking her tongue, and said, “It’s because of the source from the 35th floor, right?”

Right.

On the 35th floor, the God of Remorse presented me with a source, and as a result, I was disadvantaged in the Hundred Gods Temple.

The source was not very helpful to me at the time, but it helped me quickly get used to the power of source and faith.

It was used to hide information from Lee Yeon-hee on the 60th floor.

“I recommend you not to care. The God of Remorse must have given you the source for some strange reason you didn’t expect.”

“I wonder what that strange reason was.”

“I don’t know much about that.”

I felt uncomfortable. If you get help for no reason from others, you would feel uncomfortable, especially if it included sacrifice.

I was also anxious.

“As I explained before, the God of Remorse is someone who always regrets. He’s the god who always makes mistakes. Maybe one of the many regrets was what gave you the source.”

I could have just thought that and let it pass.

It was a stroke of luck. I thought so.

The problem was the status of the God of Remorse.

I heard that he always caused trouble and made mistakes, which made me think that he was nothing more than a stupid god. However, he had gained divinity, and he had maintained his status. Above all, the God of Remorse was related to time.

When some gods tried to break through the 60th floor through force, the God of Remorse made it the furthest.

I couldn't just let it go.

"I'm sorry, but there's nothing else I can tell you. Perhaps it would be faster to meet the God of Remorse and ask him in person."

* * *

Once again, the light flashed. Flashes spread out in all directions. Hochi, who had seen it from afar, clicked his tongue.

"This guy... what a madman." Hochi couldn't help but swear.

Lee Joon-suk's ability was a power that he couldn't try to control. He was just a tad bit away from being a real nutcase.

Hochi had made a prediction when Lee Joon-suk asked to protect people or ask for help. Lee Joon-suk's ability seemed to be specialized in wide-area attacks. Hochi's guess was not wrong.

Lee Joon-suk's attacks were all wide-area attacks. But there was a problem; the attack affected not only allies but also Lee Joon-suk himself.

"That crazy guy."

Hochi used his power on Lee Joon-suk, who was far away, while repeatedly swearing.

"Life sharing."

Now, it was challenging to assist Lee Joon-suk with simple healing skills. Lee Joon-suk was using his abilities recklessly as if he were going to die here.

"How much had he stacked up?"

Frustration

That is the state Lee Joon-suk was in.

Once he began to use his abilities, Lee Joon-suk was completely blinded.

Hochi was able to fully predict what Lee Joon-suk would have done to get that ability.

Of course, he grew up in the Tutorial where he could be healed. However, it was impossible to grow to this level and get out with a normal mindset.

It was possible only when he was as crazy as Lee Ho-jae. That meant he had to reach a level of stupidity that shouldn't be acceptable. So Hochi could understand.

After a rough experience, he got this kind of power, but he couldn't even use it properly.

He was so frustrated. However, if he used it carelessly, the surrounding area and people would be burned to ashes, and Lee Joon-suk himself would also be in danger.

Once used, everything around him would fly away, so no one could help him.

-Gwaaah...!

The giant tentacle monster was still breathing. The water in the lake had evaporated, and ashes were the only thing that remained in place of the surrounding forest. All the monsters and the plants that had popped out of the forest were gone. But the monster was still holding out, swinging his tentacles at Lee Joon-suk.

The monster looked almost pathetic. Hochi felt sorry seeing Lee Joon-suk barely escape the tentacles. Frankly speaking, Hochi was rooting for the monster.

He wanted Lee Joon-suk to get beaten and knocked out by the monster. The monster was strong, so they could have waited until Yong-yong came, but Lee Joon-suk was attacking the monster without rest.

Every time Lee Joon-suk attacked, Hochi had to protect him, and it became a bother.

-Yaaargh!

Then, the monster's body split wide open. It seemed like blood was going to shoot up, but it didn't.

Lee Joon-suk flew away quickly to the monster's open wound.

"Hey! Lee Joon-suk, this is good! Finish it quickly!" Hochi changed his position as soon as the monster was fatally wounded and cheered for Lee Joon-suk.

Lee Joon-suk dug deep into the monster's body through the monster's open wound and then used his blinding power again.

"...Wow, he genuinely is a madman."

This time, the blazing light did not spread out in all directions. It stayed entirely in the monster's body, ending the monster.

The problem was that Lee Joon-suk himself was on the monster's body.

Hochi quickly teleported Lee Joon-suk to him. Lee Joon-suk had such a questionable appearance that Hochi didn't know if he was looking at a human or charcoal soot.

"Oh, he's alive..."

"...Thank you, Hyung."

Meanwhile, Lee Joon-suk expressed his gratitude. Hochi took out a

bottle of potion from the subspace and fed it to Lee Joon-suk.

He was tired of using his abilities.

Lee Joon-suk again thanked him and asked Hochi, “Where is this potion from?”

Hochi answered as if it were nothing.

“Ho-jae had piled up many of these in his subspace, so don’t mind it.”

“Yes...? Potions are only there in the Tutorial.”

“Oh, that. Ho-jae can use the subspace regardless of the Tutorial.”

Lee Joon-suk looked like he didn’t understand. Lee Joon-suk, who had been confused for a while, asked Hochi again. “...Is my item in that space, too? I gave Ho-jae Hyung all my items when I left.”

“It probably is. Maybe if you look it up.”

“Really? If you have that item... all I need is that item!”

Lee Joon-suk repeatedly said that he could use his abilities without risk using this item, looking a little distracted.

‘I would have given you it earlier. I didn’t know.’

Why didn’t Ho-jae give it to him before?

He looked so excited, and he was going crazy.

When Hochi was thinking so, the space widened, and one person walked out. It was Lee Ho-jae.

Hochi looked back at Lee Ho-jae and asked why he hadn’t given Lee Joon-suk the item in advance.

“I forgot.”

So confident. That was a good excuse.

“Huh? That’s a necklace I’ve never seen before.” Hochi commented when he saw something hanging around Lee Ho-jae’s neck.

Lee Ho-jae just shrugged.

“I think I’ve seen it somewhere.”

A round ball-shaped ornament at the end of the necklace. It was something that persisted in Hochi’s memory.

“What the hell did you do?”

Lee Ho-jae said, looking around the destroyed area.

“You still can’t control your abilities? That’s too bad.”

Then he gave Lee Joon-suk a slap. Lee Joon-suk, who had just been excited, bowed his head with an apologetic look as if he had committed a crime.

“You’ve been in the Tutorial for years, and you—”

“Hey.” Hochi cut off Lee Ho-jae.

“What?”

Hochi thought again for a bit when he saw Lee Ho-jae looking at him.

But this time, he was sure.

“You aren’t Ho-Jae... who are you?”

Chapter 317

Japan (5)

“Who are you?” Hochi asked Lee Ho-jae again, who refused to answer.

“What nonsense are you spouting? What do you mean by who I am?” Lee Ho-jae replied in an irritated tone.

It was a perfect match: the pissed off tone and the expression. Its occurrences had decreased a lot recently, but in the past, Hochi had often seen it. No, it was always something he saw.

But Hochi was sure. “You, you’re fake.”

The way he talked, moved, and even his power and aura felt remarkably similar. At first, even Hochi hadn’t even noticed something strange.

“...When did you realise?” the fake Lee Ho-jae asked.

“Poor performance.”

Truthfully, his acting skills were excellent. Instead, there was a lack of investigation from the fake’s side into Ho-jae’s character. Lee Ho-jae doesn’t like to interfere. If you didn’t thoroughly research Lee Ho-jae, his character would be hard to pull off.

In the past, when he gave advice, Hochi couldn’t act appropriately with him and spoke irritably. Ho-jae did the same. In some cases, they would inadvertently insult each other. Yes, in the past, it was like that.

Ever since he had apologized to Hochi for his past wrongdoings, Lee Ho-jae had changed himself. Lee Ho-jae, Hochi knew now, praised moderately and moved on, and did not point out meaningless details

to hurt other people's feelings.

He, who had ascended to a god, did not change easily. It would take so much effort and sacrifice to change even the smallest habit. The inner change caused by becoming a god was significant.

That's why Hochi was sure that Lee Ho-jae's appearance was not just a random thing. This Ho-jae was someone else.

"Acting skills... you talk nonsense."

The atmosphere had drastically changed when Hochi discovered the con artist. He became hostile and intimidating.

A high-pressure power came up gently.

Hochi tried to grasp as much information as possible by looking at the rapidly changing aura of the fake.

"Ah..."

"What?"

"I remember where I saw that necklace."

Hochi clearly remembered now. When he had last met Lee Hyung-jin in the competition, he tried to give a ball-shaped item to Lee Ho-jae.

Though he hurriedly stopped his words in the middle. The item looked just like that necklace.

"You're the fake from the 17th floor, aren't you?"

He had the same items as Lee Hyung-jin, who died. Just like Lee Ho-jae, they were people with the same aura and past attitude.

It was not difficult to guess how the phantom from the 17th floor knew Hochi.

Hochi wondered why he thought of pretending to be Lee Ho-jae in front of himself.

He noted something.

Hochi noticed the scent of a god on the fake.

The God of Hope.

Lee Ho-jae had said that the God of Hope was trying to take a peep at Earth. If this were a trick of the God of Hope, he would have given that fake information in advance.

“...The fake is not me, but you,” the fake said animalistically. The fake’s eyes, which had been feigning indifference until just now, were now full of life.

“It’s true that you’re the one who was designed to clear the 60th floor. It’s a waste of time, fake. Look at you now. How is your position different from a pet dog?”

He habitually tried to get to the enemy’s nerves, but his attitude was the same as Ho-jae.

The fake didn’t merely mimic Ho-jae’s appearance. He was the Ho-jae from the time of the 17th floor of the tutorial.

Hochi laughed at the fake. Lee Ho-jae was an insurmountable wall for Hochi.

It could be called his original, but in almost all respects, he was superior to Hochi.

However, there was only one thing in which Hochi was ahead of Lee Ho-jae. His manner of speech.

“Hey, isn’t it kind of funny that mass-produced fakes popped up one by one every time one went on a floor?”

“...”

“The fakes didn’t even exactly act the same. Were you made in China? Not a replica, but a crude fake. An inferior edition, you are not an imitation.”

The fake gritted his teeth. The muscles in his face shifted from the force of his grinding. His bloodshot face was so red that the veins were almost visible in his eyes.

Hochi chuckled at the sight. The most effective thing he did was provoking and annoying others. It was entertaining to tease.

“...Uhh, Hyung, w-why don’t you stop?” Joon-suk, who had been quiet next to him, whispered in his ear.

The fake’s hatred had reached its peak. He stared at Hochi like a beast ready to rush at any moment. but Hochi didn’t give in. In the first place, Hochi had too much experience to be scared of threats.

“I have to say this. Gentlemen! Ladies! The fake here got mad at me for making fun of him because he’s a fake! Oh, my God, no conscience at all. Same as the real thing but without conscience. Lucky you, man. You got a step closer to the real world today, didn’t you? If you get to the day when you can perfectly imitate the real thing...”

“Go to hell, you bastard!”

The fake eventually leaped at Hochi, shouting a curse.

Hochi immediately responded as he had been waiting.

[Battleground]

[Specifying the opponent]

[Mana oppression]

[Holy Block]

[Soul exploitation]

[Wings of Talaria]

[Time Warp]

[Bright Light]

“Go to hell, you crooked bastard!” Hochi, who used various powers at the same time, also rushed to face the fake.

Usually, Hochi was reluctant and passive, but this time he was different.

The appearance of the 17th floor Ho-jae was very unpleasant for Hochi, and the words that he uttered were also deeply offensive.

Hochi had no intention of waiting until Yong-yong or Lee Ho-jae came to help as usual.

At least this time, he was thinking of finishing the scumbag with his own hands.

* * *

It was too much. Apart from his mindset, the world was divided based on what was possible and what was impossible.

‘You’ll regret it one day. When you have to fight.’

Lee Ho-jae had said so on various occasions.

Hochi had ignored the words every time and was now paying the price for his negligence.

“Blink!”

Hochi used a series of Blink to escape the fake’s attack. The fake tried to chase Hochi using the opposite, but there was one decisive

difference.

“Ha! You inferior bastard, there’s a limit on the number of Blinks you can do, right? I don’t have one!” Despite being unilaterally pursued, Hochi did not stop his provocations. The fake flew at Hochi, screaming once again.

Hochi said, “Hey! Listen to me!” to Lee Joon-suk, who was idly watching the scene.

“What?”

“I’ll put you in a subspace, and until I get you out there, don’t even think about escaping. Just stay there, or it’ll explode!”

Then, he moved Lee Jun-seok into a subspace. In the meantime, the fake had attacked Hochi.

“Shadow!”

The sword wielded by the fake extinguished the illusion. Immediately the black shadow flew at Hochi, who had been standing there.

“Space contraction!”

Once again, he used the skill. The space distorted.

The previous distance of several meters between Hochi and the fake momentarily stretched to more than tens of thousands of kilometers.

At a moment’s leisure, Hochi thought, ‘Why is he so strong?’

It’s the fake from the 17th floor.

‘I don’t think I could win even if I had trained without being lazy.’

There was a difference in basic combat capability. A gap that was hard to reverse even with a superior number of skills.

As soon as he first attempted a close-up match, Hochi was immediately shown up by the fake.

If Lee Joon-suk hadn't rushed in between and caught the attention of the fake, he might have died on the spot.

Soon after, Hochi changed his plan again.

Back to his first master plan: turn to the defensive until Yong-yong arrived.

“Sied’s Shield!”

He used the power of a god whose name he couldn't remember to block the fake's sword. That sword was the biggest problem.

He kept his vast amount of power in the form of a blade without a shred of disarray. If he hit the correct spot, it'd deal a fatal wound.

So all his attacks had to be avoided or prevented using power. Moreover, the fake's moves, which seemed to find a way to break up each attack, made Hochi tired.

Sied's shield was able to defend sufficiently enough for a region itself but was relatively weak against a one-point attack.

That fake saw Sied's Shield only twice and figured it out. Although he was a fake, it seemed like he was still Lee Ho-Jae.

Bang!

When stabbed with the sword, the sound of a blast came, and the transparent shield made of power burst.

When he had first used the Sied's Shield, he lasted five minutes.

In the second use, it was destroyed by only six stabs.

In the third use, it was destroyed by three stabs.

It was unclear how many attacks would be needed this time to get it destroyed.

The fake shouted, preparing for another round of stabbing.

“How long are you going to keep running!”

“Until Yong-yong comes!” Hochi shouted proudly.

The fake said, “Dumb bastard! You think this is Earth? This space is the sanctuary of the God of Hope. Not anyone can do whatever they want to...” and laughed at Hochi as if it was not worth it.

As he was explaining this, Hochi heard the sound of glass cracking in the air.

Then, the space opened, and Yong-yong appeared.

“Uncle!”

“Yong-yong!” Hochi called out to Yong-yong emotionally

And...

“Ha! You’re dead now! You, you don’t know how strong our Yong-yong is, you fake!” Hochi immediately retorted at the fake.

It was a bit weird to be Yong-yong’s uncle and present him to the enemy.

Anyway, Yong-yong was reliable!

The fake, who was constantly chasing Hochi, stopped moving and stared at Yong-yong.

Yong-yong stared at the fake instead of attacking immediately.

“Uncle, who is that?” Yong-yong asked in a low voice. It was a serious voice, unlike his usually lively one.

“...Uh? This...”

Hochi stuttered for some reason and explained to Yong-yong quietly.

He was believed to be the fake Ho-jae made on the 17th floor of the tutorial.

“I’m not sure.”

“Then I’ll have to try to kill him and find out,” Yong-yong said firmly.

Hochi, stunned by Yong-yong’s harsh words, was unable to say anything. At that moment, the fake took off his necklace and grabbed it in his hand.

And he called out to god.

“...My Liege.”

[My apostle, things are all messed up now.]

It was the sign of the God of Hope. It was shaped like a small bug, but its presence was huge enough to fill the world that had turned into ashes.

Hochi could feel nausea creep up on him despite his power.

“That’s the cause of that fake’s power,” Yong-yong said, looking at the god of hope who had appeared in front of the fake.

Then he called Hochi again. “Uncle.”

“...Yes, Yong-yong.”

“Stay a little longer. I’ll hold off that god first.”

The words stung the God of Hope.

The God of Hope looked at Yong-yong and said roughly, [This little dragon is too confident. You're going to hold me off? Do you think a god is a joke, who has time to deal with insects? Let me show you what a true God is.]

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

Finally, the mouse was caught in the trap. By the way, how dare that bastard crawl into other people's land and shamelessly flaunt his power?

"I'll show you what a true god is."

What an idiot.

"Seregia, signal when you're ready."

Of course, we finished the preparations, but I asked just in case.

Seregia immediately signaled.

'Mayday, mayday.'

"Seregia, that's the rescue signal," I told Seregia, but she stubbornly repeated the same signal.

'Mayday, mayday.'

I'll tell Hochi later not to teach Seregia anything weird.

"If you're ready, then let's start."

Chapter 318

Japan (6)

I couldn't believe the story Lee Hyung-jin told me. I had always thought about it. I had already died in my room, and everything I saw, heard, and experienced could have just been a dream. So, I vowed not to be too confused if I realized everything was fake one day.

However, I couldn't accept what Lee Hyung-jin said. Lee Hyung-jin tried to explain as much as he could, but the meaning was clear. I was just a fake made for the stage, and the real Lee Ho-jae was already up on the 60th floor. I wondered if this was the theme of the 17th floor.

Kirikiri said the 17th floor would end easily and quickly. But for a story that was improvised to clear my mind, it was too much of a coincidence.

Lee Hyung-jin tried to persuade me to go up with him.

Of course, I refused. I had no other choice if what he said was false. He could only get out of the 17th floor and up to the 18th if he killed me.

But if what he said was true. If it is true...

There was a brief pause.

In the end, my knife, which tried to cut Lee Hyung-jin's neck, lodged itself in his heart.

Looking at Lee Hyung-jin, whose blood spread all over the place, I agonized over whether to relieve his pain by twisting a knife in his chest or feed him a potion.

Then, I heard a voice.

[Listen to me.]

Surprisingly, a voice came from Lee Hyung-jin's necklace. My confused mind calmed down at once. I came to think of just two things: to grab that necklace or not to grab it.

[I'll answer your question.]

[All your questions.]

I thought about it for more time. Eventually, I grabbed the necklace.

And that's where MY story began.

* * *

[Hisano Okabuchi.]

She was having an incredible day.

Ever since she was invited to the Tutorial and became an Awakened, she had never seen anything so unrealistic happen.

She was an S-level Awakened with the ability of detection.

Although she did not fight directly on the front, she was doing her part at the Operations Headquarters a little further from the front.

She took part in all the waves, and every time she took part, she faithfully played her role. Everyone in the Operations Headquarters trusted and relied on her. But now, she was betraying everyone's expectations.

"I don't know."

"...really?"

Stop doubting me already.

Hisano wanted to spit out a string of curse.

Why do you think you know everything?

People's blind faith was unsettling. A massive black sphere floated on the east coast.

It was bigger than a city, swallowing up all the Awakened who were blocking the wave on the shore. They couldn't scratch it, even with the ability of the Awakened.

Relying on Hisano's power, Chen Ching could not find any information.

"...maybe it's because they're from Korea."

Hisano guessed as much.

Awakened people from Korea were beyond common sense. They manipulated monsters with strange powers. They lifted the sea up and destroyed the gates beneath it.

But Hisano didn't want to suspect those who came to help them and blame them without evidence. But it occurred to her that if it weren't for them, there wouldn't be such an unheard-of phenomenon.

Then she heard an unknown voice.

The voice called her name.

'Hisano.'

At the moment, she thought it was a hallucination, but she crossed out the idea soon after.

The voice felt like the power she had.

"...are you the God of Balance?"

Watching Hisano mutter, her colleagues at the Operations Headquarters looked at her strangely.

Hisano put a calm look on her face and ignored them.

‘Yes, I have something to tell you.’

“What’s going on?”

The God of Balance had a deep connection with Hisano. The god had already given Hisano powers. On stages, the God of Balance paid attention to Hisano and showed a positive response.

The god offered her a position as an apostle, and she thought she would be an apostle after she met every requirement.

On the 79th floor of Hard Difficulty, she met the god in person and talked.

But on the 79th floor, the God of Balance told Hisano, You’re not good enough to be my apostle.

And the God of Balance cut his ties with Hisano.

After clearing the Tutorial and returning to Earth, Hisano naturally forgot the God of Balance. So this situation, where the God of Balance reached out to her first, was even more surprising.

‘First of all, I apologize, Hisano. I had a desire that I couldn’t bear to let go of.’

Naturally, Hisano couldn’t understand what the God of Balance was saying.

So she decided to ask questions right away.

“Is it fine for you to talk to me like this?” The question included another one, “Why didn’t you say anything to me before?”

The God of Balance replied, ‘There are no regulations on the planet now. Of course, he will not take too kindly to it, but I intend to give him a reasonable reward and apology.’

“I don’t know what that means...”

‘There’s no more time to explain! You have to run away from there right now.’

Hisano still couldn’t understand the god’s words, but she could understand the urgency and danger in his words.

She ordered her colleagues to prepare for withdrawal immediately.

“What’s going on all of a sudden?”

Hisano wondered if she could tell her colleagues that a god said there was danger here. She decided that it was better to lie.

“That black hemisphere is about to explode.”

The God of Balance urged her to leave quickly, even by herself, saying she should get out of there. But she remained at headquarters until the end to help with the withdrawal.

And not long after, the danger warned by the God of Balance was visible. On the enormous black hemisphere, a colossal sword floated.

It was an unbelievable sight even though she could not see it properly with her eyes.

‘At least, run away now.’

“I think it’s already too late. Can you explain to me what that is?”

‘...two gods will soon clash there. The two gods that will be at the top of the world.’

At the God of Balance’s explanation, the Great Sword floating like a

mirage in the sky began to fall.

* * *

“Damn it. It’s not a game of tag,” Hochi grumbled.

He thought he’d be able to win since Yong-yong appeared. But soon after, the God of Hope popped out from nowhere.

Hochi was unsure if it was because of the God of Hope, but Yong-yong couldn’t help Hochi at all.

It was a relief that the God of Hope could not interfere with the fake Ho-jae and Hochi.

“Sied’s shield!” Hochi used his power again to block the fake’s attack.

The most significant advantage of this power was that it did not consume much power after it was activated once. After deciding to hold out, Hochi saved his strength as much as possible.

Of course, he wasn’t only defending himself. While the fake prepared to attack again to break through the barrier, Hochi exclaimed, “Go, Lee Joon-suk!” thunderously.

Then he summoned Lee Joon-suk, who was in the subspace, near the fake. As soon as he was summoned, he used his ability in all directions without asking or questioning.

The fake was startled but immediately swung a knife at Lee Joon-suk.

“Come back!”

With Hochi’s words, Lee Joon-suk was moved back into space.

The fake’s sword split the air in vain again.

“Hahaha, this is fun.”

Lee Joon-suk, who acted as a dummy target every time he was summoned would never have willingly agreed to this.

Hochi was having a lot of fun in this situation.

“You bastard! How long are you going to be playing around!” The fake seemed not to have liked it very much.

He flew towards Hochi. Hochi started running away again, avoiding him.

[Mayday, Mayday.]

A sudden voice stopped Hochi from moving, momentarily.

The same was true of Yong-yong and the God of Hope, who fought over there with the fake.

Kwaang!

With a roar, the sky broke, and a massive sword penetrated the space. The sight of it made Hochi relieved.

“Seregia! Why did you come so late... Aah!”

“Welcome me first, not Seregia, you little bastard.”

A man appeared, hitting Hochi on the back of his head, who was delighted to see Seregia in the form of a blade in the sky.

It was Lee Ho-jae.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

That’s me, huh?

Interesting. It wasn't just someone who looked like me. It was really me. It wasn't a clone.

It was quite interesting to see that I grew in a different direction from where I was now. Hochi and Yong-yong came to me.

"Daddy!"

I hugged Yong-yong, who ran to me.

"Great work. Did you get hurt anywhere?"

"It's torn."

When I followed Yong-yong's finger, I saw that his clothes were badly torn. There were no scars, which was a relief.

"You've done a good job, too. I didn't know you would be this good. You did great. See, you say you don't usually do well, but I knew you would."

That was what I told Hochi. In fact, I thought Hochi would come back to Seoul. But seeing him stick with Yong-yong until the end made me grateful and a little sorry at the same time.

"Huh? Um... mn... Yeah."

Hochi looked a bit dazed. I wondered if I was too stingy with compliments. I made up my mind to praise today for a long time into the future.

"What about Lee Joon-suk?"

"I put him in the subspace."

What a relief.

I thought he was dead. Looking around, I could tell that Lee Joon-suk put in a lot of effort. The marks alone show that he was a man with

good destructive power. The problem was that he was an idiot who didn't know how to handle his own power.

If he just filled in his shortcomings, he could do more than just pay for his meals.

“...My Liege.”

[Yes, turn around and go as planned. Don't worry too much. I will always be with you.]

The fake and the God of Hope talked to each other. I wondered at the sight.

“The God of Hope, what's wrong with the way you're talking?” He was using a weird way of speaking.

As soon as I questioned, the God of Hope spoke to me.

[The way you speak is different depending on how you're imprinted on the believer. It's quite basic information. Though, I forget, you're new to this.]

It was a voice that was sent only to me personally.

It was a relatively light, mean voice worthy of the appearance of a flying bug.

Interesting.

‘No matter how fake it is, it wouldn't have been easy to convince me.’

[Hahaha, do you think so?] The God of Hope laughed and explained, [I can't compare you from back then to you now. You were very sensitive and fragile then. Like a newborn baby. Do you know how easily the act of listening and empathizing shook that stupid thing?]

Did I?

That's true. That would have been the case at the time of the 17th floor.

The next floor on the 17th floor was the 18th floor.

I could easily recall how much I was shaken at the time. It was a time when there were not even clear goals.

In addition, the necklace that the fake is wearing. It had the God of Hope.

I didn't know when Hyung-jin was holding it before, but that was very... It came off as a bad thing.

It would have been more beneficial to crush the necklace rather than to keep it around.

[I should have recruited you, not this fake.]

The first time I met the God of Hope was on the 49th floor.

I didn't even think to rely on the gods then.

It would have been impossible for the God of Hope to bring me in.

[No, no, not the 49th floor, but the 60th floor. Do you know how much fun I had watching you flounder in despair back then?

[Hoping someone would save you, wishing that someone would come to help you. It was so funny how you wished for it. I had a chance to recruit you, but I had decided to put it off... But eventually, you grew enough to cut off the connection. You grew to overcome your depression.

[It was the most enjoyable part of my day to see you hurt and cut yourself every day and night.

[Do you know how sad it had been for me when you decided to stop?]

I decided one thing after hearing the God of Hope giggle annoyingly.

“It’s confirmed. You’re dead to me.”

Chapter 319

Japan (7)

I saw the 17th-floor fake standing beside the God of Hope. How long had he been preparing for this? It was hard to guess.

To be honest, it was quite hard to believe the fake was modeled after me. The way he spoke, which seemed to truly revere the God of Hope, made my mouth sting just by listening. The words alone proved that the fake was completely different from me. The only thing I shared with that fake was the memories from before the 17th floor.

Even compared to Hochi, the fake was utterly out of sync. Nevertheless, that fake was equating itself to me. At the same time, he was devastated by the fact that he was a fake. His hostility, jealousy, and inferiority complex was overtly obvious and made me feel sympathetic rather than annoyed or angry.

He was a possession of the God of Hope. The God of Hope must have endlessly whispered, telling him he was fake and that he could make him real. As a result, he couldn't look back on himself and only looked at me.

His delusions exaggerated the presence of something far away and hid the most important thing right in front of him. They served to immensely increase his despair and made the dwindling hope inside of him even more beautiful and precious. It was such a twisted way of gaining hope.

“Seregia.”

When I called for Seregia, she appeared in the form of a sword of moderate length in my hand.

The God of Hope saw the giant sword hanging from the sky and the longsword in my hand and said, [Amazing.]

Seregia's capabilities were amazing. If necessary, she could exist in any number of forms.

[I can't believe you broke my area like a window. How absurd. Didn't you say you wouldn't use overly powerful weapons?]

Oh, that.

I hadn't handled weapons that were more powerful than necessary in the Tutorial. In the case of Ahbooboo, although we might fight together, I rarely wielded him myself.

I shrugged my shoulders. "That's because it's a hindrance to growth. With where I am now, why wouldn't I use a powerful weapon if I had one?"

If you don't use a powerful weapon for no reason, that'd be stupid. It was natural to use what was available.

[Not a struggle, surely.]

"No."

[You don't want your divinity to get affected as a result, do you?]

Indeed, divinity got affected as a result, but such a factor was only taken into account by idiots like the God of Slowness and the God of Devotion.

[Hahaha, do you know what a big difference that is?]

The God of Hope somehow looked pleased. Was it such a big deal that getting my title as a god was not a struggle? On the contrary, I might have been in trouble if it was a struggle.

[Can I ask you a few questions first?]

I nodded. I had something to ask the God of Hope anyways.

[Why did you ignore our offer?] asked the God of Hope.

Proposal. I don't think I'd ever heard of a proposal like this.

[Isn't the God of Evil still talking to you?]

The God of Hope referred to the God of Evil.

He certainly was. Even now, the God of Evil was eagerly communicating with me.

[Please...]

I ignored his pleas as I had been for the past few days.

I answered the God of Hope, "I didn't ignore it. I refused it."

[Then, can I hear the reason for the refusal? If you tell us which part you didn't like, we're always ready to make a better offer.]

Ah, so fun.

A better offer.

I saw the fake from the 17th floor next to the God of Hope. For how long have they been playing tricks to get that fake guy?

Now, however, he had no intention of antagonizing and talked as if I were unilaterally arguing.

"Well, fine. I'll tell you what I want."

There was a good reason to antagonize the God of Hope and the Rulers. It wasn't because of my 17th-floor self—I didn't even know the fake existed until just now—nor was it due to the Rulers eating Earth's source.

The beings who attacked the Earth directly, of course, need to be crushed. But it was not enough to antagonize both the connected

Rulers and the gods.

There was a more practical reason than that. It was because of old questions. The gods of the Pantheon were all bound by restrictions. Under these numerous restrictions, the radius of a god's conduct was greatly limited. But some gods felt that the restriction was a little loose.

I used to think that the constraints were different depending on the situation. I'd been through it many times, so I realized that was not true either.

When I asked Kirikiri, she always fell for it. Over time, I found that certain gods were relatively free from restrictions.

This was the case on the 49th floor, where the God of Hope first appeared. Kirikiri had stressed several times that I should remember the 49th floor.

The most significant feature of the 49th floor was not the appearance of the God of Hope. The first notable thing was that the God of Hope arbitrarily ended the stage. The second was setting the world view of the 49th-floor stage.

The introduction of the 49th-floor stage contained this phrase:

Countless kingdoms and denominations have fallen, and only the Holy Land of the God of Hope, which had been hidden, remains.

I couldn't understand it at the time.

No matter what, all sorts of restrictions bound Pantheon gods.

It was to the point where they could only demonstrate their ability as gods within their own territory.

Though, ironically you needed to keep your holy land's locations a secret. The moment it was revealed, the system placed restrictions on it, making it quite dangerous to use your powers in your Holy Land as it ran the risk of revealing its location.

It was strange that even though it was a world where many gods coexisted, they could not intervene until the centre was blown away.

And the only thing in the world that kept the Holy Land alive was, unfortunately, the God of Hope.

There were a handful of survivors who had to cling to hope more than anyone else.

By taking advantage of the fact that the God of Hope was relatively free from connections and systems with the Rulers, I thought he was reducing the other gods' power and molding the world in the direction he wanted.

I told the God of Hope my doubts and hypotheses one by one. The God of Hope listened quietly to me, but I knew that he was not so comfortable.

“An answer to your question. And if my answer is correct, you have to tell me how to avoid some of the system's constraints. Finally, to trust your information, I'll use an information lock.”

[You madman... you think I'll take that offer?]

Of course I didn't think so. After all, I didn't mean to suggest it in the first place.

I was just saying, “Tell me what you want.”

“Yong-yong, take care of your uncle.”

“Yes!” Yong-yong, who had been quiet, answered energetically.

I grinned at his answer.

[Think about it again. Our proposal is not a bad one...]

To take advantage of the God of Hope again, I moved right in front.

“You think I care about the proposal? I told you earlier. You’re dead.”

[Y...!]

I swung my sword at the God of Hope, who quickly rose to fight.

* * *

Kwaaa!

The shock wave caused a massive dust storm. The God of Hope narrowly avoided the aftermath of the attack.

I was about to continue the attack immediately, but someone got in the way. The fake who was beside the God of Hope swung a sword at me.

I didn’t bother to avoid or stop the sword.

“Intangible.”

I cut through the sword, headed toward my heart. As soon as the sword passed, he repositioned his body.

I somehow grabbed the fake’s face with one hand and slammed it on the floor. The shock considerably shook the ground.

Why was he (I) so good at everything? I was going to catch him later and study him. I hope he didn’t die instantly.

As soon as I had handled the fake, I chased the God of Hope again. The God of Hope threw countless energy spheres my way, as he ran away.

Eight in total. The difference was that only two of the eight were real.

It wasn’t hard to detect. The problem was that the real and the fake kept changing.

When I sensed that the bottom energy sphere was fake, the other sphere would become real. There was no constant observable pattern, and it was changing randomly according to my perception.

It was indeed an attack from the God of Hope. Every single energy sphere was powerful. Usually, I'd have to identify the real and the fake somehow to minimize the damage.

It was a fresh attack. But in the face of my power, which was able to cope with anything and everything, it wasn't much.

I struck back at all eight spheres. The spheres exploded, producing massive amounts of light and heat.

It was an explosion comparable to that of a supernova. If it happened on the surface of the earth, not on the surface of this world, it would have been a power that would simply destroy the earth.

Immediately after the explosion, the God of Hope attempted another attack.

A sharp metal arrow. It was as small as a regular arrow, but the power it held was not. The God of Hope compressed enough power into the arrow to inflict a fatal wound on a god, even if the arrow simply grazed by.

It was a weapon that could greatly affect a battle between the deities, which would eventually degenerate into a physical fight.

I was able to strike the arrow without difficulty because there'd be no damage in doing so.

I had no problems in blocking and avoiding the arrow.

Because survival was carved into my very being, I was able to deal with it reflexively, whether the arrow flew at the speed of sound or of light.

I flew again to the God of Hope.

The God of Hope was faster than I had anticipated. He was fast to a startling degree.

[Come! My warriors!] the fleeing god of hope shouted in a dignified voice.

Then he opened up the space, and countless beings poured out of it. Every one of them was at or above the level of a native god that appeared in the Tutorial.

Many of the divine spirits seemed to be far below the God of Evil from Antarctica, but it still was an unrealistic sight.

Every single being that poured out like a swarm of ants was either a ruler or a new species.

Wide-area attacks against unspecified individuals were very inefficient.

Lee Joon-suk, who couldn't even control his power, couldn't use his abilities properly due to the damage around him.

However, it wasn't hopeless. This moment had its own advantages and disadvantages.

I dug into the middle of the crowd called by the God of Hope.

No one responded to my speed. As the enemies looked for me, who had disappeared for a moment, I prepared for the explosion with ease.

“Zit Pop.”

A Zit Pop that exploded without any control.

A colossal blade that could have reached the horizon completely shattered the barrier, and soon, a powerful explosion broke out.

I heard no noise because I purposely blocked my hearing.

No matter how strong I was, I didn't want to listen to the terrible sound that followed the explosion.

It was for a brief moment, but the light and heat seemed like it would never fade. It would burn endlessly.

However, the atmosphere where the air was simmering seemed to be distorted by the light.

The lake's water had disappeared without a trace, and a vast crater was carved from the start of the horizon to the end.

Red flames torched the surface. If it weren't for the artificially created world, the planet would have started to collapse earlier.

The gods summoned by the God of Hope could not even be found.

The God of Hope was not free from the aftermath. He was running away, screaming like a bug on fire.

I laughed at the God of Hope. The overwhelming heat, which would make purgatory flames seem lukewarm in comparison, would not be a pleasant experience.

"You keep running away."

Resisting was futile.

You can avoid one attack, maybe you can even avoid two or three, but you can't avoid it all. You won't get away from me in the end.

What can you do in the face of true, overwhelming power?

Anyone who faced me, someone who could withstand everything no matter what conditions, constraints, and disadvantages there were, could only hope to escape from me.

"You said you had to experience despair to see hope," I said, crushing the shield that the God of Hope desperately unfolded.

I disagreed with that remark. There was no hope in the face of real despair... In the face of me.

It wasn't hope that I felt from him, but meaningless self-hypnosis.

"Do you see hope in front of you now?"

[I do.]

[It becomes even more powerful in the face of despair. Like the only starlight shining in the polluted night sky, hope burns beautifully,] the God of Hope answered firmly.

And called someone.

[Come to me.]

[My great warrior, My only hope, prove that hope exists in the face of even the darkest despair in the world. Prove that you are real.]

What appeared at the God of Hope's summoning was the fake on the 17th floor I forgot about.

The fake showed up in front of me just like before.

He was emitting a completely different level of power and aura.

Chapter 320

Japan (8)

[Did you expect this?] Seregia asked me.

Did I expect this? Of course, I didn't.

This exceeded my expectations. This was something I hadn't even considered to be possible.

First, I had to admit that I'd misjudged the God of Hope. When judging a god, the most important thing to look at is their power.

The God of Sky must reign over all beings, as his title suggested.

Some gods love everything as long as they pop, glow, and sparkle, like the God of Light.

I thought the God of Hope belonged to the former group. I only regarded him as a god who pushed people into despair and accepted their longing for hope. So I hadn't expected this.

Until just now, the situation was one-sided.

This world of hope created by the god of hope to break the trap had become a prison that prevented the God of Hope from getting out.

The difference in combat power was overwhelming.

Apart from the total amount of power I had, the God of Hope lagged far behind me in terms of power to fight back. The beings summoned by the God of Hope were useless.

No matter how many beings gathered, they were like dust in front of a god. Likewise, ambiguous gods that did not reach any level posed no

threat to me. My victory seemed almost inevitable.

On the contrary, from the standpoint of the God of Hope, there was a strong possibility of defeat.

Such a hopeless situation made the God of Hope foster a strong desire for hope.

The more desperate the situation was, the stronger the enemy, the more desperate and eager one would get.

You could even call it faith. His power significantly increased. Finally, the God of Hope gave his power entirely to his apostle.

I misjudged that, too. I didn't care much about that fake. I thought it was a failure made by the God of Hope or a faulty replica made by the tower.

"You made plenty of preparations to defeat me."

I was satisfied with the fake, even though it was inferior to me.

I'll take it with me later and do experiments.

But that fake, modeled after me from the 17th floor, carried the enormous power handed over by the God of Hope. He couldn't handle the strength. But, his body didn't explode, nor did he lose his strength.

It was an abnormal appearance. The power at the edge of the sword held by that fake was one that condensed the amplified divine power of hope at one stroke.

Even the sun would be blown away if it burst. If it wanted to cut and stab, no god would survive. It wasn't a power that mortals who couldn't ascend to godhood could even grasp even more so wield.

No, even a god would probably not be able to handle it.

The fake must have been prepared for this moment.

[Your idea wasn't that unique,] said Seregia.

I had prepared Seregia for the battle against the gods.

Since it was a battle between the gods, it eventually would return to basic fighting. So, I thought that wielding a highly-concentrated power to the limit would be the most powerful fighting method.

I had prepared for this, just like the God of Hope.

The difference was, I raised my weapon, Seregia, against them, while the God of Hope used his power as a weapon and gave it to the fake.

A giggle sounded in my ear. It was like a flying bug buzzing near the ear while one was sleeping on a hot summer night.

[We set a trap for each other, but my preparations were more thorough, right?] asked the God of Hope.

I felt so disgusted. But I had to admit it. I'd been preparing for a long time to confront a god.

But I hadn't expected that any god would have foreseen the confrontation with me and prepared for it this much considering their innately arrogant nature.

[Do you know what the biggest nature of hope is?]

Was he trying to teach the theory of hope now?

The God of Hope spoke with excitement like he thought he had completely reversed the situation.

[It's the last thing that's left. I can tell you now, you who have always tried to turn away hope, and have been ashamed of yourself for longing for hope; hope softens the will, but the power that ignoring hope brings is more powerful than anything else.]

As soon as the God of Hope stopped babbling, the fake swung his

sword into the air like lightning. The power that seemed unrealistic to me shot up, and it made a hole in the world.

The God of Hope escaped through the hole. It was ridiculous.

Was that just a simple physical attack? This was the mental world developed by the God of Hope himself.

It was covered with Seregia's barrier. However, just a blow to the condensed energy created a hole.

The God of Hope was crazy. He said so much, and all he did was fly away in the end.

[Yong-yong.] I called Yong-yong.

[Yes. Can I help you?] Yong-yong was still cheerful.

A smile appeared on my face when Yong-yong said he would help me. Thanks to this, my irritation faded a little.

I just missed one chance.

It would be enough to catch him later and make him pay for his share.

[No, it's okay. Daddy will take care of it.]

[Alright.]

[Take your uncle out and wait for me, instead. If this space explodes and you think it's going to cause damage outside, can you move the space away?]

[What about Daddy?]

[Daddy will get out of here in the nick of time.]

The sword wielded by the fake shook the barrier. If we fought seriously, the world itself would collapse, and the aftermath might be

worse.

The aftermath would be way different from that in Antarctica. Just a little leak of power would destroy Earth. It was not a desirable result.

[Okay!] Yong-yong, who replied energetically, took Hochi out.

I did send them out, but when Yong-yong and Hochi disappeared, I felt a little empty.

The fake was still staring at me. The disappearance of my family seemed not to affect him. Even the fact that the God of Hope had left him seemed unimportant to him.

He was different from me.

If I had been in that guy's situation, I would have put a knife in the back of the God of Hope as soon as I gained strength.

There was a big difference, not only in strength and ability but also in internal aspects. Like Hochi, he shared the same memories of the past as me, but he was different than me.

The fake was still staring at me with his powers, in preparation to clash.

Admirable.

Even in the midst of this, the image of me focusing on my opponent. The power that the fake was carrying was not controllable.

A moment's disruption alone would cause the fake to explode, get swallowed up, and die. Even if he fought me with all his strength, he would die.

Still, that madman remained entirely focused, apparently having no choice but to kill me. His head was almost devoid of all thought except or the instinct to kill. He was not worthy enough to be a god.

I didn't think there was anyone better to use as a weapon and tool.
The Hundred Gods Temple was not crazy about me during that time.

[Sad,] Seregia said.

Did she not like me praising my opponent as a weapon?

"Of course, not as good as Seregia."

[Correct.]

She laughed at my reply, which seemed to be satisfactory.

The fake must have responded to the laughter and opened his mouth.

"I am real."

Who said that?

That's ridiculous.

I asked him.

"Hey, don't you realise? The God of Hope just left you."

"God of Hope had created a moment for me. I've been waiting for this moment."

I suppose so.

He was different from me in many ways, but the essentials were not different.

He's more like me than Hochi.

"Have you ever thought of finding any other goals besides this?"

"....."

The fake moved his lips soundlessly. He hadn't thought about it as I had.

"Then, have you looked for anything other than your goals?"

"What...?"

I had found mine.

Yong-yong and Hochi were waiting for me outside. There was also Grandma and Old Man from the 61st floor.

There was Kim Min-hyuk, who was working hard in Seoul, and Park Jung-ah, who remained in the Tutorial.

And there's Seregja.

[Correct,] Seregja said again with a pleased voice.

On the contrary, the fake had a blank face. For a moment, I recalled the memories that he and I would share.

"How do you think Jung-ah would feel about this?"

"...Jung-ah?"

"You know... Park Jung-ah."

The fake had a confused look.

"Who is that?"

So, there was a lost memory. The fake on the 17th floor should have the same memory as mine. Perhaps some memories had been erased or distorted by the God of Hope.

"I don't need anything else. In the end... I have to become real. Otherwise, my life is meaningless. I will become real."

There was madness in his eyes while he murmured the same words over and over again.

I could understand.

Idy, Old Man, and Grandma had the same worries. I had seen it all because I had the same problem.

“I will be real!” the fake raised all the power given to him at once.

He aimed for a one-shot. It was the right decision. Because of the gap between me and the fake, even a little bit of time added would become my victory.

As there was no difference in the total amount of power he had compared to mine now, it was the right decision to throw all his power at once.

But that was if it was possible. That fake couldn't handle the aftermath.

With all his might, the fake would die when our powers collide.

Win or lose.

Only then could I understand a little more of the fake saying that he would be real.

The god of slowness had commented to me at that time.

A moth that ran into the fire to attempt to become fire. It was an astonishingly perfect remark for who I was at the time.

Not even aware of how bright he was, the moth began to rush at me with all its might.

“I have to be real!”

He was shining so brightly, but he looked so pathetic. I could

sympathize with that feeling because I remembered myself from the past.

“Yes, I will be the fire for you.”

I rushed to face the fake.

* * *

“What happened?” asked Hochi.

As the situation turned worse, Yong-yong took Hochi with him and escaped from the world.

Lee Ho-jae also seemed unable to afford to pay attention to them, and in Hochi’s case, he ran away without any problems because he knew well that he would be a burden even if he were there.

In the end, however, he was also confident that Lee Ho-jae would come back after cleaning up the situation.

So until just a moment ago, he was taking Lee Joon-suk out of the subspace and looking at the outer view of the world.

From the outside, the world was covered with a black hemisphere. As he was looking around in wonder, the black hemisphere began to twist around. It resembled a tin can that had been melted under high heat and morphed.

Yong-yong saw it and started to use his power. Hochi was so serious that he stayed quiet beside him.

After a while, the black hemisphere gradually shrank in shape, and soon, it completely disappeared.

“The power inside was so strong that I sent the whole space away after I got out.”

“What about Ho-jae?”

Yong-yong was silent for a moment.

Hochi didn't want to, but he had no choice but to prod Yong-yong.

"Yong-yong."

Yong-yong looked perplexed.

His eyes, which looked as though they were about to burst into tears, made Hochi more worried.

"I thought Dad would get out in time..."

"And?"

"I don't think he got out..."

Chapter 321

Japan (9)

“I don’t think Daddy made it out.”

The sentence was like a statement.

Since Hochi trusted Yong-yong more than anyone else, he quickly accepted what he was saying. But as much as he believed it, he also wanted to deny it.

“...Yong-yong, would you like to recheck it?”

Yong-yong, who heard Hochi’s words, shook his head.

Hochi had watched plenty of cliché dramas. A popular cliché was the character’s incurable disease. Every time the doctor revealed the patient’s limited time in the world, the people around him would always faint.

Hochi had thought about it before. When the same situation happened to him, would he be that shocked and sad?

He had always wondered about it because no one in Hochi’s family had died of a disease.

Even if it wasn’t a disease, he didn’t think anyone would pass away.

Lee Ho-jae used to say dangerous things about turning the Hundred Gods Temple upside down whenever he went outside.

Nevertheless, Hochi was not worried about Lee Ho-jae.

To Hochi, Lee Ho-jae was an absolute existence.

Hochi believed that no matter what happened, Lee Ho-jae would get through it on his own.

It wasn't much different from the vague fantasies a child had of his parents.

Hochi had never felt anxious about his family dying or disappearing. To him, that fear was something that would only appear in novels or dramas.

That was why Hochi couldn't accept Yong-yong's words.

Hochi's chest tightened painfully as he waited, with bated breath, for Yong-yong's next words.

"The world went away to another place, not where it was supposed to end up in."

"Can we go find it?"

Since Lee Ho-jae couldn't get out of the world on time, he likely couldn't have afforded to move. Or, the enemy might have held onto Lee Ho-jae's trousers at the end.

Anyway, it was a different result than what Lee Ho-jae and Yong-yong had expected.

Hochi had no choice but to suspect that Lee Ho-jae was defeated by the enemy and forced to go to the place the enemy wanted.

"I can't trace it..."

"Why?" Hochi asked in a high-pitched voice, unknowingly.

"I don't know where it flew. I can't trace it at all..." Yong-yong explained, his eyes wet with anxiety.

Hochi eventually collapsed, feeling his legs give away.

Three days had passed since Lee Ho-jae disappeared.

Hochi was still hovering near the shore, waiting for Lee Ho-jae to return.

Yong-yong fell asleep for several days trying to find Lee Ho-jae's new coordinates.

"Why don't we go back to Korea?" asked Lee Joon-suk.

Hochi shook his head. He had already been to the flat in Korea once.

Hochi was going to wait here until Lee Ho-jae came back.

Lee Joon-suk swallowed back what he was going to say and sat down next to Hochi.

"It's alright."

"Yes?"

"It's alright," Hochi muttered as he fiddled with a few rocks lying near the shore.

He had met the Old man and Grandma in Seoul. When they heard about the situation, they laughed like crazy. The two said Lee Ho-jae would return on his own without any problems.

Instead, they grumbled, saying they were disappointed with Lee Ho-jae, who disappeared without contacting them.

Hochi was angry at the two who weren't worried at all, but when Yong-yong stopped him, he couldn't say anything more.

Yong-yong was stunned by Lee Ho-jae's sudden disappearance and blamed himself for not being able to trace him, but he didn't think that Lee Ho-jae would be in grave danger.

In the end, Hochi was the only one who was worried that Lee Ho-jae might be in danger.

“I didn’t say anything, though,” Lee Joon-suk said.

Hochi ignored the comment. He was upset that no one but himself was worried about Lee Ho-jae, after all.

Maybe it was because he was the weakest and not familiar with Lee Ho-jae’s power. Hochi couldn’t help but speculate that he was making a fuss for nothing.

But what can I do if I’m worried?

Maybe he should do what Joon-suk said: go back to the flat and rest.

But when he had tried to rest on the sofa, Hochi didn’t feel as though he were resting because he was so confused.

Even when he tried to read a novel, he couldn’t relax and enjoy it. Whenever he ate, no food tasted good.

It was most comfortable, just waiting here.

“Excuse me!” someone spoke up, knocking on the glass wall.

It was a Japanese woman.

“She’s here again.”

“Did you set the barrier up?”

“Yes.”

If he hadn’t put up the barrier, she would have come close and bothered him with this and that.

It was better to block access in this way because even if one person was blown away, others wouldn’t be affected.

Three days ago, the wave on Japan's eastern coast ended.

The gods must've had a lot of questions about the black hemisphere and the humans who appeared at the end of the wave.

The victims were controlled by the Japanese government and the Awakened Society, but reporters were camped out a little further out.

The Japanese government thanked Hochi's party and wondered whether they would be able to recruit him to Japan at the same time.

They tried to invite his party to Tokyo several times, but Hochi's party did not wander

wander astray from the shore.

Hochi did not even know what they had in mind. But whatever it was, Hochi was far from interested.

"Hyung, have you thought about it?" asked Lee Joon-suk.

Hochi didn't know what Lee Joon-suk was asking about, so he had to ask back, "What?"

"What are you going to do later? You said you'd think about it in Japan."

Of course, Lee Joon-suk knew that he didn't have a chance. He just wanted the somber Hochi to think about something else.

Hochi scratched his head. There were several options. Kim Min-hyuk had recommended becoming an Awakened officially. But after experiencing Japan, he didn't think he'd fit in.

First of all, Hochi himself was not interested in humans and, instead, was rather annoyed with them.

Saving and helping someone might be a good thing, but that was it. Above all, this experience had eliminated Hochi's desire to live a life

of danger.

Lee Ho-jae once asked if he should do a job related to books. Hochi didn't seem to like that either.

Of course, he liked to read books, but he didn't want to go beyond his hobby and make it his job.

Novels were a kind of escape for Hochi.

For Hochi, born and raised in the desolate 60th-floor world, stories in novels gave him an indirect experience of the new world.

They meant nothing more than that.

“How about... a dungeon?”

“Dungeon?”

Lee Ho-jae had also once said, “Why don't you take charge of dungeons?”

Hochi came to Japan because of the condition that they hand over the dungeons that Ho-jae had collected from the Rulers.

But that was also...

“I don't know.”

In fact, he was thinking about what to do before he came to Japan.

However, after coming to Japan and going through many things, Hochii had no time to think about such things. And now that he was waiting for Lee Ho-jae, he wondered if that was important.

“Are you going to continue being an Awakened?”

“I have to continue! Now that I've got my item back from Ho-jae...!”

“After receiving?”

“Yes, yes. Of course, I still had enough power before, but being able to use my abilities freely is another matter.”

Lee Joon-suk started talking about himself.

Seeing him speak with his eyes glowing, Hochi may have wanted him to tell this story before.

“When I first came out on Earth, I felt so empty. After all, I had a power I couldn’t use, but why on earth was I so obsessed with it? Nearly ten years. I was just an average Awakened person with the ability I had. But now that’s changed, I can regain what I had lost!”

He’s excited, very excited, Hochi thought to himself.

“I’m sure there’s a lot more to do on Earth, but I’m going to follow Ho-jae hyung. If you look, there are places where he would need my powers. Oh, and Ho-jae hyung said he’d train me separately.”

Looking at Lee Joon-suk speaking enthusiastically, Hochi clicked his tongue softly.

This guy was another monster, too.

Why was he trying to find Hell on his own?

He looked fine on the outside.

Hochi bowed his head while listening to Lee Joon-suk’s story for a long time.

Inside the box around his neck, the mantis sitting on the miniature sofa looked at Lee Joon-suk and Hochi’s face, interested.

“Is there anything you want to do in the future?”

“I want to eat more.”

“What?”

“...What else?” the mantis rolled its eyes and replied.

He didn't have to ask what it wanted to eat.

It wanted to eat everything alive. It would be better if he had stronger powers.

“Is there anything else you want besides eating?”

“Well, not really.”

Lee Ho-jae had once explained his hypothesis about the Rulers.

It was a hypothesis. Rather than a monster eating to fulfill his desires somewhat and finding his past sanity, Rulers could just find sanity and power from an old, long-lasting desire.

Hochi thought the hypothesis might be right.

“You don't want anything but to eat?”

“Yes!”

“...so if you eat well, you're not going to complain about being locked up like this, are you?”

“Yes! Master puts rice in here every day.”

Its words were slightly contradictory.

“Master?”

“Yong-yong!”

Hochi thought about releasing the mantis from the box and putting this greedy, stupid monster in the sea. He stopped after thinking about

it.

It was obvious that Yong-yong would be sad.

Instead, with his chin resting in his hands, Hochi thought, ‘Why are there only idiots around me?’

“The sunset is so beautiful,” Lee Joon-seok mumbled as he turned west.

The mantis answered, hearing those words, “It’s almost dinner time.”

“Yes, it’s pretty. It would have been better if the sun was setting on the side of the ocean,” said Hochi, ignoring the mantis’s words.

The third day of waiting for Lee Ho-jae was drawing to an end.

* * *

[Lee Ho-jae]

The raging flames had finally been brought under control. I didn’t control the flow well, but the dying fake eventually lost consciousness.

I gathered all the stray energy that had been flowing around with my hands.

When the flames blazing around me wrapped around my hands, the surrounding landscape began to appear.

The planet that had been the background of the world was no longer recognizable.

The flames had destroyed the planet in a short time, but what was gathered in my hands was calm more than anything else.

No matter how powerful and destructive the power was, a power without a will could not hurt a god no matter what.

The fake, who wielded this divine power, had lost consciousness.

It wasn't difficult to draw the power that was out of control into my own, either.

The God of Hope drove his power into the fake and made him attack me, but the limit was clear. If the God of Hope had been here, he wouldn't have been consumed by the power.

It was the limit of those who failed to rise to the rank of a god.

[What do you want to do with him?] Seregia questioned about the unconscious fake.

I pondered for a moment.

“Let him be.”

Let him burn up by the remaining heat.

Once eaten up by power, he may have been destroyed in a multitude of ways, and I didn't want to experiment with that.

I just wanted to let him do what he wanted. If he survives, so be it. [1]

I felt Yong-yong shut down the space itself.

He seemed to be trying to send it away.

Well...

[You're not going out?]

“Yes, I'm not going out.”

It was not enough to go out right now. I called out to the God of Evil, who was still begging inside me.

“God of Evil.”

[Please...]

[Please listen to my request. Please let me go...]

Even now, he was continuing his pleas, on a subject that was long lost.

“Yes, I will accept your request.”

[...really?]

[Then the God of Hope... He came on behalf of our representative... to liberate me.]

‘Our’ representative.

It felt weird to hear that the God of Hope, a Hundred Gods Temple member, and the God of Evil, who was not a member of anything, used the word “our.”

(T/N: It's kinda hard to translate this without changing the whole sentence. I hope y'all got what it means. Basically, the god of evil is using 'we'/'our' before the word 'representative' but I cannot write 'we representative'...so, yeah. The line before it as well, the god of evil uses 'we'.)

“Yes, but there’s a problem. The God of Hope is a little busy.”

[It can't be... that can't be true... the God of Hope will not abandon me.....]

Ignoring the bewildered God of Evil, I asked what I wanted to ask.

“So, I’m going to have to visit him myself. You know where the God of Hope’s temple is, don’t you? The coordinates.”

[I know...]

That was easy.

Now, I could easily fool him.

It had been worthwhile to digest the God of Evil.

The God of Evil, who had, at first, refused to give information, now began to regurgitate everything he knew.

[Are you going to invade?]

Of course, I was thinking of invading.

By swallowing the God of Evil, I had intended to find out the location and information about the God of Hope and his hideout.

I was in a hurry to find out about the God of Hope. If I gave them time, they would attack again. I wanted to finish him as soon as possible.

[My power is almost exhausted. Why don't you connect the earth with the 60th floor and put it off after you get more power?]

"It's alright. The God of Hope isn't that powerful."

The God of Hope had given all his power to the fake and ran away.

I didn't know how much he'd recovered, but it wouldn't be that much.

"And I have this power."

The power that was still in my hands.

The God of Hope poured out his power, amplified it several times, and handed it over to a fake.

The fake had left a lot of power without even using it up.

I didn't know how big the temple of the God of Hope was or how many beings would be in there.

But the remaining power I had would be enough.

Chapter 322

God of Hope (1)

“Is he dead?”

[No, his body is not completely burnt yet,] replied Seregia as she looked at the burning fake

.

Although completely unconscious, the fake stayed alive.

[We can't remain here any longer, so just let him be,] said Seregia.

I refused. “That's too cold.”

[The right thing to say depends on who the speaker is, so, sometimes, it can just be a dog barking.]

You just mean to say I'm talking shit, right?

That wasn't my personality.

[I'm just saying what I've heard before.]

Seregia shut her mouth.

I scratched my head. My hair didn't burn despite the intense heat, but it felt like the moisture in it was utterly dried up.

I knew why Seregia urged me to kill the fake quickly. Her strength was exhausted by the battle just now. Depleted energy and helplessness made humans feel languid, but Seregia viewed it differently as a weapon.

In the midst of this, she was impatient and anxious to break into the Holy Land of the God of Hope.

It would be painful to wait for that fake body to burn away.

“But let’s wait a little longer.”

Seregia did not answer.

I watched the fake slowly be consumed by the heat. I didn’t know whether I should call it a clone or an incomplete version of myself.

I thought incomplete suited it better.

That fake was still breathing, but it was already dead. It had been like that before he met me. The only time that he was truly alive was when he clashed with me. The fake would have thought so, too.

At last, all of the fake’s defenses had run out.

The body genuinely began to burn.

The fake, who had maintained his human form for a surprisingly long time, quickly became a lump of black charcoal soot.

I didn’t know if the fake would agree with me. But it seemed that even the fake liked his ending.

This alone made me quite confident that he was me from the past, dependent on self-destructive excitement and pleasure.

He was well aware that if he fought as he was, he would die soon. However, he put itself in a dangerous situation. Back then, I did not take the time to settle down and kept on advancing. I quickly climbed the floor as if I had gone mad, but I felt sad whenever the Tutorial’s remaining layers were reduced one by one.

It was not a long-term goal to live and clear the tutorial and return to Earth.

I'd only followed the sense of accomplishment that I felt by breaking through the thrill and growth walls that I felt as I broke past every moment of danger.

Even though I knew there was a high possibility of me dying, I kept going.

Instead, I hoped for more.

I hoped every moment of my life would be filled with heat, with excitement, and was ready to die when the flames of danger were shining brightly.

[You're overly involved.]

So what if I was overly involved? He was just like me in the past.

I couldn't help the fake. But at the very least, I wanted to watch its end.

[Very weak-minded. No matter how much you have in common, it's never good to have feelings for the enemy.]

"That's true."

Acknowledged. It was a weak and foolish decision.

But..."It's not always good to be strong."

I didn't know what Seregia would think about protecting herself as a weapon. I thought she might do the same.

[Do you sympathise with him?]

Well...

Maybe it's remorse for my past self who became a monster.

Suddenly, I thought of the 20th floor. I remembered the two tribes I

had met there: Chimera and Idy.

The 20th floor was the stage where I began to change most dramatically among all the stages in the tutorial.

Since then, I had started to run towards a new goal. I was still running, but I felt a lot had already changed when I thought about that time.

Maybe more would continue to change.

It may change from running somewhere to a goal completely different from the previous one. I was preoccupied with one goal and tried not to think deliberately about it afterwards. Now, I wondered if it was time to think about it again.

I whispered as I looked at where the fake had disappeared, now completely turned into ash.

May you have the peaceful ending you had wished for.

“I’ll take revenge for you.”

[Did that fake wish for the fall of the God of Hope?]

Well, probably not.

“Why does that matter? I said I’d do it.”

[That’s true.]

Seregia was also positive.

“Let’s go, then.”

The Holy Land of the God of Hope had already been found, and the fake had already been burnt.

It was easy to find because the God of Evil told me the detailed

coordinates.

* * *

Part of the space cracked, and a circular hole formed in it. Beyond the hole, I could see the Holy Land of the God of Hope. Before rushing in, I looked at the Holy Land.

It was uniquely shaped like a colossal sandglass made of glass walls. Ordinary people inhabited the upper compartment of the hourglass.

Small rooms, reminiscent of a vast hive, were packed tightly in the compartments above the hourglass.

One person lived in each room. The number of people living in the rooms seemed quite large.

At the lowest estimate, it was about 10 million rooms. From a distance, each room resembled sand in an hourglass.

In the lower compartment of the hourglass... there was nothing.

I was looking into the structure when suddenly the inside of the hourglass began to shake. In the small rooms, people halted their actions and began praying. It was a desperate and sincere prayer that I could feel, even when I knew nothing about it.

Soon, the vibrations of the hourglass stopped. Then the room at the bottom of the upper compartment fell into the lower compartment. It was akin to sand falling down an hourglass.

Humans, of course, were not sand. The impact shattered the room that fell to the lower compartment. The man in it, of course, died. The rest of the people in the upper compartment continued their prayers, terrified by the shock.

A moment later, mechanical equipment emerged from the bottom of the compartment below and removed the body from the fallen room. I wondered what kind of crazy situation this was.

Hochi used to look at the 60th floor and ask if it was okay to decorate it like that.

I wondered what he would say when he saw this Holy Land. I turned my sight to the ceiling of the hourglass. There was another world on the ceiling.

Unlike the hourglass's interior, it had a clear, glowing sky with a lush, green garden just below it.

That place was well decorated, like a beautiful paradise. In the middle of it was a temple built of pure white stone. It was quite a marvel from a human's point of view. The place was truly worth being called a temple.

The imbalance between the floors was strange, but I was quite satisfied. I was very, very pleased. The Holy Land of the God of Hope was a beautiful place worth burning.

Perhaps because I looked into the Holy Land, someone noticed me and asked, [Who is it?]

It was not the God of Hope. It seemed to be a guard of the Holy Land.

[What's going on?]

[Someone is trying to break into the land without permission.]

[I don't know who it is.]

[The God of Hope said nothing.]

[Can you tell from where they're trying to invade?]

[I don't know. But beyond space, there's a tremendous amount of energy. However, I cannot foresee the amount of power the intruders hold.]

[Strong.]

Shocked conversations broke out. There must be a lot of guards.

How fun.

[Stop! Stop spying and come forth! This is the Holy Land of the God of Hope!]

I came to the right place.

I chuckled and thanked the God of Evil.

[If the God of Hope does not allow it, no more can come in. First, reveal who you are!]

Reveal who I am?

Hmm, how should I introduce myself?

[Who are you?]

Only after a moment's consideration did I come up with the right answer.

I told the God of Hope's guard, who asked who I was.

“Your despair.”

At the same time, I fired at the front.

The spatial barrier was in layers, but the power I sent ripped it apart as though it were paper. Black smoke flowed into the Holy Land, and the extreme temperature differences distorted the air.

I cut through the storms created by the hot air flow and entered the Holy Land.

[An unexpected appearance of a villain. I'm glad you're like this, Warrior,] said Seregia.

As she said, I must be the antagonist in this situation.

I heard the voice of the God of Hope. Several guards had appeared after I entered and had been trying to attack.

[Die, intruder!]

“You, too. Die.”

* * *

Ah.

It felt good to burn this place. It was worth burning when there was so much greenery, pretty birds flying around, beautiful buildings.

I didn't want to burn places that were already in ruins.

The level of the guard was excellent. They weren't divine beings, but they had as much power as a god.

Considering the apostles' characteristics, the God of Hope's apostles were the ones who could show more ability than the others.

Thanks to this, I had a taste of their power whenever I burnt them alive, one by one. It was very satisfying.

Ahhhh!

Help me!

The temple has fallen!

Oh, God!

People's screams came from afar. There were also people in the Holy Land above the hourglass.

Basically, they were ordinary people who didn't feel much different from those who were trapped in an hourglass.

The number of believers must have been quite high in the Holy Land, given the screams heard.

My satisfaction grew even more.

[Damn it...]

It was the God of Hope.

As soon as I heard the somber voice, I felt extremely pleased.

Hahahaha.

[I thought you both would die together...]

That's exceptionally optimistic of you to think so.

It's a hundred years too early to think that! You pathetic fly!

[Stop! Cease-fire! I call a cease-fire!] the God of Hope shouted in an urgent voice.

It seems that he had not recovered yet.

"Why do I have to do that? It's over if I catch you."

[Don't be pretentious! You've run out of power!] the God of Hope pressed out.

Unfortunately, he was wrong. I had enough power left to capture the God of Hope.

I'd absorbed all the power that the fake left behind. Anyway, I used my ability again to prove that I had enough left.

“Zit pop.”

[Damn it! Please don't use that damned skill!]

I didn't have to use Zit Pop. Of course, I didn't have the means to create a skill as explosive as Zit Pop right now, but I didn't mind using any other skill at this time when no one was able to stop me.

But...

If you tell me not to do it, I want to do it more.

I sent one more blow over to the collapsing Holy Land of the God of Hope.

“Yes, Zit Pop.”

Chapter 323

God of Hope (2)

[You're not following him?]

Seregia asked, looking at the god of hope who'd abandoned his holy land and fled.

I won't follow him. I didn't even know where I was going, so how could I go after him? I took a lot of information out of the god of evil. If I got to know the realm of the God of Hope, I could destroy it one by one rather than going after him blindly.

"I would drag on the fight by playing tag for no reason. If I destroy his regions one by one, the God of Hope will have nowhere else to run."

[Good, an example of fine judgment.]

"What?"

Seregia did not answer back. I had a strange sense of déjà vu. I thought it was just my feeling.

The Holy Land of the God of Hope made its name clear. Two Zit Pops, and only remains of the once beautiful landscape was left. It was amazing that it had not been completely turned to ashes.

The ones subjugated to my attacks weren't usually durable. Among the remains of the building, relatively healthy ones were picked and put into space.

[What are you doing?]

"I'm going to take some materials. Later, I'll ask Yong-yong to make me a temple with this."

[You're so frugal.]

What's with that?

I did this hoping that the God of Hope's mood will become worse. I was cleaning up the debris and looking for some usable materials, when a red wall came out. The remains of the white temple were spotted with bright red bricks. The red walls were intact as if they had not been affected by the Zit Pop explosion.

Curiosity drove me to inspect the wall. It was not that difficult to pierce. The wall had endured the explosion, but it was easy to penetrate the wall when power was condensed at a single point.

I made a big hole, and entered. It was a space full of strange machinery that had never been seen. And there was one thing that was wriggling among the machinery.

It was a human.

"Hey, do you want to get hit and dragged out, or will you come out on your own?"

"If you don't hit me, I'll come out!"

A very rational reply came back.

"Yes, I won't hit you."

"Okay!"

A human being who was hiding among the gadgets appeared. It was a human figure, but he was not ordinary. He's an apostle, that's why he's here. I could be convinced.

"Heh... you're not going to hit me, are you?"

Of course, I'll hit you. I hit the apostle's knee in a swift move. On that broken leg, bones popped out from inside the knee that was broken.

The apostle of the God of Hope fell down and did not realise what had happened.

After looking at his knee a moment later, he squeezed out a scream as if he felt pain. The high-pitched scream, as if squeezing a nearly dried mop.

I grabbed the ankle of the apostle's broken leg and tore off the shaking limb. The leg bones sticking out from the knee looked sharp and usable.

I spoke in a low tone, with the leg bone against the apostle's neck, "I'll decide whether to hit you or not depending on my mood. Do you understand?"

The apostle nodded his head convulsively and replied yes.

"Now, shall we get to what these gadgets are, first?" I questioned him.

But the apostle was groaning in pain. The pain was too severe for him to explain, it seemed.

"If you don't start your explanation quickly, there will be more pain."

* * *

The apostle eventually began to explain only after one more wrist disappeared. I wish I had done it earlier.

"This is the..."

The apostle unwittingly pointed to the gadget with his right hand. To be precise, he pointed with what remained of his arm. His wrist was torn off and lying on the floor.

"It's a device that watches all over the Holy Land, It is used for managing it."

It looked similar to a CCTV on Earth.

I had one question.

“The God of Hope doesn’t need a device like this.”

“God has entrusted us with taking care of it.”

Well; That would be the case if there were several temples.

I left Lee Yeon-hee as an apostle on the 60th floor right now. Come to think of it, I wonder if Lee Yeon-hee was doing well.

The apostle continued to explain while I was thinking about something else.

“This way, we can watch the rooms of the upper compartment.”

A huge screen showed people living above the hourglass. Each room that people lived in was about the size of a container. It wasn’t a small room.

“The people who live there are supposed to never leave that room for the rest of their lives.”

It was too small to be their whole world for life. I felt sorry for the people who were trapped there because I had been stuck on the 60th floor for a long time.

“Everyone’s stuck alone.”

“Yes, it is.”

“Then how do they give birth to babies?”

The apostle replied that if people apply to become a couple by mutual agreement, sperm and eggs were extracted and artificially conceived while the two were sleeping. It was an excessively inhumane method of breeding.

“Ahhhhh!”

I tore off the apostle's right forearm.

“...B-but I'm just telling you the truth...!”

That fact made me feel bad. Still, it was good that people could communicate with each other.

People in the room were usually looking into electronic devices similar to computers. Sometimes, some people read books, but most of them seemed to spend time communicating with each other through electronic devices.

“...anyhow, a child born that way will be cared for in the Holy Land until the age of 10 and then assigned a room at the top of the upper compartment.”

And then, they start living in captivity. Wait, there were kids in the Holy Land? I expanded my senses and looked around.

The place where the children were located was the deepest part of the Holy Land. Fortunately, everyone there looked fine. It appeared to be a sort of shelter.

The guards I first encountered must have detected my intrusion and collected them there. I praised them in his heart. I'd already killed all the guards.

“What was that situation when that room crashed to the bottom?”

I asked what I was most curious about. The apostle hesitated for a moment. He was afraid I'd hit him again for being offended.

“If you don't tell me, you'll get more hurt.”

“...death. One room falls down every day. The room at the bottom falls. It usually takes 10 to 25 years for the top room to crash.”

“So the people there usually die between twenty and thirty-five.”

“Yes, we call it life expectancy.”

Twenty-five. It was too early to admit one's death and face it calmly. No, it has nothing to do with age. Who can stand death coming in visible form from day to day?

“Instead, one person a month is blessed with random ascension.”

“Ascension?”

“Yes, the God of Hope allows us to live in the Holy Land. Then we're free from death. In fact, that's how I came up to the Holy Land.”

I had seen people praying. Now I knew what they were praying for. They were praying for ascension.

I didn't want much faith. The problem was not the materials, but the believers. If people remained, the God of Hope would continue to squeeze the believers out of their faith. I'll steal the believers, not anything else.

[Are you going to take the ordinary people and use them?]

They don't really need to be used. If I thought about it, it's for the Tutorial stage. I can take the entire tutorial from the Hundred Gods Temple at any time. And many of the Tutorial stages were undeveloped.

Or there were places where the civilization had already been destroyed. I couldn't just leave such a place alone, so it wouldn't be a bad idea to let those people live there.

[Will they want that?]

Well... I didn't know. Life out of here must be hard for them. Instead, they will be given freedom, but some people would want comfort instead of freedom.

But still.

“I can’t leave them like this.”

It’s not because of my idea that people should be free. This was because their existence gave strength to the God of Hope.

I projected myself into each room. People were surprised and delighted to see me suddenly appearing. I told people I’d let them get out of this narrow room. Naturally, people were glad that I was talking about ascension.

“Oh... God, at last.....”

“Thank you, thank you very much.”

Those people knelt and prayed before my projection in the room. They cried and expressed their gratitude.

There were various people. Some of them showed unusual reactions. Especially a young woman. Of course, most of the people here were young.

“...can you take someone else besides me?”

I asked her.

[Who are you talking about?]

“There’s my son... He’s only 16, but he’s in a room lower than me. Please...”

Luck seemed to apply a little bit to falling down. I couldn’t believe the son was further below his mother. By the way, I was curious about the age of the woman.

“I’m 36.”

She was older than I thought.

Age usually fell between twenty and thirty-five before the died, so she

may be one of the oldest by this standard. It seemed fine to let this woman manage people later.

[Your son will also go to the new holy place. Not only your son, but everyone.]

The woman was thrilled.

Rather than saying that everyone would ascend to heaven, she seemed more pleased to be able to meet her son in person. Some people asked something different from women.

“...Can I not go?”

[Why?]

Dumbfounded, I asked roughly, not even thinking about maintaining dignity.

“I... just feel comfortable and good here.”

[If you stay here, you'll fall and die soon.]

“We still have five more years to go.”

The man said smartly. He was a very lazy fellow.

[No. Destiny can't be avoided just because you hate it.]

I recited a deceptive line after quite a long time, ignoring the man's request to leave me alone. I'll have to send him to a rough place. I thought it would be nice to have him on the 12th floor of Hell
Difficulty level.

As I took questions one by one, people began to ask all sorts of things. What was going to happen in the future, where were they being sent, and more such queries.

I answered as much as I could. It was an act of little help to God's

dignity, but I wanted to give people a minimal explanation.

Many of them asked questions like.

“Who... who are you? Who are you?”

“Are you really God? Did you listen to my prayer?”

There was a man in every world who doubted the existence of God. Even the world where God himself existed, was no exception.

I answered them.

“Your God, and your hope.”

All the people were sent into space. Then Seregia asked me a question.

[Is it okay to call yourself hope?]]

It's alright.

Faith is a curious thing. Hope for them is no longer the god of hope, but me who met them face-to-face and talked to them.

Ambiguity protected God's authority, but it also confused the direction of faith. There were countless stories of believers who had come to worship the representatives, not the gods, even in the religion of the earth.

People would regard me as the god of hope, not the God of Hope that they had never seen or heard of in their lifetime, but the one who'd appeared in person and liberated them.

It had now been too inefficient to deny the God of Hope and to put forward new faith. The faith of hope was already deeply embedded in people's minds. It was easier to impersonate the name of the god of hope and direct their faith toward me.

I put everyone in the open space, and moved the children in the

shelter to an open space. Then, in the Holy Land of Hope, only me and the apostle were left.

“God, I will do my best. Take me with you.”

Said the guy, bowing down.

I’m sorry, but I didn’t intend to do that.

“You know why I kept you alive?”

“...yeah?”

“The God of Hope is watching me through you.”

“Well, that’s not... No, I don’t think I’m such a great person...”

This guy introduced himself like a head of ordinary managerial jobs, but it couldn’t have been. Apostles were no ordinary believer. Beyond their body, they were like a god’s alter ego.

Everything he heard and saw was seen and heard by the God of Hope.

“Had enough watching me rampage in your holy land?”

I grabbed the head of an apostle who was trying to flee and raised his body. I said, turning his head to make eye contact with me. Towards the God of Hope beyond those eyes.

“Wherever you hide, I will find you.”

As soon as I finished speaking, I burst the apostle’s head.

[Are you sure you’re leaving right away?]

Let’s go.

After all, this holy place had been burned neatly so that even its

remains could not be found.

Chapter 324

God of Hope (3)

God of Hope (3)

It was a great idea to secure believers in the Holy Land of the God of Hope.

It also had the effect of cutting off the supply of faith sent by believers to the God of Hope and eliminating the land where the God of Hope would return to. But more than that, I was more satisfied with the faith conveyed to me by the believers in the subspace.

“In this case, there is no need to rush to connect the 60th floor to replenish your divine power.”

Of course, we should connect the 60th floor to the Earth, even if there wasn't a need to replenish my power.

There was no need to rush, so delaying the pursuit of the God of Hope wasn't a problem.

[Right.]

Seregia answered calmly, but not with a very patient tone. She seemed to want to go back quickly and replenish her power.

“Why don't you gather the believers, too, this time?”

[No.]

She was quite stubborn. The 61st floor was the only place with believers so far, so I hadn't actively recommended it. But she refused to accept faith through believers until now.

[No, I don't want to.]

I didn't recommend it anymore.

Then I'll just take it all for myself.

The next place we arrived at, after leaving the sacred place with the hourglass, was a city that existed in the deep sea.

The city was relying on a protective shield to protect against the pressure created from water, and food was dependent on the relief supplies from the God of Hope.

Naturally, I thought of the 49th floor. People who were besieged by monsters and dependent on food sent by the God of Hope.

There, I'd blown up a poisonous Zit Pop to wipe out all the monsters, but instead had covered the people with poison. And the God of Hope had cleared the stage, saying he liked the situation.

This was his taste in the first place. People isolated in limited space, forced to rely on themselves.

This place didn't look like a holy place. It was just a gathering of believers and belief, and there was no such thing as a temple where the God of Hope lived. Nor did the God of Hope seem to have fled here. His power seemed too weak for that.

This was such a mess.

[What should we do?]

Of course, we were going to destroy this place.

First, I had to take care of all the believers. In the middle of the city appeared a man living in the tallest building. He introduced himself as the mayor of this deep-sea city.

I informed the mayor that I would send all the people of the city to a

new world. And led the people there. The mayor didn't even doubt me when I showed my powers.

In fact, it was not easy for a mere human being to doubt while facing a divine force, let alone, call it false. The mayor looked somewhat troubled and hesitant, but immediately faltered when I said I would give the role of leading to someone else if he refused.

At that point, I called myself the God of Hope.

“Oh... are you the God of Hope?”

[Yes.]

“Please punish me for the sin of doubting God. God himself entering the city is considered an old story from the past, that only appears in myth. I thought an apostle was here. I'm sorry.”

The mayor asked in a slightly hoarse voice.

“...I'm so sorry, but why now... May I ask, why now?”

[What?]

“One thousand people die of hunger every year. There's an unknown epidemic that kills more people every year, but we couldn't get out of this city, we just had to endure it.”

An epidemic. Did the God of Hope hide it to bring out more faith?

“Thank you very much for taking us to another world, but... I don't know why you're here now...”

Unexpectedly, the mayor was brave. If he'd asked this question in front of another god, and not me, he would have died on the spot. But I decided to explain.

Because I was a good god.

[cough...] Seregia chuckled.

“What?”

[Sorry, I’m so surprised that a cough came out.]

Well... I mean...

I wanted to refute something to Seregia, but there was nothing I could say. It was Seregia who knew my behavior better than anyone else. I also knew well that I was not a good god.

However, the God of Hope I was impersonating would be a good god. I felt that hope was buried in the deepest place. Not like a rope unfurled from above.

No one would find hope in peaceful times, but it stays dormant, so quietly, like it’s waiting for the day the being needs it. Truly a virtue that doesn’t reveal itself to the world.

I thought that was true hope.

Those who believe in such hope will live with the “hope” that they’d be able to get through it even when they are at peace and that there’d be God’s help.

It was an ideal hope if it relieved people of the burden of failure and danger, making them more courageous and able to live with a strong will. How can one call it hope if it evoked despair for one’s existence?

I replied to the mayor, who was a little puzzled, perhaps because I was late in answering. Of course, it was a false story.

[Sorry, I haven’t cared about you in the meantime.]

The God of Hope would be very damned if he finds out about this. It was not enough to impersonate his identity, but I just had to apologize to a mere human being, which may be a blow to his godhood.

But I didn't really care.

[In the meantime, I had no choice but to leave you here. But now that the new world for you is complete, I intend to lead you there.]

While lying, I even said, "The whole world was in danger due to the great war between gods and demons outside, and that's why people were evacuated here for a while."

The mayor was moved to tears. Since then, the mayor actively cooperated to persuade people. Most agreed to move to a new world because they were suffering from hunger and infectious diseases.

Of course, there were some who wanted to stay, but everyone decided to follow me on the lie that there was no more food in this city.

[They're being fooled so easily. If the God of Hope finds out, he'll explode in a rage and die.]

That's what I said too. I wish there were an apostle here. If an apostle were able to show this situation to the God of Hope, I would have felt the greatest joy.

* * *

I continued to wander in the realm of the God of Hope, destroying it, absorbing the power.

It would have been difficult for a world of mixed gods, but all the places I visited were the worlds dominated by the God of Hope.

Whilst roaming his territories, I even encountered the God of Hope. Many times. Each time the God of Hope ran away from me, and I absorbed the power there.

As this pattern continued, the number of coordinates given by the god of evil were dwindling. Since then, the God of Hope had fled to the realm of other gods, not to his own.

Leaving a trace as if he were waiting for me to come after him. I

assumed he was doing so to cause a clash between the other gods and me and was going to take away my powers.

I was steadily replenished by the believers who I had taken from the God of Hope. Even the believers who had received new salvation because of me had sent a considerable amount of faith.

“Hey, you’re a bit strong among the Rulers.”

“No, no. Who said that?”

This took place just before the Ruler god, whom I had just met, was defeated.

He was the god of Gochang.

(T/N: This part... I’m kinda clueless myself, it literally says Gochang, which is a county in Korea.)

I defeated him after hearing a few curses.

The god of Gochang eagerly denied my words.

“Ai, I haven’t even been recognized as a Minor God yet. It’s just like this, ah.”

What Minor God?

It looked like there were divisions even among them.

“By the way, do you know more about the realms of the God of Hope?”

“Ye, I’ve told you everything I knew.”

The only place that the God of Gochang told me was where I had already raided.

I gave one more push.

“Then is there no one else who knows?”

“Well... he wouldn't have told anyone if it was an external secretive land. But there won't be many places like that. If it's a Ruler, they'll try to hide their territory, but when it's the God of Hope, it's safer to announce that this was his territory.”

Is that so?

I had to say, he was a good speaker. I'd always liked someone who was good at explaining things.

“How much would he have, if so?”

“One or two, he'd have one or two. It may be hidden in a multi-religious world. If so, that alone would be a great shame.”

In fact, I wondered if there was anything more shameful than a god running away from his own believers when the God of Gochang had explained that.

“I see.”

I'd met many gods. Most of them were Ruler gods.

The land of the God of Hope, which was told to many gods, including the god of evil, was thoroughly raided. At this rate, almost all the supply of faith had been blocked. Now, it was not a matter of supply and demand, but of maintaining his godhood.

I opened the quest window.

[God of Order-?]

[God of Light-Explosion, please! (Complete)]

[God of Duel- Return of powers]

When did the god of light see me use it again?

I hadn't noticed.

[God of Hope-Truce]

Alright.

I'll call you now.

I'd already absorbed everything I could.

"How am I supposed to accept this?"

"Heng! Do you want me to deliver it to the God of Hope?"

While I was muttering to myself, Kirikiri's face popped out of the quest window screen.

I said hello to her and then asked,

"Will you?"

"Yes!"

"Then do you know where the God of Hope is?"

If that's the case, I would go catch him without a moment's hesitation.

"No, I don't know where he is. I can only deliver the words."

It was a shame. I wish I could capture him neatly.

I didn't know that the God of Hope would continue to run away to the end even though his base was completely blown away.

[God of Hope-Truce (Completed)]

Soon, the quest window was renewed.

Kirikiri waved to me.

“Hihi! Then see you next time!”

Then she disappeared again. It was certainly convenient.

“Well... did she just... Who is she?” Next to me, the god of Gochang spoke.

“Kirikiri, from Tutorial Hell difficulty...”

I was about to ask if he knew about the Tutorial, but the god of Gochang seemed to have understood who Kirikiri was.

“Ah, so that’s the crazy...”

The god of Gochang stopped talking the next moment.

Kirikiri’s face popped back out of the quest window, which had not yet been closed, and was staring at the god of Gochang.

The god of Gochang knelt slowly in that posture.

“Sorry, I almost made a mistake.”

“Heng-heng, don’t mess with other people’s privacy.”

Kirikiri said, and then disappeared from the quest window screen again.

I pressed the god of Gochang to give me information about Kirikiri, but the god of Gochang kept his mouth shut until the end. Even if I were to torture him, he wouldn’t budge due to privacy, so I couldn’t help but leave it be in this situation.

[Are you going home now?]

I should.

[I remember you wanted it to end completely.]

I've done enough.

It was not a victory to wipe out all the enemy's population.

If you destroy all your enemy's forces and absorb the enemy's infrastructure and facilities, it's considered as big a victory as the word "Loser!" engraved on the enemy's forehead.

Above all, if the God of Hope decided to give up everything and hide, I would not be able to clear the quests to take over the Tutorial. Now that I'd solved the quests; if there's another quarrel some other day I could really end it with just a few words.

[It's going to be annoying for a while.]

It will?

Why?

[Didn't you absorb a lot of believers? In addition, you said you were the god of hope. It won't be easy considering Warrior's personality.]

Come to think of it, it was annoying. To act more like the God of Hope and attract believers, I had pretended to be virtuous.

[Managing people is the most annoying task. Do you have the confidence and patience to do so?]

Absolutely not.

The sect on the 61st floor had Old man and Grandma as the managers. I had asked them to take over my part as a god and lead them.

"I'll just leave it up to Hochi."

[Will he do that bothersome work?]

“I can make religion and sect management like a game system. Just like I did in the Dungeon.”

He'll find it interesting if I arrange it to Hochi's taste.

[And if he refuses?]

...Well.

If I asked him sincerely, wouldn't he do it?

[I think it's very likely that he won't listen.]

It was.

Because of my old mistakes, Hochi wasn't too pleased to ask me to do something. It was not short-term work, and it was highly likely that he would refuse to go along with a work functioning for long.

“Then... shall we kidnap Hochi's favorite novel writers?”

If he accepted it, it'd be set in stone.

If he refused, I'd pose a threat of kidnapping them and thus have his novels in a perpetual state of limbo never to be finished.

Chapter 325

God of Hope (4)

This concluded the series of disturbances that had occurred when the God of Hope intervened in Japan.

I had to dig more before hitting anything next time.

It was as rewarding as I had anticipated it would be and it came with the added bonus of f*cking over the God of Hope. I hadn't completely devoured the God of Hope, but I destroyed his base and took the majority of his believers.

What's better than that?

I was very pleased to see the God of Hope running away cursing me whenever he ran into me in his holy land.

At the end, the God of Hope, who kept saying, "Hope shines more strongly in despair," ran away and did not respond to my provocation. It would be true that the more desperate the situation is, the greater the power of the God of Hope.

However, the land destroyed by me was greater than the power that he had been receiving from his dwindling following. All the believers of the God of Hope were anxious for salvation.

For decades, for life, or for generations, they were hoping for a better life, squeezing faith into the God of Hope. So when I gave them real hope, they came into my arms without any doubt.

I'd gained a lot. For ordinary gods, the number of believers and their faith were more important than their power.

I can confidently say that my achievements have given me the

foundation to rise from where I am now and get even stronger. Of course, the believers on the 61st floor would be disappointed to hear this.

It was true. So I was able to come back to the flat with great satisfaction.

A feeling of panic rose in me. There was no one there. When I came back to the flat without much thought, it was empty. Of course, I thought Hochi would be lying on the couch, and Yong-yong was playing in the room.

On checking, Hochi and Yong-yong's energy still remained in Japan. I was wondering what was going on, so I moved to where Hochi was. Hochi was sitting on the beach with Lee Joon-suk, watching the sunset.

They look tired. That's good. Someone's been working hard.

"What are you doing?"

"Huh? Just... uh?"

Hochi had a stupid look on his face.

Hey. I wished he wouldn't do that with the same face as me.

I once asked Hochi if he wanted to change his face. I thought he would prefer to live with a different face because it was Hochi's face that states that he was my clone.

The face represents the person's identity. The same was true for me and Hochi. But Hochi was against having his own new face.

For some reason, Hochi kept the same face as me. The reason was unknown. I decided to respect Hochi's choice. But when he was wearing such a look, I always thought, "I wish he had a different face from mine."

"I went to the flat, and was confused because you weren't there. What

are you doing here?”

“...T-that’s...” Hochi stammered.

Perhaps because he was facing the sunset, his face looked red. He seemed to be embarrassed about something.

“Hyung, are you hurt anywhere?” asked Lee Joon-suk.

“Of course not.”

He then asked, “What happened then? Was it a big deal?”

I gave a rough account of what had happened.

“I went after the runaway God of Hope. I didn’t catch him.”

“Oh, that’s why you’re late. What a relief. Hochi Hyung was so worri-
ungh...!”

Hochi shut Lee Joon-suk’s mouth. Only then did I understand why he was embarrassed.

“What? Were you worried about me?”

“No!”

Hochi was in a flustered state of denial.

Yong-yong appeared in the air. Right in my arms.

“Daddy! You came too late!”

Yong-yong hugged me once, raised his head and rebuked me. He must have been sad that I disappeared for a few days without contacting him.

He had that familiar look in his eyes. When Yong-yong did something

wrong as a child, I gave him the same look while I scolded him.

How old was I again? Already getting scolded by my son. Still, it wasn't a bad feeling.

"Sorry, the God of Hope ran better than I thought."

The essence of hope remained till the end, and the God of Hope was confident. If he had been a decent god, he would have prepared for a final stand even if he was ashamed to see his main plan failing like that. The God of Hope, who gave up all his apostles and Holy Land, and chose to run away, was certainly an exceptional case.

When I apologized, Yong-yong quickly straightened his face and hugged me.

Ah, my pretty son.

"Yong-yong, were you worried about your daddy, too?"

"Hey, I wasn't worried about you!" shouted Hochi beside.

I ignored him. It was not meaningful to shout those words with a face redder than the sunset.

"No, I wasn't worried." Yong-yong replied in a calm tone.

He wasn't worried. In fact, this was the right decision, but somehow I felt sad. I wanted him to believe me so firmly that he didn't worry about me, but on the other hand, I had a contradictory feeling that he should worry about me.

"Hehe."

Either way, Yong-yong was rubbing his face against my chest, saying it was good to have me back.

I stroked Yong-yong's head.

“A little while ago... Ahhh!

Lee Joon-suk screamed.

“What’s wrong?”

“He must have been bitten by the mantis for putting his finger in the box.” explained Hochi.

What? The mantis? So, he pinched Lee Joon-suk’s finger, huh. I thought they had gotten a lot closer since then.

“By the way, why aren’t you waiting at the flat...”

Boom!

I heard a dull explosion noise from behind while I was talking. Looking back, construction materials were being transported. There were quite a few busy construction vehicles and people.

The restoration of the coastal defense line had begun a long time ago. There would be no more monster waves here. But people were not sure of the fact. Maybe it’s natural for them to be like this.

It was meaningless hard work, but it’s not worthless. Furthermore, what happened on this coastline must have been at a magnitude beyond human standards. It made sense to be on guard.

That may be why the group was still staying here. In fact, I was worried a lot. About Hochi. I always wondered if he could do something alone since he was a lethargic fellow.

However, when I left the job to him, he was not only doing his best as much as he could, but also showing a responsible attitude.

“You’ve done well,” I said to Hochi.

Come to think of it, I don’t think I’d ever said this to Hochi.

I was only saying, “Work harder.”

“...Well... it was supposed to be that way. Yong-yong and Joon-suk worked better.”

Of course, it wouldn't usually happen like this, but now I thought it wouldn't have gone well without him. Should I say I was relieved or proud? Probably both.

I asked Hochi what I thought I'd leave to him.

“Hochi, I've absorbed the believers of the God of Hope this time.”

I told him about the situation the believers were in and the direction I wanted to lead them.

“I want you to take care of them. I'll take responsibility and make it look like a game system. The interface will be very friendly, so it won't be too difficult. And as long as you accept it, I will...”

“I'll do it.”

“Can you... Huh? You will?”

“I don't know if I can do well, but I'll give it a try.”

I smiled quietly.

I was going to take him to the flat right away, but Hochi was showing such a responsible and mature side that I didn't want to move him away.

“Okay, then I'll go back first and take a rest. Come back later. Let's talk about it again when you're back.”

I also told Lee Joon-suk to talk to me later.

I thought it would be better to train him and let him stick with Hochi in the future.

For some reason, Lee Joon-suk seemed to be pleased with my saying that we would talk later.

* * *

“You’ve done a very good job. Ahahaha.”

Kirikiri laughed. She wasn’t pretending. She looked to be in a good mood. She is always smiling, but I can tell how she felt after observing her for so long.

“What’s the state of the God of hope?”

“He’s ruined, so ruined, totally ruined.” said Kirikiri, drumming her fingers.

The defeat of the God of Hope seemed to be truly joyful for her.

“Can he maintain his position as god?”

“He can.”

That was an unexpected answer. I thought it was more likely for him to not.

“The God of hope was not only believed by ordinary believers. He was in danger because most of his believers were Ruler Gods.”

A god who was receiving faith from other gods. It was not an unfamiliar experience. Through the God of Slowness, I knew that there was a god who feared another God.

I confirmed this fact through Old Man, Grandma and Seregia.

“Well, that’s something you can only keep up with enough power. Problems are going to start popping up internally, too. It would be difficult for him to make a comeback in a short period of time. Ahahaha!”

Kirikiri looked really happy. It was somehow weird to see her rejoice over another's misfortune.

“The God of Hope has been an old headache.”

I'm sure he is.

If he was given faith by the Rulers, it would only be profitable for him to raise the Rulers. He must have developed his power by giving information on the Hundred Gods Temple, and by using loopholes in the system to increase his power.

In a way, it was safe to say that this was the ultimate cause of the earth's end. It was the God of Hope who was backing the monsters, gates, dungeons, and the Rulers who commanded all that.

It was no wonder that he prepared the fake for when I came outside with hostility from the beginning. He couldn't have done harm to me in the Tutorial, but I could imagine how nervous he must have been to see me clear each floor.

I checked the quest window again. Some of the gods' quests had already been marked complete. Like Kirikiri, they were gods who wanted to weaken the power of the Rulers.

This was also the case among the gods whose quest was completed.

[God of Light-Explosion, please! (Completed)]

[God of Nature-(Completed)]

[God of Sky-(Completed)]

[God of Sacrifice-(Completed)]

Some gods completed their quest for no particular reason or no reason at all. As for the god of light. He was a unique case.

But in case of a god of nature or god of sky...

“Heng, they don’t want to be involved anymore.”

Did they want to stay away from the conflict between the Rulers and the others?

“You’ve been acting so crazy, breaking into other people’s holy land. There are many reasons why they don’t want to be associated with Ho-jae anymore. On the contrary, there are gods who say that if a person is as strong as Ho-jae, they should be automatically included in the Hundred Gods Temple.”

That was my problem. It would be enough if it were the God of Nature or the God of Sacrifice who had some problems with me. In the case of the God of Sky, we had a problem that I needed to go and argue about.

It wasn’t an emergency though. Rather,

“They want me in the Hundred Gods Temple?”

“Yes, yes. I also think it’s not a bad offer. What do you think of it, hoo-woo-jae-ae?”

At that moment, I had the urge to grip the back of Kirikiri’s head.

‘Not a bad offer.’

“I don’t intend to be under the control of the system.”

It’s been only four months since I’ve escaped the tutorial, and now you want me to be bound by the same shackles?

Definitely a no-no. If there was such an offer, I was willing to resist desperately.

“He-heng, it would be great to be like a Korean family with Ho-jae.”

You evil bunny.

Becoming a Korean family with Kirikiri, who was delighted by the fall of the God of Hope.

It was a shame to have a family relationship with the wicked gods. That was a serious problem. I heard that the reason for the birth of the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon was because of dangerous gods who clashed with each other.

Maybe I would be forcibly recruited that way, too. Measures were needed.

“Ah, here comes a visitor. I’ll get going!”

Kirikiri exclaimed and disappeared. I soon found out who Kirikiri was talking about.

The air in the flat was distorted and a man appeared. Flaming red skin, height twice that of a regular human, and a body with toned muscles.

He looked like the monk from the 13th floor.

“God of Duel?”

Chapter 326

Seoul (17)

The God of duel.

The god who had been watching me since the early days of the Tutorial.

Since I was an amateur challenger who didn't know anything, when I didn't have the same confidence I had now. Thanks to that, he didn't have a good impression of me.

Somewhere in between, he had a change of mind, so he gave me some power as a gift. He was also a god who didn't pay much attention to me because his evaluation changed again.

Before entering the 60th floor, the messages I'd seen about the God of Duel were usually like this:

[God of Duel regrets something.]

[God of Duel is displeased.]

[God of Fight regrets something.]

[God of Duel is disappointed in you.]

Such was the case. That was all. I knew what the duel god wanted.

Me to have a fair confrontation with an enemy.

But f*ck that, it wasn't possible in the Tutorial's Hell Difficulty.

No matter how much I got stronger, at the time, it was abnormal to

demand such a thing at a high level of difficulty, where the easier option was to hit someone's back or find a shortcut.

Was it on the fourth floor? There was a negative message for me, saying that I'd have to repeat the attack against the city of Goblins. Should I have run straight from the main gate of the city of Goblins to the throne room of the King Goblin?

What the duel god wanted was always unrealistic. Of course, after gaining more power, I was able to clear it in the way he wanted me to.

But why would I? I was never interested in fair confrontation. It has always been that way, and it will continue to be so.

In conclusion, the God of Duel was a god who wasn't on good terms with me. So when Hochi and Yong-yong had participated in the Tournament, the God of Duel demanded the return of his power.

That obstinate god suffered whenever his power was used in a wrong way. That may be why the power, which had already been altered, copied, torn and used, was still asked to be given back, with a promise of reward.

"God of Duel."

He nodded his head.

He was a giant with flaming red skin, bulging eyes and a muscular, yet irregularly-shaped body that was reminiscent of the goblins listed in folktales. He resembled the monks I'd met on the 13th floor. Maybe they're from the same clan.

"What brings you here?"

"Requirement: the return of powers."

The God of Duel answered, plainly, in a firm voice. He was a little different from the God of Hope, who telepathically communicated in the shape of a strange fly.

Stiff talk. He looked like a monk, but his tone was a little different.

“That request was accepted by me.”

The God of Duel nodded. The God of Duel had promised a reward. It was of no consequence to return a power that was already useless to me.

But...

“Who gave you permission to come here?”

“Of course your...”

The voice of the God of Duel, who’d answered in a monotonous manner, halted.

Everything in sight began to vibrate. The sofa, alarm clock, table, and other furniture in the living room of the flat rose into the air and were broken into pieces while vibrating. The walls and ceilings of the building were drilled with holes. Same was for the God of Duel.

His skin couldn’t stand the shock and began to peel off. He, who already had red skin, became more red with blood clots all over his body.

This was different from the God of Hope who summoned his own world to Japan and dealt with me. The God of Duel jumped into the middle of my territory, and to make matters worse, exactly where I was.

Die.

“I accepted the demand for the return of your power. Though I don’t remember saying that you could come to my place at any time.”

The God of Duel tried to use his power and protect his body.

He spat out, “Have you been busy?”

His voice was weirdly calm. And the answer wasn't fit for a situation where his eyes were being half pulled out. It was definitely a busy day.

Restoration of Seregia... I had to find a solution. I still needed to call in Kim Min-hyuk to find out what happened over the past few days, and what Hochi and Yong-yong had been doing. I also had to visit Park Min and wring his neck.

"You must have been very busy. I'm sorry. You told me to come later, so I thought that the timing wouldn't be important."

The God of Duel immediately apologized. I didn't like it. Even in such a situation, he gave me a calm reply, not a scream.

"More than anything, I thought it would be best to meet you now. For me, for you and for the other gods watching us."

F*cking bastard.

This was the most annoying thing. The God of Duel did not come alone. There were countless eyes of gods with him. The gods of the Hundred Gods Temple.

Just as Lee Yeon-hee came to the 60th floor with the eyes of those gods, the God of Duel did the same. The fact that the gods could indirectly come out and look at Earth through the God of Duel wasn't pleasant for me.

"What do you mean by 'would be best for me'?"

I won't allow him to make a bullsh*t story. I'm willing to pull out his eyes and make him blind like the guy on the 13th floor.

"Many gods are anxious."

"Why?"

"Of course, because of you."

Tch.

I clicked my tongue. It was the same as Kirikiri said.

“You are an anomaly in many ways. Most Combat Gods can’t even reach the Minor God level, but you are well beyond it.”

“I see how it is.”

It’s no wonder that the Hundred Gods Temple was concerned about my power.

A more important problem. What I wanted was owned by the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple.

“It’s been less than a day since the hunt was over, have you already prepared the cauldron?”

As soon as I had finished hunting down the God of Hope and the Rulers, they checked in immediately. It was too much of a coincidence. I thought about dealing with them once I kill the God of Duel, the medium of their gaze, and shut all the eyes on Earth.

‘Seregia.’

[Yes, Warrior.]

‘Help me.’

[It’s too much right now.]

‘Can’t you do anything?’

[I’m helpless.]

Damn it.

Seregia seemed to be in a worse condition than expected. When she killed the fake, she was hit hard by the power of God of Hope.

I was also harmed by that power, but Seregia, who had to face it head-on as a weapon, suffered even more damage.

It wasn't something that I had noticed while getting back to Earth. First, I had to solve the issue at hand. Before the Hundred Gods Temple could come down to Earth in earnest, I'd have to kill the God of Duel.

I was planning my future actions, when suddenly the quest window opened. Having opened without my will, the quest window flashed brightly.

[Quest Window]

[God of Slowness-Conversation with God of Duel.]

[God of Remorse-Conversation with God of Duel.]

[God of Origin-Conversation with God of Duel.]

[God of Amusement-Conversation with God of Duel.]

[God of Devotion-Conversation with God of Duel.]

[God of Light-Explosion! (Completed)]

[God of Light-Explosion! (new!)]

It was an unexpected quest. But I could understand the will of the Hundred Gods Temple. They wanted me to talk to the God of Duel. They're going to talk to me, using the god of duel as a spokesperson.

[God of Slowness-Conversation with God of Duel.]

Explanation: The God Of Slowness is curious about your latest move.

The God Of Slowness would like to learn more about you through a conversation with the God of Duel who visited to get his power back.

[God of Remorse-Conversation with God of Duel.]

Explanation: The God of Adventure asked.

[God of Origin-Conversation with God of Duel.]

Explanation: The God of Origin is deeply concerned about your recent move.

The God of Origin would like to confirm that your move does not threaten the safety of the God of Origin, through the conversation with the God of Duel who has visited to receive his power back.

There were even different explanations for what they wanted even though they all gave the same quest.

The Gods of Slowness and Adventure were intrigued while the God of Origin was concerned.

The God of Light...

What is this?

I'm sure I already did that.

[God of Light-Explosion, please! (Completed)]

[God of Light-Explosion, again please! (new!)]

Description: The Lord of Light is shouting 'One more time'. The God of Light has prepared a reward for the quest, a new price, but not consent for the transfer of the tutorial. Whatever the reward is, you'd better ignore it.

I'll ignore it.

All the other gods wanted me to have a conversation with the God of Duel. It was not to draw a conclusion through conversation, but to use it as a basis for judgment on me. It was strange, but that was the

attitude the gods had been using for the challengers.

“Conversation.”

“Are you willing?”

The God of Duel was still calm.

I wanted to throw a stone in that calmness.

Conversation.

My preferred conversation was one that involved throwing hands and not words.

“Ta-da!”

Then, Kirikiri, who had disappeared through the quest window, came back out.

* * *

“Heng heng, I knew you two were going to fight,” commented Kirikiri, munching on a chocolate pie.

Now, even if I didn’t give it to her, she brought snacks out of the kitchen on her own.

“Come on, eat. Talk while eating.”

Kirikiri said so, and gave me and the God of Duel one slice of chocolate pie each.

Hey, this is mine.

It’s my house.

To put it aside, it was a house owned by Kim Min-hyuk, and the

snacks he bought.

“The God of Duel doesn’t speak well. How dumb. Ahahaha.”

Kirikiri laughed, pounding the back of the duel god. The God of Duel quietly tore off a piece of the choco pie, and began munching on it. It seemed that he didn’t even care that Kirikiri had hit his back.

It was annoying. The fact that he remained so unguarded irritated me.

“There are two main concerns of the gods.”

“What is it?”

“One is that you’re completely out of the constraints of the system.”

Does that matter?

It was different from the God of Hope, who used the boundaries of the system to his benefit. The God of Hope used his men, but the other gods did not punish him because he belonged to the Hundred Gods Temple.

But in my case, my land was only vaguely related to the Hundred Gods Temple, and if you looked closely, I myself, would be considered a third party.

If I’d intruded into the joint area of the Hundred Gods Temple without permission, I would be attacked by the Hundred Gods Temple.

“Well, maybe you can find a loophole. Above all, In the eyes of the Hundred Gods Temple defense is impossible if you attack only the personal land of a particular god. Just as you destroyed the holy lands of the God of Hope.”

It’s not the problem of the Hundred Gods Temple, but a particular god then.

“Some of the gods are worried they might be your target.”

That won't happen.

“You think I'm going to pick a fight with just anybody?”

“Heng-heng.”

Kirikiri just smiled.

I guess you think so.

“The second worry is choosing a way to avoid the restrictions, with Ho-jae protected by the system.”

“And how is that possible?”

To avoid the restrictions while being protected by the system.

“You already know. By becoming the apostle of another god.”

Apostle.

I hadn't expected that to appear again.

“In the first place, the apostles were created by the gods to free themselves from restrictions and expand their sphere of influence. If you're an apostle of another god, you'll be a part of the Hundred Gods Temple, but you can avoid the system's constraints. ”

“Can you be an apostle of another god even after you become god?”

“Of course.”

Several hypotheses came to mind.

About the God of Hope.

“Among the gods in the Hundred Gods Temple, is there any other
“God apostle”?”

“Yes. Yes. There are. Typically they were under the God of Hope.”

The God of Hope. That’s why I got the impression that he was free from the system.

Kirikiri said, looking at the God of Duel sitting next to her.

“God of Duel here is also an apostle.”

The God of Duel was the apostle of another god.

Whose apostle was he?

Soon, I got the answer.

“The God of Slowness.”

The God of Duel nodded.

“Heng-heng. Anyway, Ho-jae is very unique, such a situation has never happened before. That’s why it’s like this. Just know that the Hundred Gods Temple doesn’t want to antagonize you right now.”

The Hundred Gods Temple had no intention of antagonizing me. Of course. There was no unified opinion in the Hundred Gods Temple. Practically each god had different thoughts and goals after all.

“So what was the conversation they wanted to have with me?”

“Well, they wonder what you’re going to do in the future, and whether you plan to antagonize them in the future.”

I asked the God of Duel, but Kirikiri answered instead.

The God of Duel stared at Kirikiri and opened his mouth.

“I have a proposal for you.”

“Huh?”

Kirikiri looked at the God of Duel with her eyes wide open. The God of Duel spoke without regard for her.

“It’s a proposal from the God of Slowness. Become her apostle.”

Kirikiri’s eyes began to glow fiercely, her face radiating as she glared at him.

As expected, each god had their own agenda.

Chapter 327

Seoul (18)

Kirikiri's eyes glowed and she glared, but the God of Duel paid no attention to her. Rather, he looked at me calmly as if he were waiting for my answer.

I thought while looking at them,

Fight.

Please, fight.

“What do you mean?”

“Literally what I said. The God of Slowness wants you to be her apostle,” the God of Duel answered my question.

Suddenly, this guy seemed better.

Kirikiri, who was staring at the God of Duel with a burning gaze, opened her mouth.

“Isn't asking this a different story as opposed to what you came here for?”

The God of Duel ignored Kirikiri's words altogether.

Very good.

You two fight this time.

I can sacrifice my house for the sake of a fight between the two.

“Come on, don’t be so hard.”

Fight.

Fight quickly!

“I want to hear stories from both sides.”

“The God of Slowness promised you the best treatment. It would never be a disappointing proposal for you.”

“Heng, you’re just telling him to become a lower God. Like you!”

Rough words begin to pour out of Kirikiri’s mouth.

Very good.

Now, the God of Duel was furious...

“That’s right.”

I just agreed.

It’s not good enough.

“But a price is promised.”

I’ll fan the flames again.

“Can I hear what the price is?”

“Of course.”

“No! Don’t listen!” Kirikiri screamed.

She had stood up, fluttering her arms, showing her urgency to keep me from hearing the proposal.

Yes, attack the God of Duel.

Attack and shut that damn mouth!

Fight!

But the God of Duel spoke calmly, overshadowing my enthusiastic support.

“I’m glad you’re interested in the proposal. I’ll give you more details next time, in a quieter and calmer situation. For now, I’ll bid goodbye.”

And he disappeared. It was a sudden exit, just as he had first appeared.

F*cking b*stard.

I couldn’t believe he ran away from here.

* * *

“Heng-heng.”

Kirikiri ran to the kitchen as soon as the God of Duel disappeared.

She returned to the couch with a bunch of snacks under her arms (that was hidden by Kim Min-hyuk so that Hochi and Seregia would not eat everything) from the cupboard.

“Come on, eat up.”

This is my house, Kirikiri.

“It’s the first time I’ve given food to Ho-jae!”

This is my chocolate pie.

Eitherway, I ate the chocolate pie quietly.

If I assumed from what had happened, the God of Slowness and Kirikiri were divided within the Hundred Gods Temple. That was good news for me.

Given Kirikiri's behavior, it was easy to guess her position in the Hundred Gods Temple.

Same went for the God of Slowness. All the words used to describe the God of Slowness were obviously not enough, since she was revered even by the other gods. Apart from her influence within the Hundred Gods Temple, it can be assumed that the God of Slowness has exceptionally strong ability and power among them.

And if those two were at odds... Of course, it was a good thing for me. Just by dividing opinions about me there, it became difficult for the Hundred Gods Temple to impose punishments or force something on me.

The Hundred Gods Temple goes with a majority vote anyway.

"Heng-heng, will you become the apostle of the God of Slowness?"

Of course, I didn't intend to.

"Well, let me think about it."

Kirikiri, who was biting into a Choco Pie, had a bad complexion. Wow, Kirikiri's expression was dark even though she had something to chew in her mouth.

"Can you explain to me a little bit about the God of Slowness for now?"

"Yes, the evil god."

Lightning struck from the sky.

“Ahhhhh! You’re just mad!” cried Kirikiri, pointing out the window.

Well, a lying god looked worse than one who drops lightning for swearing at her.

By the way...

“What are you doing on someone else’s planet?”

“Right? How rude!”

Kirikiri said with a bright smile. It was obviously a bright smile, but it felt strangely mischievous.

There were few things I knew about the God of Slowness. The God who was related to time. A God who had nothing to do with the source.

Even in the world of polytheism, she was not well known to people.

“The God of Slowness is peculiar. Especially among Hundred Gods Temples, as well as the Pantheon.”

“In what way?”

“That’s because she’s the oldest god in existence. She existed before the Hundred Gods Temple was made, before the source was discovered and divinity increased.”

It didn’t make sense to explain it like that.

“She’s a god who doesn’t care much about ordinary people.”

“Why?”

People were the main source of power. No matter how much one hated, most of them were simple human beings.

“The gods instead fear the God of Slowness. It’s nothing to be shocked

about; which one would give more faith? An ordinary human being or a god who's reached a high level?"

It was obvious. Of course, the faith from the god was much greater. Overwhelmingly.

Was that why the God of Slowness wanted me to be an apostle?

I didn't think so. Kirikiri warned just a moment ago that a god that became an apostle of another god could be a risk factor, crossing the constraints of the system.

If the God of Slowness wanted me for that reason, it was something that would work for Kirikiri, who wanted to stamp out the God of Hope for the balance of the Hundred Gods Temple.

"By the way, what's up with the sudden increased interest in the Hundred Gods Temple? Now that you've struck out the God of Hope, are you saying it's useless now?"

"No, it's not like that."

Kirikiri scratched the end of her ear.

Her ears were so long that I couldn't reach them at all, so she'd folded them, pulled them down to her cheeks, and scratched them like she was combing her hair.

"Rather, she's nervous because you're so intimidating. A few gods were interested like the God of Slowness. Most are on the edge though."

It was the same story that Kirikiri had explained a little while ago.

"Even if you don't necessarily become an apostle of any god, Ho-jae is a powerful enough god. It's rare to see a god with such a combative disposition. Even the God of Duel is a very exceptional case. You, who have strength way beyond that of a Minor God at the Minor God level but are also a Combatant God, naturally come off as intimidating."

This was rather unexpected. Few of the gods were combative.

“But of course. A combative disposition doesn’t help much after you ascend to higher ranks.”

I didn’t think so.

Let’s find out more about this later.

“And I’m more anxious about Ho-jae’s absorption of the believers by impersonating the God of Hope.”

“Huh? Why?”

“In fact, you shouldn’t have done that. It’s obvious that just impersonating another god will affect your own divinity.”

[Warrior, are you alright?]

Seregia piped up.

I thought she was sleeping, but she must have been listening to our conversation. I answered that I was okay.

Pretending to be the God of Hope, I didn’t feel particularly hurt by anything.

“The Hundred gods Temple’s gods are afraid you’ll impersonate them in a place where they can’t act directly.”

* * *

I promised some things to Kirikiri, who had been sticking to me for a long time.

Unless they antagonize me, I won’t attack or impersonate a particular god first.

Kirikiri wanted a promise that I wouldn’t impersonate the god even if

they were hostile to me, but I refused.

I knew impersonation of a god was threatening, so why wouldn't I use it? I should use it if I need it.

In return for my promise, I asked for information. I became a god, and I came out of the Tutorial, but there was so much I didn't know yet. At this point, I wanted to answer some questions.

"Next question."

"What is it?"

"Hundred Gods Temple. Where do they meet?"

I understood that the Hundred Gods Temple was a group of over a hundred dangerous gods. But sometimes I wonder if the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple were all gathered together in a certain space.

When I was in the Tutorial before, I saw the message from the gods.

"Yes, yes, there's a place like that. Of course they are. There's a rule that all the Hundred gods Temple's gods should keep their bodies there. That's why I was able to deliver the offer of surrender to the God of Hope."

Their bodies were gathered together. Other than that, I asked about the constraints of the Hundred Gods Temple itself, but Kirikiri didn't answer everything.

"I can explain more than I used to, but I can't tell you everything."

"Then, the next question."

"Heng... how much more?"

Of course, it's until you pull out what I want to know.

"I've explained so much that my mouth is burning."

The burnt smell in Kirikiri's mouth was not because she talked too much, but because she ate too much Choco Pie.

* * *

Kirikiri was satisfied with getting some promises from me, so she ate all the snacks by herself and then went away.

“What are you going to do?” asked Seregia, who was lying on the bed.

I shrugged my shoulders.

“You need to build up your strength again. I need to connect the earth to the 60th floor, and absorb the believers of the God of Hope perfectly. No rush though as time is on my side.”

I got a lot from today's conversation with Kirikiri with the God of Duel. It was miscellaneous information but I got confirmation that the Hundred Gods Temple were not taking immediate hostile actions against me. It was even better to confirm that the God of Slowness was at odds with other gods in the Hundred Gods Temple.

“What about the proposal of the God of Slowness?”

Of course, I intend to refuse.

I could listen to the proposal, but that didn't mean I would accept it. I couldn't bear to be under anyone in the first place. The God of Slowness may not know the fact. If it were the God of Slowness who had been watching me all along in the Tutorial, I was sure she'd expect me to refuse.

Clearly.

Still, should I think that the proposal provoked Kirikiri? Or maybe I should try to induce a dispute. I don't think the spark of the dispute would hit me. Though I should be careful.

“Oh, you're back.”

Kim Min-hyuk opened the door and came in.

I greeted him.

Kim Min-hyuk said while putting down the stuff he had in his hand, "I'll have to call Hochi. He was really worried."

Hochi must have been really worried about me.

"I already met with Hochi and Yong-yong."

"Oh, really? What's wrong with Miss Seregia? Are you sick?" Kim Min-hyuk exclaimed when he saw Seregia lying in bed.

In fact, it was not a day or two since Seregia was lying down, but now she was showing that her whole body was sick. Her hair was disheveled, a blanket covered her nose, and her forehead was draped with a wet towel.

"Uh... um... well, if it hurts, it hurts."

Seregia's strength was exhausted in the battle against the God of Hope and the fake. There was a lot of damage during the attack.

But lying down like a flu patient wouldn't restore Seregia's strength. It was just a formality.

"I want to eat tangerines," sniffed Seregia.

"She wants to eat tangerines."

"...Do I look like the maid who does grocery shopping?"

Chapter 328

Seoul (19)

“Leave Hochi and Yong-yong alone. They can take care of it themselves...”

Seregia said, as I sat beside her on the bed and peeled tangerines.

It’s kind of annoying.

“Are you going to be okay?”

We successfully defended against the waves of monsters that attacked the East Coast of Japan.

There will be no more recurrences.

But that’s not the end of my inconveniences.

We still need to communicate and reassure those who were wondering exactly what happened and what will happen in the future.

Hochi and Yong-yong are not obligated to do that, but as they know something, they should provide at least a minimal explanation for those who are concerned.

Of course, you could just ignore them, but it will only be a hassle later on.

On top of that, we should also be in line with the Japanese government, which is trying to wrap up and promote this incident as a successful defense and subjugation effort.

Which means we’ll have to participate in the promotion too.

“It’s all right.”

It’s going to be a real pain in the neck.

I don’t have to participate in this, but, oh well.

After Hochi finishes his task successfully, I plan to entrust him with the believers I gathered at the Holy Land of the God of Hope.

“I’ve also gotten in touch with a private group. When should we make an appointment?”

I heard that there is a pseudo-religion that sells my name in Gangwon-do.

Business must have been good already, but because my name has been appearing more often on the news recently, it’s bound to be even more successful.

“I’ll leave that to Hochi, too.”

You can think of it as a rehearsal before I tackle the believers of the God of Hope.

Yes, the believers of the God of Hope were a bit more difficult.

It would be easier to deal with the rural people who were tricked out of their money due to pseudo-religion than to deal with the believers who struggled in despair because of the God of Hope.

It’s safer too.

“Ah.”

As soon as I finished peeling the tangerine, Seregia opened her mouth.

She shook her head when I tried to feed her the whole tangerine in one bite.

“What, you want me to put them in one-by-one?”

Seregia nodded.

It was annoying.

I threw the whole tangerine into Seregia’s mouth.

She glared at me, but she didn’t spit out the tangerine in her mouth either.

She just mumbled and ate.

“Seregia, why don’t you eat something like strawberries instead of tangerines?”

Peeling a tangerine was so annoying.

“If you pick off the tops, then I’ll eat the strawberries.”

Yeah, I don’t want to.

It’s a hassle.

“Are you almost done then?”

“It was the first thing I did as soon as you came.”

said Kim Min-hyuk, nodding his head.

His complexion was a little better than before.

After sending Hochi and Yong-yong to Japan, his face had improved a little while they were gone.

He’s going to be busy again. Should I tell him?

“Call Park Min to the Association.”

“Why do you want to call him? Didn’t you decide to let him go already?”

I didn’t.

Although there were some extenuating circumstances to consider, it was mainly because he had been previously used by the God of Hope.

So I still had to get my hands on him.

“It would be enough to infect them and make them puppets.”

“...Can you do that, too?”

Of course I can.

If the subject were a non-deity, I can do anything imaginable.

“Let’s also gather some of the Newly Awakened.”

“Why would you need the rookies? If you need any Awakened, just the guild members would be enough.”

“No, it’s not enough.”

My own strength was enough.

Even the party and its 61st-floor subordinates were nowhere near my ability.

The problem was the number.

We needed more numbers to expand our power.

“I need more rookies to work for me. But perhaps externally, more will be working for Hochi or you.”

Kim Min-hyuk said after thinking for a while.

“The only ones I can recruit from my sources right now are the rookies from the guild. There are some who say they’ll come when their contracts are over, but not a lot.”

In short, more bait was needed. Bait to attract the Awakened.

“System window to assist leveling-up. Limited size inventory. One item from the Tutorial. Is this enough bait?”

“It’s enough.”

Kim Min-hyuk nodded.

“It’s an irresistible offer for even me right now. Can you support the system and inventory though?”

I’m already doing it.

I’m already creating the system.

The inventory can be made by giving up part of my subspace and setting personal coordinates.

The items will also be easily accessible from the Tutorial.

“Just leave the rookies who don’t want to come, they’ll only be a burden. Not all will accept the recruitment anyway.”

There is no need to cling to a person who is not interested.

“But what are we gonna do with the rookies?”

asked Kim Min-hyuk.

In fact, it’s no loss if we aren’t able to gather the Awakened from Earth.

But more than Earth,

“I’m going to send the rookies away from here...”

“Away?”

“Other dimensions.”

The Awakened of the Earth who cleared the tutorial were all used to moving on to the next world and clearing the missions.

If we can train them a bit more, then we can send an expedition beyond the dimensional gates.

“A different dimension? Is that possible?”

It’s possible.

In fact, if you have the right coordinates, you can easily create portals connected to other dimensions.

I’ve actually learned quite a lot of coordinates by chasing the God of Hope around.

As I tracked down the God of Hope, I also marked the corresponding coordinates of each location.

Among those, there were some planets that could allow the Earth’s people to make a steady advance.

A dimensional expedition naturally brings tremendous advantages.

And if you think about it, new resources and artifacts will come from the civilizations of other dimensions.

You could colonize the undeveloped ones, or you could make deals and trade with the civilized ones.

Through these exchanges, the influence of human beings on Earth will naturally increase in indigenous areas.

And the growth of Earth's influence will also grow my influence.

I will be the one opening and managing the dimensional gates after all.

We can offer an appropriate fee to the humans who use the gates and let them enter the portal.

"It's not an admission fee, so we can adjust and monopolize it from the beginning, right?"

Kim Min-hyuk asked.

He seemed to be eagerly thinking about it when I opened a new topic to discuss.

It was an attractive offer.

"Or we could just split up the groups and bring them all into our own group. We're already the ones maintaining and managing the dimensional gates anyway..."

"Yes, yes, it's fine with me, so make the model yourself."

"Okay."

Kim Min-hyuk looked serious and didn't move for a while.

After all, it would be comfortable having someone who would devotedly think about such troublesome things instead of me.

That way, I don't have to use my brain.

"Warrior."

Seregia, who had been quiet, called me.

"What is it, do you want more tangerines?"

“I want some pork cutlet.”

...Oh, right.

I want some pork cutlet too.

Let's go with that...

“Hey... hey... hey.”

I called Kim Min-hyuk who was deep in thought.

I had to call him several times since he seemed to be too absorbed in the gate.

“What?”

“Hey, why don't we have some pork cutlet?”

What I meant was, ‘I want you to buy it.’

As a bonus, you can also buy your share.

“I'll order it. We can have it delivered.”

“No, you have to buy it.”

“...Why?”

“We're going to the temple in Seoul. The one that's being remodeled in Jamsil Stadium. Delivery isn't allowed there yet, so you have to buy it and bring it.”

The temple will not be opened to humans until Yong-yong is done with the decorations.

It's a temple after all.

If it looks too shabby and insignificant, then it will lose its prestige.

“...Do we have to eat a huge pork cutlet?”

“No.”

Seregia responded sharply.

She usually speaks in a calm tone that's barely audible, but she only raises her voice at times like these.

“...okay.”

Kim Min-hyuk sighed and left the room with his shoulders slumped.

You don't have to read his mind to figure out what he's thinking.

As soon as the missing guys come back, I'm sure he's going to be grumbling in annoyance again.

Seregia looked at me as soon as Kim Min-hyuk left.

“Would you like more tangerines?”

Seregia shook her head.

Of course.

Seregia likes to eat, but not this much.

She was just dissatisfied.

She laid in bed pretending to be sick and made me do all the work.

She was grumbling like a human.

It wasn't because I ignored her suggestion of going back to Earth immediately, or because she complained that I have been using her

roughly, and forced me to feel guilty and apologize.

Seregia was a sword, a weapon.

There was no way she would be angry because I treated her like a tool.

Now that Seregia sent out Kim Min-hyuk like she wanted, it was time to hear the reason.

“I didn’t have to hit it head-on.”

Okay.

So it was because of that time.

I expected her to bring it up to some extent...

That time when we crossed swords with the fake who received the power of the God of Hope.

Seregia was talking about that time.

“But you won in the end.”

Seregia didn’t respond.

I know.

Seregia was not doing this because she’s an idealist, but because she’s worried about what’s coming.

“The enemy was barely a god. But its power was on par with yours. Maybe he was even stronger.”

It certainly was.

If I only thought of the total amount of power, then the power of God

of Hope, which the fake wielded, exceeded my power.

“The opponent, of course, prepared for a one-shot fight.”

The fake had chosen the most natural way to press on — with force.

It put all of its strength in one stroke so that I would not be able to block it or redirect it.

It was a good judgment, and it was the right decision.

Even I would have done the same if I were in that position.

“The other person must have been planning the moment and was preparing for it for a long time. His judgment was sound enough.”

“I suppose it was.”

In the first place, the God of Hope seemed to have prepared the fake just for that moment.

It was a moment when he focused on his whole life, even from a fake’s point of view.

“If only I had any attraction to the fight, then it would have been my victory.”

“Yes.”

If only I fought it head-on and not dragged it out.

If the God of Hope fled first and disappeared, then the fight with the fake wouldn’t have such a twist.

It would have been easier to win.

That was why Seregia was concerned.

Of course, I won, but the power that the fake released at the moment was to the extent that Seregia became exhausted and ill.

This was not a game without any risk at all.

I was someone who used all means and methods to achieve victory, so why did I dare to accept a head-to-head confrontation in favor of the opponent?

The excuse that it was for growth and experience, as in the past tutorials, did not work.

“Surely that head-to-head confrontation is something that you would choose when facing the God of Duel instead.”

“That’s right.”

Seregia’s concern is that the reason for the head-to-head confrontation might be pity or sympathy for the fake.

In fact, while the fake was dying, Seregia once asked if I sympathized with the fake.

Seregia is always concerned about this.

I wonder if that gap was caused by emotion.

Or maybe it was just her way of thinking as a weapon.

My way of thinking was exactly the same as hers once.

In fact, there was only a slight difference even now, but it’s not very pronounced.

Before answering, I moved inside the temple.

It was a story that no one should overhear.

After we moved, I told Seregia,

“There are two reasons.”

“You have two?”

Seregia asked back.

I thought she'd rather complain that I only had two reasons behind that decision.

I wondered if she saw me as a unicellular organism more than I thought.

“The first one is just because I thought I would win. I'll win no matter how many advantages my opponent has over me and no matter how much they've prepared.”

Such confidence allowed me to accept the outcome.

I wouldn't even be here if I hadn't been convinced in the first place.

“And the second reason is that I couldn't back down.”

“What do you mean?”

Seregia asked back.

It's hard to explain.

“You know, sometimes you feel like you've won and lost.”

I often felt it when I was a professional gamer.

Apparently I won, but I'm annoyed, as if I lost.

“...Maybe that feeling means defeat?”

“Yes, even if in substance you didn't lose.”

Seregia was silent.

I accepted her silence, and had to wait a moment.

The basis of my divinity is a continuous victory.

Confidence and faith in that victory has made me who I am now, and it sustains me.

To put it another way, I can't keep my divinity in a situation where I can't win.

That's what a deity is.

Just as the God of Duel can't hit someone's back for a mean victory, and the God of Light can't fall asleep in the dark.

It was not a matter of preference, but of identity.

“...the penalty is too high.”

said Seregia, who had been silent for a while.

It was as she said.

But it was that powerful.

I hoped for overwhelming force, not just moderate strength.

For my purpose, I even had to assume that all the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple were turned against me.

I had to take such risks to make the 60th and 61st floors my sacred sites and to get all the stages of the tutorials into my hands.

“Even if it's only once, if the word defeat rings in my mind, I might lose everything.”

Even if I lose, I'll get through it if I think it's a stepping stone to a final victory.

But even if I win, if I have a sense of defeat in my heart, that's it.

“But I'm sure.”

“What are you sure about?”

“I'm sure I'll get through it in the end. I'm confident that I'll keep going no matter how many times I fall and get blocked. I'm sure I'll never lose.”

And I assure you.

That this conviction can never and will never be broken.

Chapter 329

Seoul (20)

“Ladies and gentlemen, we are now crossing a zone of turbulence. Please return to your seats and fasten your seatbelts...”.

The in-flight broadcast came out.

“Hyung, they want you to buckle up.”

“What about the belt?”

Instead of wearing the seatbelt, Hochi used his powers to adjust the surrounding climate.

The aircraft, which had been shaking earlier, immediately became stable.

“...Huh?”

Yong-yong, who was dozing off, raised his head.

Yong-yong, who had fallen asleep as if nothing had happened, looked around and rubbed his eyes in reaction to Hochi using his power.

“It’s nothing. Go back to sleep, Yong-Yong.”

As Hochi patted his back, Yong-yong, who had been blinking for a while, soon closed his eyes again and went back to sleep.

It was a new feeling; he felt, as he looked out the plane window and held Yong-Yong, who was fast asleep.

For Hochi, Korea and Japan were so close that it seemed like you were

merely crossing a stream, one where you could cross and return at any time.

However, he felt a sense of satisfaction when he faithfully completed his duties and returned home by flight according to the protocol.

“By the way, when are we going to eat?”

He heard some nonsense somewhere, but Hochi ignored it.

Instead, he asked Lee Jun-seok.

“Aren’t we going back too late?”

“Uh... Well. At this rate, yes we are...”

In fact, it was too late to return home.

It was a return after almost two months.

Hochi wanted to get the job done “well” just as Lee Ho Jae asked.

He did his best to fulfill the numerous requests of the Japanese government as much as he could.

As soon as the Japanese government realized that Hochi was cooperative as the Japanese government did, they filled his schedule with jobs that weren’t planned but somehow seemed really necessary.

Of course, it was to delay his return as much as possible and try to recruit him in the meantime while he was in Japan...

But, it didn’t work.

Thanks to this, Lee Jun-seok, who wanted to return to Korea as soon as possible and receive his items, had to worry about it every day.

“But aren’t you hungry?”

“Didn’t you just eat the in-flight meal earlier?”

Eventually, Hochi couldn’t stand it, and he replied to the Mantis.

The Mantis was lying on the bed in the box, and pouted.

“I’m still hungry.”

“Shut up.”

This guy had evolved into a new race because it couldn’t adapt to life in the box.

From a mantis, to a carnivore.

All-day long, it just thought about eating something.

At first glance, it looked similar to Seregia, but in Seregia’s case, her interests were extremely limited, and snacks were one of her interests.

The Mantis was only thinking about eating or sleeping.

“Oh, I’m hungry.”

Like a wasted man in his room, lying on a bed in the box, scratching it’s stomach and saying, ‘I’m hungry.’

No matter how the Mantis behaved, it didn’t matter much to Hochi, but it was still unsightly.

“If you shut up until we arrive, then I’ll buy you something delicious.”

“Really?”

The Mantis was delighted and clapped its hands.

In the meantime though, the Mantis did not budge from the bed.

Hochi was grumpy because he didn't like that.

“Stand on your hands until we get there.”

“Yes!”

Hochi sighed as he watched the Mantis beginning to do a handstand and thought,

‘I shouldn't do that.’

Not long ago, Hochi himself was equally aimless, and he loved being lazy.

In fact, it wasn't much different now.

However, looking at the Mantis, he decided that he should not become someone without goals.

* * *

An uninvited visitor came first thing in the morning.

The visitor was Japanese.

She was told to go home after finishing her tasks, but she tried to meet with me and told me about Hochi, who had not gone back in 2 months.

“So the God of Balance intervened on Earth. You came to tell me that?”

“Yes, that's right.”

A Japanese woman called Hisano answered calmly.

Her tone was polite, but something in her mannerisms irritated me.

It felt like a parrot talking to a city hall official who only answered with “yes” or “no”.

Hisano started talking, saying the God of Balance had something to tell me.

The story went like this:

In the midst of the chaos in Japan, the God of Balance intervened on Earth.

It was something that I also knew about.

The woman named Hisano spoke to me as if to inform me of that fact.

And that was it.

The God of Balance intervened in my realm, Earth.

But did he just send her to inform me about it without apologizing or compensating me for it?

I stopped yawning because it was embarrassing.

I knew quite a bit about the God of Balance.

He was one of the Hundred Gods that showed interest in me.

I remember he was a pretty good god at first.

When he saw that I was satisfied with the way I was willing to kill my enemies, I thought that all the gods in the Hundred Gods Temple were also different.

Still, among the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple, he had the most common sense.

Anyway, the God of Balance is a god who gives back the same thing as what was given to him.

Notifying me that he violated my territory and returning without mentioning any compensation for it?

Given that this is the God of Balance, this was like a declaration of war to me.

Rather, if he didn't inform me about it, then I wouldn't have taken it like that.

"I don't know why the God of Balance told you this."

Hisano replied in a somewhat disgruntled tone.

"Anyway, that's what you should know. The God of Balance has a purpose, so I'm sure he wants it delivered."

"The God of Balance isn't like that."

The God of Balance, as I know him, doesn't do things this way.

I put great importance on the divinity of the gods.

Since the beginning of the tutorial, I have done so.

With the divinity of the gods and their character in the message, I tried to analyze the gods even a little more.

That's why I was pretty sure that the message from the woman named Hisano was not the God of Balance.

"No, the God of Balance told me to tell you that."

Hisano spoke with a sharp voice, but she was visibly embarrassed.

What is the problem?

"Did you miss anything? The god must have said something else other than that."

Hisano looked hurt by my harsh words.

“The God... You know... Heuk... Keuk.....”

Hisano, who was trying to raise her voice, immediately began to shiver and tremble when I pressed her down with force.

The God sent her, so I had to deal with it.

At times like this, it was necessary to use force to squeeze out information.

“Did you leave anything out of what the God of Balance said?”

It seemed more likely that the woman did not convey the words of the God of Balance correctly, rather than the God of Balance did not even offer an apology or a reward.

Unless the God of Balance really intends to declare war on me.

“Tell me. The truth.”

Hisano trembled and stuttered.

“Th, the compensation for intervening on Earth... He said he’ll pay.....”

Yeah, that’s right.

He is the God of Balance, after all.

By the way, there was a reason why this woman was not appointed an apostle even though she had received power.

Considering the divinity of the God of Balance, he would prefer you to execute the instructions received without error, rather than for you to omit words to preserve his honor.

“Is there any more?”

“...He said he would meet you in person and apologize.....”

Ah, yes.

That would be awkward to convey from a god-worshipping standpoint.

[Can I come in?]

I heard a voice from outside.

It was a divinity manifested.

I felt the energy at first, but since there was only one deity that would appear at this timing, I knew that it was the God of Balance.

“Come in.”

At the same time as my permission, the space in the room began to distort.

After a while, when the distortion of space ceased, the God of Balance appeared.

The God of Balance was in the form of an old human man.

“I think this apostle candidate will be insufficient as your apostle.”

I said, looking at Hisano who collapsed on the floor trembling.

Instead of affirming my words, the God of Balance shook his head with a smile.

“No. My explanation wasn’t enough, so I could have made a mistake.”

The God of Balance defended Hisano.

Meanwhile, he breathed some power into Hisano, who was being pressed down with my power.

I did not expect that the God of Balance wouldn't disapprove of her.

Hisano was released from my pressure by the God of Balance's power , but she didn't get up from the floor properly.

"Now then, tell me what you want."

* * *

"Is this enough?"

Asked the God of Balance.

Of course it was enough.

The God of Balance neatly apologized to me for invading my territory.

It was just a word of an apology, but that was enough.

The God of Balance not only apologized, but also paid sufficient compensation.

First of all, he cleared the quest, and gave me the dimensional coordinates of the common area of the Hundred Gods, so the price for a slight intervention in the earth was enough.

"Of course."

He laughed as if he was fortunate to be the God of Balance.

Unlike the God of Duel, which had a geek-like side, the God of Balance really looked like an ordinary human old man.

Maybe he's from human origins?

Do you have a deep understanding of humans?

"Thank you for understanding. Although. Even though it was an

urgent situation, I thought it might get bigger if I didn't apologize because I intervened without permission in the realm of another god."

It is true that the Earth is my realm, and that the God of Balance intervened without permission, but I was a little angry that he sent a message to one of the Awakened who had a relationship with him to run away.

If Yong-Yong hadn't blown up the space in time, it would have been clear that Hisano, who was actually lying face down, would have died without leaving any bones.

Maybe he thought it was fortunate that things went well, but the God of Balance smiled brightly.

I had a long conversation with the God of Balance.

Whether he liked me, or if he thought I was a little short of reward, the God of Balance gave me some valuable information.

"As you say, it is true that there are factions amongst the Hundred Gods. However, apart from the factions, most of the gods choose to judge their own right. Of course, the actions and choices of the gods are often forced according to their divinity."

"Maintaining the incarnation within the Hundred Gods takes quite a lot of power. Just being in the Hundred Gods' Temple and having to leave the incarnation there at all times is a big constraint."

"So, the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple often compare their superiority with each other with the power of their incarnations. The God of Hope, who fought with you not long ago could barely maintain his incarnation in the Hundred Gods Temple with the little power he has..."

"The God of Adventure was the leading god at the time of the establishment of the Hundred Gods Temple."

"Interesting, of course... It's better not to care."

“The God of Slowness and her followers are too dangerous. The God of Hope is the only one who’s been running around but...”

This was the information I received.

Thanks to that, I learned more about the Hundred Gods.

I was also happy to hear once again that the God of Hope had suffered a devastating blow.

The God of Balance asked me one last request.

It was a little surprising.

“I want to take that child as my apostle in the near future; however, she still wants to live with her family in her hometown. Will you allow me to summon her from time to time while living here?”

I see.

After all the apologies and rewards, he still shared more information.

He was hoping for more.

I pondered for a moment, and then I replied.

“If you receive a favor, then you should return just as much. You may summon the apostle Hisano anytime. I am also allowing her to return to Earth.”

The God of Balance was greatly pleased with my answer.

It seemed like a good idea to maintain a proper friendship with this kind of god.

Since he is a god who returns whatever he is given, there is less risk of being stabbed in the back.

The God of Balance went back after our little chat.

I also got up from the sofa and prepared to return to the temple, when I saw Hisano standing up awkwardly...

He didn't take her with him.

"Hey."

"...Yes, yes!?"

Hisano replied in a daze.

It was a huge contrast to her previous manner when she informed me in a clerical tone.

Her hair was a mess, and her eyes were bloodshot.

The drool that dripped earlier dried up around her mouth and her eyes were puffy.

The God of Balance gave her some strength earlier, but it would have been difficult just to be around me and the God of Balance.

In fact, it was amazing that she was able to endure it without losing consciousness.

My first impression of her wasn't that good, but she's quite useful.

No, she was very useful.

An apostolic candidate who is cherished enough that the God of Balance came and made a deal with me in person.

However, she is not yet an apostle.

And she still lives on Earth, my territory.

I secretly blocked off access to the outside and told Hisano,

“Work with me.”

The God of Balance is an honest god who can't stab me in the back first.

But of course, I am a god who can stab anyone in the back first.

Chapter 330

Seoul (21)

[Guild Leader Kim Min-hyuk announces the recruitment of Japanese Awakened Hisano Okabuchi]

Even though there had been a flood of sensational news recently, the latest headline was enough to draw people's attention.

Korea was excited with the recruitment of Hisano. Aside from being a known SS class, Hisano also possessed various skills and specialized in both civilian protection and monster raids.

Japan, on the other hand... seemed to have gotten the shorter end of the stick.

They tried to recruit Hochi and Lee Jun-seok who participated in the Eastern Coast Raid, but their efforts were all in vain and they eventually gave up.

Most of the best Awakened in Japan have been recruited abroad.

The Japanese Awakened Association naturally became angry, and demanded clarification from the Korean government, the Association, and the Guild, while they attempted to contact Hisano and convince her to disregard the other party's offer.

However, Hisano rejected the Japanese Association's desperate request to renew her contract.

The Korean Awakened Association said it wasn't their job, and the Korean government didn't even understand how things were going.

And lastly, the Guild.

“I just ignored it.”

Kim Min-hyuk eventually had to get some time off to let out some steam because he had been continuously overworked for the past few days.

“F*ck, what would they do if I told them that I’m going to dive with my cell phone off?”

Of course, the Japanese Awakened Association did not intend to give up just because they could not reach Kim Min-hyuk.

They even sent a member of the Association to Korea and tried to set up a contact point for him.

As a result, Kim Min-hyuk simply hid in Lee Ho-jae’s temple.

Occasionally, he would call the Guild through a second phone to get up-to-date with the operations, but he mostly chose to completely seclude himself.

“Good job.”

Seregia, who was lying in a sleeping bag, said to Kim Min-hyuk.

For Seregia, she was welcomed in Kim Min-hyuk’s seclusion.

Of course, he had to welcome a dedicated maid-in-charge to deal with accommodation and meals at work.

The shrine, which was remodeled from the World Cup Stadium that was closed due to the appearance of the gate, had changed so much that it was hard to tell how it looked before.

It was thanks to Yong-Yong who came back from time to time to decorate the temple even while Hochi and his party were in Japan.

When it came to architecture, even Yong-Yong confirmed that Lee Ho Jae was better.

The temple was built around a gate on a tower so high that it could be seen anywhere in Seoul, and the soccer stadium that surrounded the tower was equipped with magical engineering that would make even the earthlings accustomed to advanced civilization drop their jaws in amazement.

Functional spaces, including prayer rooms and other rooms required for a temple, were well organized, and accommodations for visitors and pilgrims were built as well.

Security was of course flawless, and the temperature and humidity were constantly adjusted so that each resident could be comfortable.

It was also equipped with a strong defense system that would completely block the eyes of the gods who have been spying on Earth from time to time.

Presently, only three people –Lee Hojae, Seregia, and Kim Minhyuk — stayed in this magical temple. Although, a large population could live here without experiencing any inconvenience due to the space distortion.

At first, Kim Minhyuk merely stopped by the temple to check on Lee Ho-jae's progress, but he eventually began to do his work in the temple altogether.

He didn't want to leave the heaven-like temple where he could easily move around like a wizard and where food appears whenever he wanted to eat.

So, as soon as something bothersome happened, it was natural that he hid in the temple.

Of course, there were troublesome things like opening snack bags for Seregia, picking strawberry tops, emptying a watermelon to make a fruit salad, or picking fish bones for her, but Kim Min-hyuk thought it was worth it.

“How is the healing lottery doing?”

Lee Ho-jae, who had been away to set the dimensional coordinates of

the Tutorial, asked as he entered the break room.

* * *

In the past, I had told Kim Minhyuk that he should invite 30 people a month by lottery and invite them to the temple to be healed of any illness.

It was an easy way to raise my influence on Earth.

At the time, my reputation as the crazy terrorist who bombed Seoul Station had somewhat improved.

“But their reaction is a little different from what we initially thought.”

“What do you mean?”

I asked as I sat down next to Seregia’s sleeping bag and peeled some grapes.

“What we thought was this: Wow! Healing incurable diseases! God’s miracle! Wow! Amazing!”

Kim Min-hyuk exaggeratedly raised his hands and rubbed them together.

His explanation was a little over-the-top, but it was correct.

Healing any disease is usually treated as a miracle of God.

“But the timing was bad.”

“Ah.”

As soon as I peeled the grapes, Seregia opened her mouth and waited...

She was lying in the sleeping bag and opened her mouth just like a goldfish.

Sorry, but you don't get to eat the grapes I peeled.

I focused on Kim Min-hyuk's explanation, and ignored Seregia's gaze as I popped a grape in my mouth.

"You're recruiting the Awakened by releasing equipment and items from the Tutorial. Recently, Hisano's recruitment has also raised attention. So, it's not a miracle, but people came to the conclusion that you got a healing item as a reward for clearing Hell difficulty and that the limit for that item is 30 people per month."

"That's not good."

I understood what he was trying to say.

In a way, it was a mistake.

It was a mistake because it meant that I wasn't efficient with getting things done in the right order.

But my priorities for collecting influence and faith on Earth were too low to consider all that.

Earth was initially equipped with a state-of-the-art civilization, and indigenous religions are still strong.

With the Tutorial and monsters appearing, information about the Hundred Gods Temple was pretty much released.

Frankly, it seemed nearly impossible to gather enough faith on this planet to satisfy me.

"Then think of healing rituals as just volunteer work."

"Or, what if you took the Old Man or the Grandma with you? If you perform healing rituals while showing your true form, then people would have no choice but feel intimidated or mystified."

It was rejected.

It's not like they're going to agree to do that in the first place.

“Let's do it later if it is connected to the 60th and 61st floors.”

Among the giant warriors who have become idle like an unemployed man on the 61st floor, there were some who I thought could serve as a mascot of the temple.

If none were willing, then I'll just make one.

What about her?

“Seregia?”

“No.”

She refused it without a second thought.

Come to think of it, I do need a symbol of my religion.

The members of the 61st floor don't even care about that.

But as religion becomes widespread, the time will come when it will be necessary.

I have to think about it.

“And about the guys who were doing stuff in Gangwon-do.”

“Uh, didn't you set an appointment with them?”

“I did, but they were procrastinating and delayed the schedule.”

Kim Min-hyuk explained the recent changes in the pseudo-group.

“Have they really become a religious group?”

“Uh, maybe because they were born crooks, they have the ability to

convince people. We even prepared a site for them in Gangwon-do, and the number of believers gathered there was significant.”

So, I explained that by gradually inflating and fabricating the bombing of Seoul Station, the eradication of the G-class, and the defense against the monster waves on the east coast of Japan, it will have an effect of deifying.

If they are doing that, then it’s a waste to just throw it away.

They’re acting on behalf of me and managing the religious organization which I’m not good at either.

“What if you visit the Gangwon-do sect? Give a speech in front of the believers.”

Well, it’s a little annoying for me to go.

Let’s leave this to Hochi.

Just in time, Hochi, Yongyong, and Lee Junseok entered the temple.

“Uh, you’re here?”

Oh my gosh.

When I told him to come back after finishing in Japan, Hochi, who had been away for two months, returned.

But when I saw the proud smile on his face, the words automatically came out,

“You must have done well.”

Hochi nodded.

“It was successfully finished.”

“It was a problem because it was so perfectly done...”

Lee Jun-seok muttered in a small voice next to him.

It seems that he came back after accepting the requests of Japanese politicians and members of the association, who were making him do even the most trivial things.

“Yes, good job. Well done.”

Still, I couldn’t blame Hochi who was doing something for the first time and was proud of it.

For now, I just praised him.

I can tell him later that he didn’t have to do every single request.

The believers of the God of Hope who I wanted to entrust to Hochi needed to be taken care of well anyway.

It wasn’t bad to listen to the members’ requests.

“Why is Seregia lying down?”

“I am sick.”

“Why?!”

“Because somebody treated me so roughly.”

Seregia.

That’s a little weird to hear.

No, it IS weird.

It was fortunate that Yong-yong was asleep.

“Haha, grapes.”

The Mantis interrupted and reached out for the grapes in the plate.

I unintentionally flicked the forehead of the Mantis approaching the plate.

“Ow!”

“Why is this thing out of the box?”

“Oh, we let it out for a walk.”

Do human-eating monsters need walks too?

Kim Minhyuk, who was next to me, quickly moved behind my back.

However, Hochi or Lee Junseok were not wary at all.

Did you guys develop a trusting relationship?

“Some days, it doesn’t think about escaping, nor about eating people. It’s safe if you just feed it on time. It listens well to Yong-yong.”

Hochi explained.

When I checked, the power of the Mantis was growing rapidly.

Considering that time when we first met, its power was about half a penny that I couldn’t even treat it as complete. Compared to its power now, I could say that its improvement was considerably big.

At this point, it seemed safe to call it a half-god.

“Haha.”

There is absolutely no way that the Mantis, who was excitedly eating grapes when I stayed still, grew up on its own.

When I looked closely, I could see that some of Yong-yong’s power

was mixed inside the Mantis.

It seems that Yong-yong gave it some strength.

Did you feed it?

Only then did I understand.

There is only one difference between the Rulers and the monsters who are obsessed with desire.

And that thing was called 'reason'.

Unlike the monsters, who only have a basic desire for more power and survival, the Rulers can make judgments.

How strong are the enemies you need to eat to gain strength, how many are the odds you have, how do you fight and grow.

Before the Mantis was caught by Yong-yong, it was hiding using the characteristics of the earth, where neither the gods nor the Rulers were able to tread recklessly.

The principle of action is still simple, but it had that level of intelligence.

If you convinced the Mantis that the safest and easiest way to get power was to remain as Yongyong's pet, then of course, it will be Yong-yong's faithful pet regardless of its pride

It's okay.

I wondered if it would be a little easier when dealing with the Rulers later if I kept these characteristics in mind.

It may be a little different if you are a Ruler who has enough power to reach Godhood, but in a fundamental way, it may not be that different.

But there's only one problem.

When that monster decides one day that it is better off being something other than Yongyong's pet, it will betray him coldly without thinking about affection or loyalty.

That's something that Yong-yong will have to endure and deal with in the future.

I thought it would be better to watch Yong-yong's choice, rather than worrying about it.

"Hey, have you made any progress connecting the 60th floor to the temple?"

Hochi asked.

How did this guy suddenly feel so grown-up?

"Yes, it's almost done."

It was going to be done in a week's time.

In a week, I would be able to finally connect the residential area on the 60th floor of the Tutorial's Hell difficulty to the temple in Seoul.



PDF by: traitor/1ZEN



THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- VOLUME 11 -

**-AUTHOR-
Gandara**

[Nocturne Translations]

Chapter 331

The Hundred Gods Temple (1)

“Hey, why didn’t you return Lee Jun-seok’s item?”

“Huh.....? Huh?”

Hochi suddenly asked about Lee Jun-seok’s item.

What item?

“Before, when Lee Jun-seok cleared the Tutorial, he said he gave you an item.”

Oh, I remember.

When I persuaded Lee Jun-seok to go outside, Lee Jun-seok sent me all the items he had collected.

From miscellaneous items, such as a growth journal, to equipment that were used as core items.

It was an inevitable choice because he couldn’t take anything outside the Tutorial.

Of course, in my case, I am free to use my inventory even outside of the Tutorial.

“The items, they should still be in your inventory.”

...Not really.

“Give it quickly. Hey, he says he really needs those items.”

I'm in trouble.

Hochi asked this as soon as we met, so Lee Jun-Seok must have asked him to do this in advance.

Lee Jun-seok must have been really desperate, so I can understand.

He only developed his skills up to the point where he felt powerful.

The problem is that he lacks the ability to reliably maintain that power.

Naturally, he had to accept a certain amount of risk every time he used his power, and because he couldn't control it, any technique that allowed him to focus his force on a single point or limit its range was a dream come true.

He was both a glass cannon that couldn't even handle his own strength, and a human bomb that deals hard hits and then explodes.

Lee Jun Seok was mumbling next to Hochi.

By looking at his brightly red face, it was easy to see how much he was looking forward to it.

But the problem was...

[I already distributed them to the communities.]

The items Lee Junseok needs were probably the core items he used as main weapons.

He probably wouldn't bother about the other items such as the journals, the accessories, or the potions.

But those core items... were already given out to the communities...

On a first come first serve basis.

Of course the whereabouts of those items... I had no idea.

[...Are you crazy? Why would you give out stuff that other people have entrusted to you!?]

Hochi admonished me.

I had nothing to say.

“Junseok.”

“Yes, hyung.”

“The way I see it.....”

I had no choice but to sell my medicine.

I felt really sorry for Lee Junseok.

“You don’t need an item. Even if you solve your problem with an item now, you’ll just rely on that item again. The priority is to grow yourself and overcome your problems.”

I was just spouting a bunch of nonsense.

If you can overcome weaknesses with items, then you can overcome them.

It was a phrase that I would say in the past, when I was paranoid about trying to get rid of my weaknesses.

Of course, for Lee Jun-seok, who knew me in the past, he would have nodded with an ‘ah, I knew it’.

“But, hyung... I can’t even train properly on Earth. I have no one to test my strength against. If I do something wrong, then there would be a risk of damage.....”

Good point.

Damn it.

I thought of a quick way out.

“Then, you can train somewhere else, not on Earth.”

“Somewhere else?”

I nodded.

If training on Earth was difficult, then it would be ideal to send him to another place.

[Quest window]

[God of Death – Thanatos’ Purification]

Description: The God of Death wants to purify Thanatos, which has been contaminated with a continuous regression.

Thanatos was completely contaminated, since it was a place where experiments were conducted to artificially create numerous perfectors.

There, the deceased eats the deceased, and the eaten is reborn and eats the deceased who ate him.

It was an endless loop of predation, and at the same time, it was a cycle of immortality.

Thanatos is a common area of the Hundred Gods Temple, but it is a place where the influence of the God of Death was strong in the past.

The God of Death wants to purify Thanatos and restore its past.

Destroy all the dead that exist in Thanatos.

Thanatos’s dead aren’t very dangerous by normal standards.

However, the conditions for intervention are difficult due to the fact that it is an abandoned planet that remains a common area of the Hundred Gods Temple.

The God of Death presented a challenger with countless powers, but the challenger of course, did not choose the God of Death (ahahaha), so he eventually asked for the purification of Thanatos through a quest.

Let's just ignore the 'Ahahaha' but focus on the God of Death in the middle.

It is said that this quest window was created by Kirikiri herself, not by the Hundred Gods' Temple system.

In any case, Thanatos seems to be a suitable place to send Lee Jun-seok.

What the God of Death wanted in the first place was not a request for me, a God.

It was just a request to ask of an ordinary apostle.

The problem is that the God of Death could not secure an apostle through the Tutorial.

I thought Lee Jun-seok could do this kind of quest.

Since it is an abandoned planet, there is no need to worry about damage to the surrounding area while killing the dead.

I suggested it while informing Lee Jun-seok of the quest.

"If it's such a place, then you can practice as much as you want. Secondly, quests are an opportunity to try to use your strength as much as you want."

At the same time, I was too lazy to do the quest myself.

Of course, the quest should be done by me, but to be honest, connecting the 60th floor to the portal was more urgent than that.

“If you do this well and show significant growth, then I will create a new item as a reward. Something fancy.”

I bet it would be a much better item than what Lee Jun-seok entrusted to me.

“How about that, can you do it?”

“Yes.”

Lee Jun-seok, who was worried for a while, answered.

It was a relief.

“I’ve seen Thanatos’ dead on the 93rd floor. It might not be easy to kill all the dead on the planet, but I can’t afford to miss the opportunity to work hard and grow.”

Fortunately, Lee Jun-seok seems to have experienced Thanatos in the Tutorial.

Lee Jun-seok smiled as if he was glad that he had the opportunity to train rather than the difficulty of the mission.

As expected, the effort to reach level 201 was enough.

“Yes, it might be dangerous, so I’ll send Yong-yong with you at first.”

Lee Jun-seok did not start immediately.

Since he just got back from Japan, he said that he would stop by his house and visit his family first.

I didn’t know how long it would take, so I told him to take a break.

After Lee Jun-seok was sent away, Hochi’s eyes were sparkling.

Did it seem fun to get a quest from me?

I asked Hochi to visit the cult in Gangwon-do and meet them.

I plan to use it as a rehearsal before I entrust the believers of the God of Hope to him...

“They think I’m a phantom, but I’m a real god. It would be enough to correct that misconception and inspire the believers. Can you do it?”

“Of course.”

Hochi’s answer was confident.

* * *

It was a place where the soft touch of grass was laid on the floor.

The warm light and the dirt that was neither loose nor damp.

It was an environment that anyone could refer to as a beautiful field.

Anyone would have called it so, if not for the huge wall that was visible in the horizon and the ceiling blocking the clouds above.

The walls and ceilings of unrealistic dimensions indicated that this place was indoors rather than outdoors.

Kirikiri liked this place.

Her favorite place was usually a field or a mountain where the energy of life was widespread and open.

So she had to control her expression in the presence of her visitor.

Kirikiri liked this room the most inside the Hundred Gods’ Temple.

It was her room, and it was designed to best suit her taste.

“What do you think?”

Asked the God of Balance who came to Kirikiri's room.

Kirikiri didn't answer right away and scratched her nose.

She had no choice but to.

Kirikiri had not yet chosen.

“I'm not asking you to judge.”

“Then?”

“I just.....”

“I'm curious what you're thinking.”

There was a voice that cut off the God of Balance.

It was a voice of a woman who was gentle and soft but at the same time cold and sharp.

The ears of the fox, not the rabbit's ears, were visible, and several tails fluttered behind the back.

“God of Sacrifice.”

“I know it's difficult to make a judgment right away. I just want to hear what you are thinking, and we just want to understand the situation a little more.”

Kirikiri found it difficult to keep silent at the words of the God of Sacrifice.

“He will eventually collide with the gods, for whatever reason.”

It was a natural story.

She made a quest window for him herself, but it was only a drag in the end.

The Gods of the Hundred Gods Temple agreed to the conditions given by Kirikiri.

By a majority vote.

Each one will present a quest, and when Lee Ho-jae clears all of them, the Tutorial will be handed over to him.

The gods knew.

Some gods will not give up their rights to the Tutorial, no matter what conditions Lee Ho-jae has cleared.

So she found out that it was virtually impossible to transfer the Tutorial through the quest.

For them, the quest given to Lee Ho-jae was not a transaction in exchange for the Tutorial, but only to deceive him and make him finish quests for free.

“He knows. Actually, the quests don’t mean much.”

“Is that so? He tolerated the survival of the God of Hope because of the quest. Unwillingly endured with the God of Duel. Then, he even made a deal with the God of Balance.”

The God of Sacrifice disagrees with Kirikiri’s predictions.

“No, I’m sure.”

“Can you tell me why?”

Prior to answering, Kirikiri drew pictures like scribbles on the ground.

It was a really, really old habit.

As old as the very long time that she has existed for.

The God of Balance and the God of Sacrifice knew her habits, so they waited silently for Kirikiri to finish her scribbling.

“If the quests were really important, he would have already cleared most of them. Moving quickly. He can’t afford to go wrong with the goal in front of him.”

Lee Ho-jae had done little since he came to Earth.

He organizes his surroundings a little and gives the group of people who came to Earth experience to adapt to Earth.

And he is dedicated to connecting the 60th floor of the Tutorial.

Although he clashed with the God of Hope previously, he did not take the offensive until the God of Hope blatantly attacked him first.

The meaning of the connection with the 60th and 61st floors was clear.

To facilitate the supply of divine power and to retrieve the hidden powers from the 60th and 61st floors.

His current strength was enough to clear the quests specified in the quest window immediately.

Clearly, Lee Ho-jae was preparing more than the strength required to clear the quest.

“It may be because he just likes to be connected with his holy place,” said the God of Sacrifice.

Kirikiri disagreed.

If she knew Lee Ho-jae, then she wouldn’t be so relaxed.

No matter how much time has passed, he has changed a lot.

“In the end, rather than doing all of the gods’ favors, I know that some gods must succumb by force like the God of Hope.”

“Huh, that’s where you get into trouble, isn’t it? Which one will win. No, it seems like it’s a question of which side will win the Hundred Gods’ Temple.”

Lee Ho-jae’s power has not yet been revealed.

When he fought with the God of Hope, most of the Hundred Gods simply watched the fight happily.

It was the collision they wanted.

The God of Hope, who had been eating away the Hundred Gods by twisting the rules, was treated as a work by many gods.

However, as the result of the conflict was revealed to be Lee Ho-jae’s one-sided victory, the attitudes of the gods changed rapidly.

It was because of Lee Ho-jae’s special existence.

He did not twist the rules like the God of Hope, but existed outside the rules altogether.

It wasn’t strange that the gods became wary.

Right now, there were discussions and voting that Lee Hojae should be included in the Hundred Gods Temple, at least in the Pantheon.

The claim that he must be forced to belong to the temple may soon become a reality.

If so, depending on the timing, regardless of the Tutorial, he and the gods of the Hundred Gods will face each other eventually.

“I haven’t yet decided which side to help or in which direction to lead the situation.”

Kirikiri answered.

The God of Sacrifice smiled and said,

“Thank you for the explanation. Whichever you choose, know that I will agree with you.”

“Do you believe in my choice?”

At Kirikiri’s question, the God of Sacrifice shrugged.

“Then I have to believe. Sacrifice is inevitable for everything, but I hate being on the side of being sacrificed. It’s natural to always stick to your side on the other side”

“I will follow your choice. You have always chosen the direction to end chaos.”

Following the God of Sacrifice, the God of Balance also expressed his will.

After the talk, the two left Kirikiri’s room.

Kirikiri, who was alone again, ran across the field, jumping.

After running around like that for a long time, Kirikiri’s mood was a little refreshed.

“What’s really going to happen?”

Kirikiri was more concerned about the future than the clash between several Gods and Lee Ho-jae.

When he defeats all the opposition of the gods and obtains the Tutorial. When he finally achieves his long-cherished goal.

She was worried about the future after that.

“Hoooojaaaeeee.”

Kirikiri, muttering his name to herself, giggled for a moment and laughed.

Never in her dream that a human with this strange name would grow up to this point.

And she didn't dare to guess what was to come.

She looked up at the sky, trying to ignore the ceiling beyond it.

What was the God of Slowness thinking?

How far was the god who proves the existence of time in the universe itself looking?

She didn't know.

She cannot foresee the future nor engage in causality.

It was just a wish.

She couldn't get a glimpse of the consequences before the adventure began.

Chapter 332

Hongcheon (1)

It had only been less than two months since Ho-jae and his party returned to Earth.

And the humans had already begun to experience huge changes.

Gates that previously poured out monsters no longer appeared unexpectedly.

The gates that used to randomly generate at all times suddenly became a huge risk factor during that time.

Due to this occurrence, humans had no guarantee of safety anywhere.

As a result, the social foundations became concentrated in the big cities, and the value of the Awakened who was a powerful force in street warfare soared.

But currently, the monster gates were no longer appearing.

It was a simple sentence, but what this sentence implied could not be explained in just a few words.

The monsters that suddenly appeared one day weren't just natural disasters that caused human casualties.

The appearance of monsters changed the landscape of the world.

Numerous people lost their lives to the monsters, and almost all countries lost their territory through monster invasion.

Even the United States and Korea, which were known as Monster-safe areas, still had areas that were overrun by monsters.

Fortunately, monsters that jumped out of the gate do not leave the area, stopping when they reached a certain point.

As if someone had placed a rally point on them.

Rather than eradicating all the monsters, the countries left some of those lands alone.

Instead, the numbers of the Awakened and the army were concentrated in limited areas.

As a result, it was relatively easy to protect the citizens of the city from the monster spawns or gates, but places far from the cities became defenseless against monsters.

In the case of South Korea, the incidence of gates appearing was so low in the first place, that it could be limited by abandoning some areas.

However, in some countries where there was a high probability of gates appearing, most of the land was lost.

But now, those gates do not appear anymore.

The damage caused by monsters nowadays had been minimal, with the exception of the occasional monstrous wild animals and the monsters that roamed around and entered the human settlements.

Although suspicious of this sudden phenomenon, many countries put their doubts to rest for the first time and began to move into the suburbs.

Naturally, the mainstay of this effort was the military forces.

Depending on the situation, the Awakened were also called out, but their importance was significantly lower.

And that was how Lee Ho-jae began to attract the Awakened with his trump card called the Dimensional Portal.

It was all over the newspapers, even the one that Hochi was reading.

Lee Hojae and Kim Min-hyuk's idea was simple.

Soon, the Awakened will be out of jobs.

The best advantage the Awakened had over the military was their combat power and experience fighting within the city.

And although they cannot replace the firepower of the military units in the field, both parties could still cooperate.

However, the jobs they would be entrusted with would probably be eradicating the monsters left in the remote areas at the most.

But that arrangement will not last long enough now that the monsters are no longer spawning.

Above all, the Awakened who were treated like nobles and heroes in the city would not be pleased with the mission to clear out monsters outside of the country.

They have already enjoyed too much wealth and honor to be treated as warriors on the front lines.

The army will still want them, but they will offer them a significantly lower price.

But with the opening of the Portal Gate, the Awakened who have been struggling with work, lost wealth and fame, will emerge as important resources again.

The Awakened who have had similar experiences in the Tutorial will quickly adapt to their expedition to other dimensions.

"Do you read the newspaper?" Asked the old man sitting next to him.

"Yes," Hochi nodded, feeling a little absurd.

The old man did not recognize Hochi's face as Lee Ho-jae's.

With the appropriate cognitive dysfunction magic applied, the old man will only see Hochi as a normal young man.

“Oh, it's a mess. It's a mess.”

The old man glanced at the newspaper that Hochi had spread out.

It was a literal mess.

Just reading the newspaper headlines revealed how confusing the situation was.

One crisis disappeared, but another crisis arose.

There were articles that talked about the ideal future, while others were anticipating new opportunities.

In any case, the newspapers were predicting that the times would change once again.

“Ahhh, tsk, tsk, tsk.”

The old man seemed to dislike the current situation.

Eitherway, Hochi was puzzled.

Hochi still felt awkward when someone he didn't know talked to him without hesitation.

The old man shook his head and said, “I don't know how the world has come to this. The government hasn't even issued an evacuation notice yet, but they're already fleeing...”

The stale smell of sweat.

Packages wrapped in cheap, wrinkled packaging.

It was a scene inside the train where there were more people standing than those sitting in the seats.

As the old man said, the people seemed to be taking refuge somewhere.

“But it’s a little better these days.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes, because a few years ago, I never thought of going home by train like this. In my hometown, it was hard to go to the next neighborhood. One time, while we were sleeping at night, monsters appeared in front of the apartment, and the residents of the apartment blocked the entrance to our building and tried to hold out...”

The old man shared what he had been through.

It was an experience that could have appeared in a blockbuster movie.

Hochi wondered if the old man’s words were mixed with a little exaggeration.

Clackety clack. Hiss.

The train slowly slowed down and came to a complete stop.

The people standing in the corridor of the train stumbled forward in reaction.

But the train had not arrived at the station yet.

The train stopped once every ten minutes or so and resumed operation after examining the surroundings for danger.

“Is this train usually so crowded?”

The old man said that he often goes to his hometown.

The old man who heard Hochi's question nodded and replied as if it were something natural.

"Yes. This train is going from Seoul to Chuncheon and Gangneung, after all."

It was a train that connected Chuncheon and Gangneung, some of the few cities left in Gangwon-do.

In the past, it used to be a train that would run several times a day, but now he wondered if it only goes back and forth once a week.

If so, then it was normal that people would crowd it.

"Here, please!"

The Mantis sitting next to Hochi raised her hand.

He wondered why she did that, and saw that a salesman was pushing the cart down the crowded train aisle.

"Yes, what would you like?"

"A boiled egg and cider."

"We're out of cider."

"Ah....."

The Mantis looked sad and ordered bottled water instead.

"Do you give out peanuts as a service?"

"No, you have to buy it."

The Mantis ordered peanuts with a more regretful expression than before and looked at Hochi.

“...Do you have any money?”

He had no choice but to buy it for her.

He got enough money from Kim Min-hyuk before they left after all.

The Mantis began to peel the eggs with a giggle.

Hochi sighed inside.

Still, Lee Ho-jae told him to buy something delicious on the train.

However, Lee Hojae talked about a variety of lunch boxes, not boiled eggs, potatoes, or squid.

After the big city became safe from monster attacks, mankind faced a shortage of resources and food.

It was natural because procuring them to sustain both supply and demand became difficult.

Due to this, the current era had become a time where everyone cherished and put up with what little they could get.

“Are you a couple?”

The old man asked.

Hochi looked serious.

“No.”

“Then she must be your wife. She’s so active and healthy, how nice.”

“No, she’s not.”

The old man did not answer.

You're not listening to me.

“This is.....”

He took the egg from the Mantis and gave it to the old man.

“Hon hon, you're a very nice young couple.”

We're not what you think we are.

Please don't talk to me while you're eating.

He turned the old man's attention to the egg and opened a virtual window.

[Faith Window]

[Lee Ho Jae's Faith (tentative name)]

[Location: Hongcheon County, Gangwon Province]

Religious building status: Hongcheon County Main Office (1),
Branch Office (6)

-The church is rapidly expanding due to the recently constructed church building.

Through six offices, the enlightening of rural people in the remote regions is taking place.

Received faith/number of believers

-2,227pt of faith is being produced every month.

-The total membership is 4,207 people.

-The number of believers is insufficient to be treated as a formal religion.

-Less faith is produced compared to numbers.

-A few believers have fanatic beliefs.

-There are some believers who have no faith at all.

Religious Influence

-The influence within the country is significantly dropping.

-The national government is not even aware of the sect.

-The reputation within the country is very poor.

-The public sees the sect as a pseudo-multilevel organization that mixes eschatology and idolatry of the Awakened.

Clergy Status

-There are no priests who have been properly educated in doctrine.

-No qualified clergy exists.

-The clergy in the Church's leadership have very little faith]

This was a Faith Window created by Lee Ho-jae for Hochi.

It was a rough mix of the System Window of the Tutorial and the Quest Window that Kirikiri made.

“Hmm.....”

Hochi confirmed the problem by reading the Faith Window seriously.

Hochi liked the Faith Window.

Lee Ho-jae's prediction that such a hologram window, reminiscent of a game system, suits Hochi's taste, was correct.

-Achievement tasks-

Mission 1: Reform the priesthood that sees Lee Ho-jae's Faith as a means of business.

Mission 2: Reveal the basis of faith for the believers of Lee Ho-jae's Faith to devote their faith.

Mission 3: Improve the public image of Lee Hojae's Faith, which is considered a stupid and childish cult.

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There were even missions that aroused his desire to achieve more.

However, Hochi was still inexperienced in mingling with society and the people outside.

But that didn't mean that he was completely ignorant of the ways of people.

Most of his sources came from novels, but he read various stories through them.

He also shared the memories of Lee Ho-jae who experienced various worlds in the Tutorial.

Hochi eagerly looked into the Faith Window and wondered how to change the group and how to grow it.

It was a pleasant worry.

Hochi felt confident that he could somehow do it successfully.

“Are the preparations going well?”

Lim Seong-hyun asked the subordinate priest about the preparation.

“Yes, it is.”

The subordinate replied nonchalantly.

His attitude was terribly annoying.

Lim Seong-hyun frowned.

‘You punk.’

‘You might be wearing those robes now, but still act just like a thug on the streets, with a cigarette in your mouth and just nodding your head.’

He wanted to throw him out right now, but he still had to use him.

‘After this, I’ll have to find new guys that can be used as limbs.’

Lim Seong-hyun was a veteran with 20 years of experience as a fraudster.

When he was young, he made money by seducing innocent country girls.

After getting a little older, he made money by tricking old people who were ignorant of the world to join multi level marketing scams.

However, after the monsters appeared, his life changed rapidly.

The time had come when money was no longer important.

Of course, money was still important, but its value had relatively declined.

For him, who uses his desire to make easy money in scamming people, his means of business had disappeared.

He eventually had to change his business.

He started selling fear instead of desire.

Elderly people in the countryside who lost contact with their children in the cities and who couldn't sleep due to fear after hearing the sound of monsters coming from over the mountain, were really easy to deceive.

He brought out a universal eschatology and incited the people.

Heaven has punished men for its sins.

Everyone will die, but you will not die if you receive divine revelation...

You have been chosen.

People in the mountainous regions of Gangwon-do, abandoned by the government and the military, were easily convinced.

Some volunteered to become a believer immediately with a few magic tricks.

The problem is that after some time, the Awakened appeared.

They looked like godly superhumans that overturned the desperate situation.

Communication with the city was restored.

People have come to know about the somewhat absurd, but very mysterious, facts of Tutorials and the Hundred Gods.

Meanwhile, Lim Seong-hyun's eschatology lost its mystery day by day.

So Lim Seong-Hyun chose to deify the Awakened.

The Awakened claimed to be the guide of choice by the gods.

He insisted that someday, the strongest and greatest guides would come down to the world to lead people to heaven with himself as the revelator.

And the most powerful guide was Lee Ho-jae.

In fact, Lim Seong-hyun chose Lee Ho-jae because he was unlikely to come out of the Tutorial.

But Lee Hojae eventually came out.

He really has to close his business now. But then, good news came when he was agonizing whether he should close his business.

Lee Ho-jae's progress had been extraordinary.

He appeared in an endless explosion.

Fighting G-class all over the world alone.

And he did not even contact the media the whole time he was doing it.

It was a move that perfectly fit the ideal guide of Lim Sung-hyun's pseudo-religion.

Lastly, Lee Ho-jae was not very negative about his pseudo-group.

As soon as they got in touch, he said 'let's meet in Seoul and talk'.

Afterwards, he said he was like his family, and that he was going to send a representative to discuss the future with him.

"Is this really okay?"

Asked the subordinate priest.

This kid stretched and contracted like a rubber band.

“Of course. I already got a reply.”

Several times, he sent emails to Kim Minhyuk asking if the pseudo-organization he was running offended Lee Ho-jae...

Kim Min-hyuk confirmed the number of believers and said that Lee Ho-jae was also surprised and delighted when he mentioned that the current number of members exceeded 4,000.

Lim Seong-hyun was confident in his ability to deal with the Awakened.

He often invited the Awakened by running pseudo-groups.

Of course, most were third-rate Awakened.

Apart from the C-class, most were Awakened with D-class ranks or lower.

Most were Awakened who committed crimes, left the city and wandered around the suburbs.

They were violent and dangerous, but Lim Seong-hyun controlled them without difficulty.

The Awakened were all drunk with power.

They had a sense of superiority that they were different from the others.

The sense of reward that this kind of treatment was right for them as they gained power through hard work was what convinced them to join.

He just needed to match it appropriately and satisfy their desires.

The Awakened called Lee Ho-jae was not much different.

“Are the other kids ready?”

The subordinate priest nodded with a sordid smile.

“What about Miyoung?”

“She said she didn’t want to die.”

“That’s not good.”

Some women are easily deceived by their authority as revelators and fanatical doctrines, but there are also women who sometimes refuse the requests of the priests.

“Emmy and Abby were all third-degree believers, right?”

The third degree believers were a special class.

In the words of the priests, believers are people who have been brainwashed enough to enter a fire pit.

“Bring her in and ask her to persuade Miyoung. It’s urgent.”

Soon, the representative of the leader will come.

He doesn’t know exactly what that representative is.

The future of the church is different depending on how Lee Ho-jae thinks and treats the church.

Everything needed to be prepared.

“But is it really okay, hyung? I’m honestly a little scared. Why don’t we just run away now?”

Lim Seunghyun frowned and said,

“Shut up, you coward, scared, tired. The Awakened are humans, just

like us. There's nothing to be afraid of."

Chapter 333

Hongcheon (2)

“Aigoo, those bastards again.”

The old man who was quietly eating the egg got angry.

The yolk popped out of his mouth and got stuck on the back of Hochi’s hand

‘Uh..... ’

Hochi wiped the back of his hand and looked up, following the gaze of the old man.

While the train had not yet started, a man came into the train car and made a ruckus.

“Please believe! Come and find the light before the coming end! Enjoy eternal life!”

It was a believer from the pseudo-religion.

The people on the train frowned because of the man’s loud voice.

Aside from spouting nonsense, the passengers were displeased because the man was talking in a loud voice.

The man who had been preaching about the “Hell of Disbelief” a moment ago suddenly lowered his voice when he spotted a female student sitting in front of him.

“Hey, are you a student?”

“Y-yes...?”

“Hmm, just by looking at you, I could tell that you are blessed with good fortune.”

What the hell is that?

Hochi was worried for a moment.

“But I could feel that your energy is under pressure. Things aren’t going well for you these days, right? That’s because your energy’s compressed. If you have time, come have a little chat with me once we arrive at the station.”

That man must be a pseudo.

The girl, whose arm was held by the man, was confused and could not push him away.

The man began to explain to the girl and sat beside her as if she were expecting him to sit with him from the start.

“Now, look at this brochure. This is our church in Hongcheon.....”

The girl couldn’t say anything as the man carried on.

Is she just scared, or is she embarrassed?

Probably fed up with what they were hearing, several passengers suddenly started talking aloud,

“That’s a load of shit! F*** you!”

“Girl, don’t follow him. If you follow that, then you’ll end up throwing away your money.”

The passengers’ angry voices poured out from around them.

Embarrassed at being called out, the man who was talking while

holding onto the girl escaped with a dejected expression.

Hochi thought about it for a moment.

People around her helped her on the train, but what if it were a place with few people?

Would that girl be able to get rid of the pseudo?

It might be a more dangerous pseudo than I thought.

The pseudo-man moved toward the back of the car, avoiding the glares of the people around him.

Hochi made eye contact with the man as he walked down the alley.

[Lee Deoksam]

Age: 37

Status: Lee Ho-jae Faith (tentative name), 4th degree priest

– Produces 0pt of faith every month.

– Does not have any faith.

-Contributes greatly to the recruitment of new members of the denomination.

-One of the causes that is degrading the church's reputation.

-One of the pillars of the Church's business.

-A multi-level operator.

-Recommended to be expelled from the denomination or punished as an example.

‘...Was it the Lee Ho-jae Faith?’

He was wondering if it was a pseudo he ran into on the way to Gangwon-do.

He didn’t know it was really the Lee Ho Jae Faith.

“Excuse me.....”

The man named Lee Deok-sam suddenly lowered his posture and spoke.

Hochi looked at him surprised to see if he had recognized him, but the person Lee Deok-sam was talking to was not Hochi.

“Your mouth is so plump. You have a blessed face. By the way...”

He was talking to the mantis who was eating a peanut in the seat next to Hochi.

The mantis looked at Lee Deok-sam with wide, open eyes.

At that time, an egg shell flew onto Lee Deok-sam’s face.

“Go away!”

The old man sitting next to Hochi threw the remainder of the egg shells in his hand.

Lee Deok-sam, who was struck by an egg shell to his face, shook off the shell on his face with a harsh expression, and then fled.

“Ah-hyo, those rotten bastards.”

When the man went to the next car at the back of the train, the old man cursed again.

Hochi was speechless for a while.

Then he asked the old man a question.

“Did you know about that pseudo?”

“Everybody knows. They’re famous these days. Those guys are very dramatic.”

Hochi wanted to sigh.

Somehow, things might be more troublesome than he thought.

He asked the old man again.

“It’s not about taking innocent kids like before, joining the denomination and asking for money. The problem is that some people really believe their words and become believers.”

“Is there anyone who really believes in that?”

Of course, through the Faith Window, he could check the number of faith and believers received by the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

However, he didn’t think that there would be anyone who wanted to become a believer from what the man was talking about earlier.

“It’s what people in the countryside believe. When the monsters appeared, people became isolated.”

After the appearance of the monsters, the rural people were cut off from civilization for many years without knowing the cause of the sudden appearance of monsters or the many things happening in the world.

They just gathered in the countryside and lived in hiding.

After the Awakened appeared, the situation gradually calmed down, and only after the contact network was restored were the people able to hear detailed explanations.

The explanation they heard at that time was so absurd.

The strange world of Tutorials, the ordeal of the gods, and the unknown monsters.

When the confusion was aggravated by the unorganized information, a person appeared to stir up their confusion.

Those who show the power of the Awakened introduced them as guides from heaven.

The people in the countryside were infatuated with their mysterious abilities, hoping for safety from monsters that they promised.

“...Yes, well, that’s plausible.”

From Hochi’s point of view, it wasn’t a story that deeply resonated with him.

Humans would be able to do that.

“I don’t believe it. Do you know how many Awakened I saw in Seoul? They eat, they poop, they’re scared of monsters just like us.”

The old man responded with a snort.

Then he lowered his voice and whispered.

“And by the way, one of my friends joined that pseudo.”

“That pseudo?”

“Yes, do you know what that cult worships?”

“What do they worship?”

Hochi asked.

“There’s an Awakened named Lee Ho-jae who came out a while ago, and they worship that Awakened like a god. They display his pictures and pray and bow before it. My friend didn’t say it was weird. Aish, crazy guys.”

“Ah.....”

He’s right.

“They’re serving the Awakened who is doing well in Seoul. That Awakened probably doesn’t even know that there is such a cult.”

No.

He knows there is a pseudo.

Hochi wanted to tell him the truth.

However, it was difficult to explain anything, and he quit because he thought he would be treated as a pseudo too.

Hochi tried to organize his thoughts for a moment.

To the rural people who had been isolated for many years, the Awakened would certainly seem like divine beings.

Even after finding out about the Tutorial and the Hundred Gods, they still will.

It would sound like a story of a warrior who had been chosen by God to be tested and returned to Earth to save them.

It wasn’t really far from the truth.

Even if the Lee Ho-jae Faith continues to operate that way, there will be no major problems.

Rather, it would be easier to understand that Lee Ho-jae is a guide or a revelator than to say that he is really a god.

It will be easy to accept.

However, it was said that scammers ran the faith.

The scammers are people who will sell anything if it makes them money.

Unsurprisingly, they seemed to run a faith without considering Lee Ho-jae at all.

And perhaps because of that, people's perception of the Lee Ho-jae Faith became bad.

'This is going to be troublesome.'

People's perceptions are solid.

Their impression of the pseudo believers as idiots will not change easily.

Those who believe this are unlikely to become believers.

The image of the Faith needs to be renewed.

The best way to change people's perceptions is for Lee Ho-jae to work miracles as a god.

But that was Lee Ho-jae's job, and it wasn't the job entrusted to Hochi.

How can we change their perception of the denomination?

Is it possible to change their perception while maintaining the framework of the religion that idolizes the Awakened?

He was skeptical.

“Now, the Revelator’s agent is visiting the church for the first time. Let’s show him our sincerity!”

“Yes!”

Im Seong-hyun smiled as he saw the believers responding to him with a loud voice.

The congregation gathered here were all second degree or higher.

So a friendly smile was bound to come out.

In order to become a member of the second level or higher, they had to make a substantial donation to the denomination or devote themselves to the priesthood.

“Okay then, let’s get ready to welcome him!”

“Yes!”

The believers replied, singing in a chorus.

Lim Seong-hyun kept himself from snickering.

It was disgusting that old people responded with bright voices like kindergarteners.

He sent out the members and sat on his chair.

All of the members were in the midst of preparing for the welcoming event, but it was not something he should help with.

He leaned against the back of his chair and closed his eyes for a short nap.

“Hyung.”

As the surroundings became quiet, a subordinate priest approached.

He was wondering what kind of grievance the guy who had been talking about being anxious or scared a few days ago would be complaining about this time.

It was annoying, but he couldn't completely ignore it.

Lim Seong-hyun asked with his eyes closed.

“What?”

“Let's just run away.”

“Do you want to get your ass kicked?”

Lim Seong-hyun got up from his seat, feeling the momentary rush of anger.

He just couldn't understand.

Life has finally come to an end, but what kind of escape is running away?

“Hey, do you know how much money we're making? If you keep going for 3 years like this, we will be playing and eating forever. You can live while pretending to be the head of the church for the rest of your life.”

“No... Brother, it's not that I don't know that.”

“Then what is it?”

The subordinate priest hesitated and said,

“I looked into it, but there are some rumors of the person named Lee Ho-jae... Strange. I think he is a little different from what is known.”

He knows about Lee Ho-jae.

In fact, any Korean knows.

In the past, Lee Hojae's documentary was always shown when you turned on the TV.

In times of despair, the media and the government tried to give people hope by selling Lee Ho-jae's name.

Thanks to that, his religion had grown this much, so of course he knew a lot about Lee Ho-Jae.

“What is it?”

“He's kind of... an asshole. But just a bit.”

Lim Seong-hyun smiled.

None of the Awakened he met were not a fool.

“There is also a story that he killed a lot of people.....”

Lim Seong-hyun put his arm around the shoulders of the subordinate priest.

So what if he killed people?

All the Awakened he had met so far were criminals.

“Hey, it's fine. What do you think those crazy guys want?”

“Hyung...”

“Power? Money? What?”

Lim Seong-hyun crossed his hands and clapped loudly.

“You think that crazy guy would hate selling his name?”

Bam bam!

A rough knock sounded.

Soon a member of the congregation entered.

“Guardian! He has arrived! But.....!”

The believer’s face was white as a sheet.

Chapter 334

60th floor (19)

“What is inside of all that luggage you packed, Yong-yong?”

Yong-Yong did not answer and just laughed.

It was strange.

It was obvious that Yong-yong attached space warping magic to the backpack he was carrying.

That bag looks so full, just what in the world did he stuff in it?

“Are you going to take it to your room?”

“Yeah.”

I guess there were a lot of interesting things he saw for the first time on Earth.

Yong-yong has always been taking strange things or things he had never seen before to his room.

“Hey, wouldn’t it be better if you stayed on Earth?”

I asked Kim Min-hyuk.

In fact, there was no reason for Kim Min-hyuk to come with us to the 60th floor.

“No, I’m going to go there.”

It seems that I placed too much stress on Kim Min-hyuk.

He had several chances, but he kept himself from diving and avoiding work ever since he joined us.

“Let’s put this soup in my sub-space. It will cool down.”

I received the packaged soup, rice, and side dishes from Kim Minhyuk and put it in my inventory.

I succeeded in connecting the 60th floor to the portal and had a chance to meet Lee Yeon-hee’s parents before going there.

Unlike my family who all disappeared or died, everyone in Lee Yeon-hee’s family was alive and well.

They were even living a decent life by receiving subsidies from the government.

However, even though they were living in abundance, they were sad that they have not seen their daughter in 10 years.

Lee Yeon-hee’s parents asked me to deliver their homemade pork soup to her when I said I would go to the 60th floor later to meet her.

During our conversation, I learned that her parents had been selling pork soup before. And because of that, Lee Yeon-hee ate a lot of pork soup during her childhood.

“Let’s go when we’re ready.”

“Huh. What am I supposed to do? Should I drink some potions?”

Kim Minhyuk asked.

“You just need to stay still like when you’re going into a Tutorial portal.”

Kim Min-hyuk somehow got a little anxious and climbed the portal.

I also stood on the portal holding Yong-yong’s hand.

“Why, Seregia, do you want me to hold your hand too?”

“No thanks.”

Seregia, who hesitated for a while, climbed the portal a beat later.

“Then move.”

* * *

[You have entered the 60th floor.]

“Oh, is this the 60th floor?”

Asked Kim Minhyuk.

“It’s completely different from the 60th floor in normal difficulty.”

“Of course. I did a few remodeling.”

Because I smashed it in a fit of anger.

I had to do some major reconstruction work four or five times, not including the countless small repairs here and there.

There were also many new things that have been created since Yong-yong became interested in architecture.

Anyway,

“It’s been a long time since I’ve been here.”

I have been on Earth for only two months, but I feel like I’ve been gone for a year.

I scratched my chin.

Even though it was a place where I previously struggled to leave, I

never expected that I would feel like I was back home once we returned.

“Yeah! It’s been a long time!”

Yong-yong answered.

It’s been a while since we’ve been home, so he was pretty excited.

I could literally feel Yong-yong’s heartbeat from his little hand that was holding onto mine.

“Dad, I’m going to my room.”

“Okay.”

Yong-yong excitedly flew to his room.

Was it in that direction?

From Yong-yong’s point of view, this was literally and truly his home, so his reaction was only natural.

“Where is Yong-yong’s room?”

Asked Kim Min-hyuk.

He seemed to be wondering where Yong-yong had gone.

“There.”

“There?”

“No, it’s the one at the top.”

Kim Minhyuk asked with a quizzical expression.

“But... that’s a tower, right? It’s a tower. That’s, crazy. I thought it

was some kind of background.”

Yong-yong’s room is a little big.

It may be difficult to recognize because it cannot be easily seen at a glance.

“It’s not really that big, it’s just the space distortion magic... Seregia! Where are you going!?”

Meanwhile Seregia, who was next to him, was quietly heading in a different direction.

Seregia disappeared without answering.

When I looked at the direction she went to, I noticed that she headed for the barriers.

Seregia spent a long time becoming an energy source for the barriers as a great sword.

Maybe Seregia feels like the inside the barrier was her room.

Sigh.

Yong-yong and Seregia quickly left for their rooms after arriving.

I wish Hochi had come with me.

“Let’s go to my room first.”

“Is your room like that tower?”

But before that, there was someone I had to take care of first.

There. There was a woman hiding among the buildings in the residential area who was quietly observing us.

It was Lee Yeon-hee.

“Ah, uncle?... Are you really uncle?”

* * *

“Waaahhh.”

“Eat slowly, a little. Rest and eat later.”

Lee Yeon-hee was literally pouring out tears like a waterfall while eating the soup.

It was a grim sight, but on the other hand, it was also unhygienic.

If she keeps, her tears and the mucus from her nose would fall into the soup.

I forced Lee Yeon-hee to hold a towel in her hand (a small handkerchief or tissue paper wasn't enough to handle), wipe her face first, and eat the soup.

“Have you calmed down?”

“...Yes.”

Lee Yeon-hee said after wiping her face continuously with the towel.

In that short time of crying, her eyes and nose became very red.

“Is the soup that delicious?”

Lee Yeon-hee was anxious and scared when she saw me on the 60th floor.

Honestly, I thought she would be a little happy, so I was embarrassed.

First, I tried to warm up the mood by letting her eat the soup and

talking slowly.

And as soon as Lee Yeon-hee put the soup in her mouth, she started crying.

“Yeah... It’s very good...”

Lee Yeon-hee, who answered that it was delicious and ate the soup again, began to sob again.

This is driving me crazy.

I reluctantly put the spoon down.

Lee Yeon-hee’s parents prepared plenty of soup so that me and Kim Min-hyuk could also eat it.

I was also looking forward to eating soup because it’s been a long time.

But I lost my appetite upon watching Lee Yeon-Hee sobbing like that.

She wasn’t just crying, she was completely sobbing while shoving soup in her mouth at the same time.

“Is it really that delicious? I’ve had much more delicious food from the Tutorial shop than the food from Earth.”

I muttered quietly.

Kim Min-hyuk, who was sitting next to me, kicked me in the leg.

As I looked right at him, Kim Min-hyuk turned his head and pretended not to know.

Even though it was Lee Yeon-hee who was supposed to be sad, I could also feel my chest tightening a little.

Her emotion at that time was something that I was familiar with.

All members of my family had died or gone missing.

And by the time I entered the Tutorial, they were completely out of the picture.

So in a way, I could understand Lee Yeon-hee's feelings.

Her case wasn't like mine, but Lee Yeon-hee was also trapped for a long time.

She was alone.

It must have been even harder for her after being trapped on the 60th floor.

It's only been two months, but an isolated person will naturally become unaware of the passage of time.

But in the midst of all this, as soon as she felt the taste of the food her parents used to serve her when she was a child, tears welled up in her eyes.

Lee Yeon-hee's goal was to return to Earth.

I understood her because I knew how much she wanted to see her family again.

I felt sorry for her again.

"Lee Yeon-hee."

I called Lee Yeon-hee while keeping my voice from cracking.

Lee Yeon-hee raised her head, which had been plunged into the bowl, and looked at me with teary eyes.

"Your mother's soup is delicious, right?"

Lee Yeon-hee nodded.

“You’re thankful I brought it to you, right?”

Lee Yeon-hee nodded.

“Aren’t you lucky to be my apostle? If you had refused, you wouldn’t have been able to eat that soup.”

Lee Yeon-hee nodded her head repeatedly.

I also nodded with a warm smile.

Hahaha.

“Yes, yes, eat a lot. Slow down and eat a lot. Let’s talk about it later after we’ve finished eating.”

From the side, Kim Min-hyuk looked at me with disgust, but I ignored it.

This is really important.

Lee Yeon-hee was an important resource in many ways.

It’s good to score points when she’s not alert.

“Auntie, don’t cry.”

Before I knew it, Yong-yong had sat on Lee Yeon-hee’s lap and started patting her.

Lee Yeon-hee embraced Yong-yong unconsciously and began to cry again.

Don’t ignore me.

It looked like Lee Yeon-Hee kidnapped Yong-Yong and used him as a hostage.

When the emotions are so intense, the head does not work rationally.

Yong-yong gave Lee Yeon-hee a small pat.

Such a sight would warm anyone's heart.

Yong-yong did not panic and hugged Lee Yeon-hee tightly and patted her back.

I guess it's a good thing I packed the soup.

I was worried about how to make up with Lee Yeon-Hee and get closer at first, but this seemed to be a good opportunity to move on.

Although Kim Min-hyuk was looking at me like he wanted to say a lot of things, I decided to ignore it.

* * *

"At first, I thought it was a hallucination."

"What, us?"

"Yes....."

When Lee Yeon-hee saw us on the 60th floor, she thought she was seeing hallucinations.

"I have been alone for too long... As I keep thinking the same thing all along, I've always felt like I could see what I was thinking....."

I nodded.

I know what it's like.

I've been through it a few times.

"Thank you for doing the work I asked you to do. Had it not been for

the signal you sent here, it would have taken me more time to reach the 60th floor.”

“Yes...”

Lee Yeon-hee nodded.

Still, her complexion looked a little better than when I first saw her.

“By the way, uncle.”

“Uh, what?”

“Are you not going to kill me?”

I paused at the calm question.

I think you asked a similar question before.

“Why would I kill you?”

“...because I’m now useless?”

The biggest reason for leaving Lee Yeon-hee as an apostle on the 60th floor was to easily connect the 60th floor to the Earth.

Do you think we don’t need you anymore because you’ve already fulfilled that role?

“Do I look like someone who just kills you once you are useless?”

“Yes.....”

It was a cold judgment.

“I even betrayed you and... I don’t think you’re going to let go of the one who turned their back on you.”

In the past, Lee Yeon-hee quietly asked if I would kill her on the 61st floor.

However, looking at her actions, it was not like she was a person without regrets in life.

I was curious about her psychology.

“I was betrayed, but the truth is that I betrayed you first. It couldn’t be helped, and as a matter of fact, you couldn’t help it either.

If I had to argue, my fault was bigger than Lee Yeon-hee’s.

I expected Lee Yeon-hee’s betrayal, helped, and even induced it.

Of course, I didn’t mean that someone should apologize because the other did worse.

She meant that she had no intention of talking about the crime because of her fault.

“Although I was an enemy.”

And this was the most important.

“I won anyway, right?”

“Is that so.”

Lee Yeon-hee asked again.

“So I’m not an enemy anymore?”

“Right.”

Lee Yeon-hee quietly nodded.

Her body froze, without even a fine movement.

However, I could see her muscles relax.

On the surface, it didn't show at all.

Certainly, Lee Yeon-hee had excellent talent.

In fact, it was obvious.

Although I also lent her a hand, she climbed up to the 60th floor of Hell difficulty on her own.

If anyone could do it, I would have cleared the Tutorial 10 years ago, not two months ago.

I told Lee Yeon Hee about my future plans.

Previously, I've given her clues little by little, but I never spoke openly.

"I am taking over the Tutorial from the gods."

"Well... Looking at the 61st floor... It doesn't seem impossible at all," sighing, Lee Yeon-hee responded.

"Have you been there?"

"Yes."

She had been to the 61st floor, and it seems like she has met my followers.

Seeing that she was alone on the 60th floor, it seems that she was not accepted even though she met them.

"As an apostle, I wondered if you really needed me."

Maybe that's why they didn't accept her upon their meeting and the reason why Lee Yeon-hee thought I was going to kill her.

“I need you.”

I will be taking over the Tutorial from the Hundred Gods’ Temple, effectively removing the time rewind that was applied to the Tutorial stage and preventing the dead and the destroyed land from coming back.

That was my goal.

However, if left alone, most of the Tutorial stages will be destroyed immediately.

I didn’t mean to bring the Tutorial world to ruin according to the order.

I wanted to overcome the crisis and face a new future.

“So that’s my role. So you’re saying that I will be God’s apostle who will save the worlds on the verge of destruction, is that it?”

“Yes. In fact, it won’t be much different from the stage mission in the Tutorial. The difference is, unlike before, when you didn’t have to worry about the future after you cleared it, you have to keep the future in mind.”

It’s not a recurring time, but a whole new future.

“I will give you the best treatment as an apostle. After the Tutorial is completely handed over to me, you will be able to go to Earth and see your family whenever you have time. Of course, on the premise that you do your job well.”

Lee Yeon-hee asked me after worrying for a while,

“...Why me?”

“What do you mean, why?”

“That’s something other people can do, even if it’s not me. Why do

you want to entrust that job to me... May I ask why?"

I was silent for a moment.

I was expecting Lee Yeon-hee to drop her passive attitude.

However, the word 'something other people could do' was not easy to handle.

In the past, Lee Yeon-hee was an irreplaceable, must-have existence for me.

I gave her all my expectations and attention.

Lee Yeon-hee also tried to live up to my expectations without feeling too uncomfortable about it.

"Because I need you."

I decided to be as honest as possible.

"Because you are more like me than anyone else, in judgement and even actions. I taught you that, but you grew up that way too. So I think I can entrust the Tutorial world to you. Because I can trust your judgment there."

I was serious.

Her judgment did not differ much from my judgment.

Although there were differences, depending on the situation, Lee Yeon-Hee's judgment could have been better than mine.

I remember every decision that Lee Yoon-hee made as she went through the different stages.

When she first encountered life on the 4th floor and a civilized species.

When she was isolated on the 6th floor and faced despair.

The first time she encountered an enemy who showed her favor on the 13th floor.

On the 16th floor, where she was able to meet some weird but funny friends.

The judgments on the 20th floor where the enemies who looked disgusting and looked ugly appeared.

Stages on the 40th floor where you had to deal with various kinds of monsters and the stages on the 50th floor where you had to lead people as an apostle.

After that, even when the number of communication with Lee Yeon-hee decreased.

I've been keeping a close eye on how she cleared the stages.

I also gave advice accordingly.

Remembering all of her steps in those messages, I was able to trust her future judgments.

“And above all,”

It's not about competence.

“We went through the hardest time together.”

Even though it was a conversation that I couldn't see before and exchanged only through letters and messages.

In the days when every second was like hell.

With Lee Yeon-hee, I could see the future and live.

“I'll do it, I'll become uncle's apostle.”

Chapter 335

Tutorial Level 60 (20)

“How surprising.”

Kirikiri said.

“What?”

“Hihing.....”

Kirikiri didn’t answer and scratched her ear.

Unlike humans who can scratch their ears simply by raising their hands, Kirikiri had to stretch her arms high in the sky to scratch her ears.

It looked pretty uncomfortable.

Eventually, Kirikiri scratched her ear more comfortably after pulling her ear down to the front of her face.

“Do you have any fleas or something?”

“I do not!”

Kirikiri cried out.

It’s because you keep scratching your furry ears that I thought there were bugs.

Kirikiri glanced at me as if she was angry at my words, snorted and then sighed.

I guess asking her whether she had fleas or not was worse than I thought.

Is it because it's Suin?*

Usually when you ask humans if they have fleas, it's just because they're dirty enough to have it or they don't wash up...

Well, it might be upsetting though.

“Apologise!”

“Yes, yes, I apologise. I'm sorry.”

“Tsk.....”

Kirikiri seemed less relaxed, but she didn't say anything after I apologized.

“But what's surprising?”

I decided to change the topic.

Kirikiri unwittingly tried to scratch her ear again at my question, but noticed it and hurriedly lowered her arm.

Instead, while fiddling with her cheeks, she said,

“I didn't know how Hoojaee would say that.”

That?

“Are you referring to what I told Lee Yeon-hee earlier?”

“Hmm.”

Kirikiri had been with us since we entered the 60th floor.

It was just that she was hiding from Lee Yeon-hee, saying she would be angry with her.

“You must have thought that I would kill Yeon-hee Lee too.”

“Hmm.”

Kirikiri curtly replied.

I was wondering how close my impression of Kirikiri was.

“Oh my god, I’m so disappointed.”

I tried to imitate Kirikiri’s tone.

“Don’t.”

Kirikiri said with a sharp look.

Honestly, it didn’t look so scary.

“Alright, I won’t. Sorry.”

“.....”

After a quick apology, Kirikiri couldn’t say much again.

I found a new strategy.

But it’s better not to overdo it.

If I cross a certain line, she would lose confidence in my words and would treat whatever I say as a joke...

“It was really surprising. It wasn’t that you didn’t kill Yeon-hee, but that you would say such a thing to her I do know that Hooojae would get along with people like him, though.”

I nodded.

Kirikiri knows me so well.

I was once her enemy, but we got along after we ceased to be enemies.

It was because most of the people I met were either an outright enemy or someone from the Tutorial Stages that was supposed to be an enemy.

So there were only a few people in the Tutorial that I could talk to and connect with.

“I also knew that you cared for Lee Yeon-hee’s ability.”

Kirikiri showed me the letters Lee Yeon-hee had exchanged with me in the past, and discussed the replies I sent.

“But I didn’t know how to persuade the two of you to talk about your bond.”

Was that so surprising?

“And the HooooJaaee I know wouldn’t lie about that.”

“Yeah, I meant it.”

In fact, my relationship with Lee Yeon-hee was a bit complex.

The time we spent together was too short for us to be considered family or friends.

It was more appropriate to say that she was a colleague or a disciple.

I couldn’t exactly tell what kind of connection we had, but I was sure it was a deep relationship anyway.

At least I thought so.

I believe Lee Yeon-hee would think the same way too.

“I don’t know if HoooJaae... I didn’t think you would know the importance of family and colleagues.”

Kirikiri said, and eventually pulled her ear down and scratched it.

“Instead, I knew that you thought such bonds would be a weakness, standing in the way of you achieving your goals.”

I told Lee Yeon-hee about our bond and that I needed her for that.

This is an important matter

At least for Kirikiri.

“It used to think so too.”

In the past, I valued friends and other relationships, but I certainly considered their existence as a weakness, and it made a gap in my mind.

Nevertheless, I didn’t let go of them because they were so precious, but I was anxious that I would forget my goal because of the divided attention. As a result, I distanced myself from them to some extent.

“Is it different now?”

I nodded at Kirikiri’s question.

In the end, it was not myself, but others who helped me endure the 60th floor.

Park Jung-ah, who helped me keep me sane every day.

Lee Yeon-hee, who made it possible to see the future again.

Hochi and Yongyong, who became my family.

And from start to finish, Seregia, who trusted me and waited for me.

Thanks to those around me, I was able to withstand my trials and go further.

It was a cheesy and embarrassing story, but I honestly told Kirikiri my thoughts.

Kirikiri said with a bright smile,

“That’s a good thing.”

A snort came out when she laughed.

“The God of Slowness must be upset. Hi hi.”

Does that even matter?

I was dumbfounded and just laughed out loud.

* * *

“You’re leaving?”

“Hmm.”

Kirikiri nodded.

“Why don’t you go see Lee Yeon-hee after she wakes up?”

Lee Yeon-hee, who was crying while eating soup, fell asleep as soon as she calmed down a little.

I wouldn’t be able to sleep just like that if it were me.

“No.”

Too bad.

I guess it was still awkward for her to face Lee Yeon-hee.

I thought about another way to persuade Kirikiri.

“No wonder when you’re here, I feel like someone is stealing my power little by little.”

Gosh.

So sharp.

“Then... it can’t be helped. Goodbye.”

“Hihing, goodbye. People will be summoned here in about 5 minutes.”

Kirikiri disappeared from the 60th floor after informing me.

I opened the message window after a long time.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: Jung-ah, are you ready?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th floor: Yeah.]

The answer came from Park Jung-ah.

Somehow, her responses had gotten shorter again.

I was a little nervous.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th floor: It will start now.]

Soon, all tutorial challengers from the Earth server will be summoned to the 60th floor.

Originally, such a thing was not possible.

But the Earth was now my territory, not the Hundred Gods Temple’s.

Of course, it was an act of authority to run a Tutorial for the people of the Earth for the Hundred Gods Temple.

It was also an invasion against my territory.

I agreed with Kirikiri's proposal to bring Earth's Tutorial challengers back to Earth through the 60th floor.

[Stop all tutorial stages on the Earth server.]

[The qualifications of the challengers on the Earth server will be requalified.]

[The challengers of the Earth server are forcibly moved to the outer dimension 'HX60'.]

That 'XH60' was the name of the 60th floor, which was no longer a Tutorial stage.

Whether it was because of the sudden system message or the opening of a new dimensional link, Lee Yeon-hee, who was sleeping earlier, suddenly woke up and alertly observed her surroundings.

I roughly explained the situation to her.

Soon after that, people began to be summoned to the 60th floor.

There were people who gathered quickly looking for a face they knew, and others were wandering looking for someone while trembling.

There was less confusion than I thought.

Well, they have stayed in the residential area for two months, so they've probably heard of this situation in advance through the system messages, that's why there wasn't much confusion when they finally had to move to the 60th floor...

There were also some people who were on bad terms, so some of them were raising their voices at each other.

It was noisy.

Somehow, when a thousand units of people were suddenly summoned in one place, it was bound to be crowded.

I decided to ignore it for now.

Rather, as soon as she was summoned, I had to accept that a woman was running fiercely at me.

Bomph!

“Ugh!”

Park Jung-ah crashed into my body and screamed against my chest.

Fortunately, she did not pass out after making contact with my body...

Otherwise, Park Jung-ah would have been in a shape similar to minced meat by now.

“I’ve adjusted my strength as much as I can.”

Park Jung-ah didn’t say anything and stayed still while she pressed her face against my chest and hung from my body.

“Let me see your face. It’s been 10 years since we’ve met, let’s see your face.”

Park Jung-ah did not raise her head.

She didn’t even answer.

Instead, she started to poke her fingers tightly on my side.

“What are you doing?”

“In the past, when I pressed here, you would flinch and get ticklish.”

Umm.....

There is no way I'll react to such a thing now.

"Maybe after you became a god, your senses became dull."

What's she trying to say?

"Or you have been freed from your mortal troubles and became liberated, or your sexual desire was... No, that's not it....."

"No, I'm still healthy. It's normal."

I replied in annoyance.

Was Jung-ah always like this?

Yes, her personality was just as I remembered...

However, becoming a god does not mean that desire disappears.

Rather, they just cling to you more blindly.

Park Jung-ah was still not raising her head.

I wrapped my arms around her shoulders and hugged her.

Then I felt her trembling more clearly.

"Jung-ah."

It was always like this.

Park Jung-ah always pretended to be bold.

She looked bolder and more brutal while trying to hide her weakness.

Knowing her for a long time, I quietly waited for her to say

something.

“.....Are your feelings still the same, or...”

I guess that's what you really wanted to ask.

Too much has happened in the meantime, and too long has passed.

I could understand where her anxiety was coming from.

It was because I had that anxiety too.

“If, if so, then, tell me now.”

“No.”

I was able to give a definite answer.

Park Jung-ah spoke again after being silent for a while.

“...you've kept me waiting for too long. Did you ever want to see me again?”

The last time I met Park Jung-ah was before I was trapped on the 60th floor.

At the third contest.

That was 11 years ago.

“I've always wanted to see you again.”

I said honestly.

Hoping that my true feelings would be conveyed.

“And...”

I was always sorry for Park Jung-ah.

Even now, when I see her being so anxious.

But selfishly, on the other hand, I was also happy.

“Thank you for waiting.”

I knew that the reason Park Jung-ah remained in the Tutorial was to wait for me.

She reached the 90th floor a long time ago, but now she doesn't have to worry about the Order of Vigilance anymore.

When she left first, she was waiting, worrying about me.

Only then did Park Jung-ah step back away from me.

As she wiped away tears from her eyes, she smiled as if she were relieved.

“Hah, I should've asked you the truth before; I hesitated for no reason.”

Park Jung-ah quickly regained her gallant attitude.

It was good to see.

The image of her that I remember from the past remained the same.

In fact, her appearance almost didn't seem to change at all, so it was even more so.

“What do you think after seeing my face ten years later?”

“It's good. And...”

Park Jung-ah stood up for a while and said ‘umm...’

“It’s awkward.”

Then she grinned.

I couldn’t help but chuckle.

It had been so long since I’ve seen her, but I did not feel uncomfortable around her at all.

I did notice some changes from what I remembered of her, but those were natural changes that occurred over time; changes that we never observed from each other, or indirectly heard through the messages we exchanged.

“Thank you, and I’m sorry.”

This is what I said when I relayed a message through Hochi.

I also said it several times through my messages, but I wanted to see her face and say it again.

“Me too.”

Park Jung-ah replied and hugged me tightly again.

As we hugged for a while, Park Jung-ah smiled.

As if she were showing someone.

Park Jung-ah placed her face over my shoulder, away from my sight.

However, even if I didn’t dare to look directly, I could see everything around me.

Park Jung-ah, who hugged me tightly, was smiling over my shoulder, looking at Lee Yeon-hee who was standing behind me.

Lee Yeon-hee was staring straight into Park Jung-ah’s eyes without looking away.

With a scary look.

This... this situation is a little difficult.

* * *

I excused myself from Park Jung-ah for a moment.

My reunion with her was important, but I couldn't leave the rest of the humans in a mess.

"Now, be quiet. Focus here."

At my word, everyone's mouths closed in unison.

I climbed on the platform in the square and explained the situation to them.

Let's see how they'll react.

"From now on, you can only say what you need. Or when you're being questioned."

The order that only necessary words could be spoken was useful in many ways.

Anyone who tried to ask useless or redundant questions were unable to open their mouths.

"Are we going back to Earth?"

Someone asked.

I'm sorry, but you're not.

"No."

I took these people over from the Hundred Gods Temple.

So their fate now laid in my hands.

They were a usable manpower, and I needed manpower now.

They believed that I would be returning them home, but there was no such thing.

“Unfortunately, you have not completed all the Tutorials, so it means that your training is not yet over. In the future, it won’t be in the Tutorial, you’re going to go somewhere else for training.”

After that training, they may be able to return to Earth.

At least, they may during the holiday season.

“That... Is the training dangerous?”

It was a very sharp question.

“Yes, it’s dangerous.”

I told him the truth.

The expressions of the numerous challengers gathered in the square suddenly darkened.

My training will be dangerous.

It will be difficult too.

However, there was no risk of losing one’s life.

Their reward will also be certain.

All the men who have gone through my training have grown enough to do their part wherever they go.

I’ve said it many times, but the only exception is Hochi.

“Hey... I’m a challenger on the 99th floor of hard difficulty. Isn’t that enough to deserve to return to Earth without having to retrain?”

“Shut up.”

I ignored the unfavorable question.

It was a little coercive, but I had no intention of dealing with them.

I will pay them enough compensation.

To the extent that I think they would do well to be with me in the future.

[Call]

“Huh?”

I’ve been explaining to the challengers for a while, but I got a call signal.

There was only one person who would call me this way.

It was a call signal from Hochi, who was left on Earth.

Hochi was calling me.

Translator’s Notes:

Suin*: hybrid beast

Chapter 336

Hongcheon (3)

The sound of the *janggu* and the *bok* drums** were noisy.

Fireworks soared into the sky, and the people holding hands began to sing.

It was a song about praising the great leader Lee Ho-jae and the stories of the believers who were waiting for him.

The lyrics were too explicit, childish, and cringey for Hochi to bear.

When he heard the section that praised Lee Ho-jae's past heroics, Hochi's face turned red.

They were fictional stories in the first place, so it was difficult to understand, let alone empathize with.

But people didn't seem to think that way.

They cheered, clapped, and wept.

Hochi was stunned by their reaction as if they had a reunion with a family member they hadn't seen in ten years.

It was a very unfamiliar and embarrassing welcome event.

He accepted the bouquet the kids brought him.

Hochi hurriedly nudged the mantis with his elbow and told it not to eat it, as it brought its face toward the flower.

The mantis muttered with a very unhappy expression.

“I was just trying to smell the flowers.....”

Hochi felt awkward.

He thought the mantis was eating the flowers from the bouquet.

He felt a little sorry for seeing the mantis as only a carnivorous pig.

“Soon, brother... The Head Priest will come. You came so suddenly... haha. Please say something to the believers.”

Said the male priest who stood next to him.

After Hochi arrived at the train station, he went to the denomination with the mantis, ignoring the people holding the signs “The Guide’s Agent, Hochi”.

It was a sudden visit, so it was natural that they were not ready.

There was no particular reason.

There was a member of the pseudo-religion that caused a disturbance in the train car, and Hochi didn’t want to be guided by them to the denomination.

“Great, thank you for the warm welcome. This... Ho-jae will also like it.”

Cheers burst out from the crowd.

Their reaction was good, but Hochi was a little embarrassed.

He was confident that his communication skills were better than Lee Ho-jae’s.

He never expected that the spotlight would be turned on him like this and be asked to say his thoughts and opinions in front of a large audience.

Until recently, Kim Minhyuk had kept them from public meetings as much as possible, and in Japan, Lee Junseok also came forward to speak for him.

So this was his first time speaking in front of a crowd.

And there was no way he could do good at his first speech.

The reason Hochi thought he was good at speaking was simply because he had frequent trivial arguments with Lee Ho-jae, and that Lee Ho-jae, the subject of comparison, had too little to say.

Hochi admitted that he was not good at speaking, and tried to speak as calmly as possible.

“There is one thing that I have always been thinking about since I first came to earth and heard of your existence.”

The male priest whispered next to him and said that it was okay not to speak formally.

He ignored it.

“And it is to repay your trust and support.”

From the point of view of the indigenous religions of the earth, it is very unnatural in itself for God to reward faith.

However, it was not so from the perspective of the believers.

When they believe in religion, most believers think of the benefit.

They can't help but think.

In the first place, it was natural to think that the greatest bait to attract believers to a faith, was to promise something in the future or in the afterlife.

If you believe, you can go to heaven; if you believe, you can be

immortal; if you believe, you can be free from anguish; if you believe, you can be free from disease and suffering.

The Believers turn to religion for that.

Some people may not have the same reasons, but most people do.

“Ho-Jae... no... Well, so did the leader Lee Ho-jae.”

Hochi managed to catch himself from saying that Ho-Jae was a good natured-man.

When in fact, Lee Ho-jae didn't care much about the people of this denomination.

He couldn't care less, but he had no choice but to find out about it and send Hochi. However, if he had been a little busier, then he would have ignored it instead.

Hochi didn't like it very much.

No matter how deceived by the pseudo-religion, Hochi thought he should take care of the believers a little more since they are the people who believed in him anyway.

“Your faith has really helped us.”

It wasn't just a feeling of confidence or small happiness that came from the cheering.

Their faith was actually a new way to generate more power for Lee Ho-jae.

Of course, compared to Lee Ho-jae's current level of strength, the amount given was very weak.

“So we decided to give back to you since that helped us so much.”

Most of the people were showing that they did not understand what

he was saying.

Anyway, they responded and concentrated, but there seemed to be a question of what he was talking about.

The male priest who was right next to him had been acting annoyed for a while now.

He sighed irritably and rubbed the ground with his feet.

He wasn't saying anything, but it looked like he wanted to say 'Eh-hyo, you can't do that. A person who doesn't even know how cool they are has come.'

Hochi also understood.

But what Hochi was trying to give them now had never been done before.

"From now on, you will be able to check your faith and merit values by score. And you will get a real reward based on that score."

People still didn't seem to understand Hochi's words.

Each system window appeared in front of the confused people.

[Lee Mi Ja]

Age: 54

Status: Lee Ho Jae Faith (tentative name), Class 2 Believer

-Produces 21pt of faith every month.

-Working with all her heart as a cook in the church.

-Cultivating sincerity and is devoted to the denomination.

-Cumulative faith: 47pt

-Cumulative merit: 19pt

-Cumulative integrated score: 66

“What is this?”

The woman who had been absent-minded was frightened when she saw the words that appeared in front of her eyes.

It wasn't just her.

The words appeared in front of everyone in the denomination as well.

And...

[You can get a reward by consuming 66 points.]

[The required compensation is listed.]

[Miracle-Minor Healing: 1,500pt]

[Potion-Minor Healing: 50pt]

[Potion-Fibre Muscle Healing: 130pt]

[We recommend purchasing the lowest level healing potion. The lowest healing potion is excellent for various wounds and muscle disorders. It can greatly alleviate the chronic back pain of Lee Mi-ja. After taking the lowest healing potion, it is recommended to cure back pain through Miracle-Minor Healing.]

Lee Mi-ja, who had been overworked because of her poor circumstances from a young age, had chronic back pain.

The message listed rewards to heal Lee Mi-ja's back pain.

But that wasn't the end of the list of recommendations.

[Miracle List] [Close]

[Miracle-Minor Healing: 1,500pt]

.

.

[Miracle-Advanced Healing: 20,000pt]

[Miracle-Supreme Healing: 400,000pt]

[Miracle-Resurrection: 8,000,000,000pt]

.

[Miracle-Lower Guardian Summon: 100pt]

**[Miracle-Reception (3 minutes conversation with God):
70,000pt]**

**[Miracle-Seance (There is a possibility of failure depending on
the personal circumstances of God.): 100,000,000pt]**

[Food Reward] [Open]

[Item Reward] [Open]

[Ability Reward] [Close]

[Ability-Stamina 1: 100pt]

[Ability-Strength 1: 100pt]

[Skill Ability-disease resistance: 900pt]

[Skill Ability-Strengthening: 1,200pt]

[Skill Ability- Avoid Accident: 4,000pt]

Some people are confused by the message that appeared before their eyes like Mi-ja, but some people also acted fast...

“I’m healed! The scar... It disappeared.....”

After purchasing and taking the scar removal potion as recommended in the message, the woman cheered when she confirmed that the long scar on her face had been removed, and soon began to weep quietly.

The kid, who was the model for the church’s publicity cover, turned his high merits into delicious snacks.

The child who ignored his mother who was trying to stop him put the candy that appeared out of the air in his mouth and was excited about the sweet taste that he tasted after a long time.

Some people were looking at the rewards of ability.

Some people were quietly pondering over miracles such as advanced healing or resurrection.

“You can get all the rewards shown in the message if you have enough points.”

Hochi, who had been quiet, raised his voice again.

Because his words were imbued with magic, all those who were distracted by the message focused on Hochi’s speech.

“Over time, the rewards will become more diverse. Please trust us more without doubt and work hard for the church. In return, we will reward you everything you desire.”

Religion should be mysterious.

Gods must be ambiguous, and his existence must be questioned.

The belief that humans have in fantasy is more powerful than that of conviction.

Most religions were like that.

But Hochi thought he didn't have to stick to mysticism.

Lee Ho-jae had sufficient abilities as a god, and he did not hesitate to show off those abilities.

He was willing to return the favor in relation to the amount of faith he received from the believers.

In the first place, what Lee Ho-jae wanted from the followers of the Earth was not a huge and deep faith.

Lee Ho-jae wanted his religion to become a popular religion on Earth.

To be the basis for one's own activities.

It was obviously a loss to use the faith he had gained and reward the believers with a real reward using that faith.

But Lee Ho-jae didn't care because he wanted the religion to spread faster.

And there was no need to worry about the deficit because the score was set lower than the faith and merit value that was actually supplied.

It will only be less profitable, but the surplus of faith will remain.

And, in Hochi's opinion, if they ignore some of the characteristics of existing religions, it seems that they can quickly raise the popularity of this religion.

Miracles in the form of rewards.

Who would dare to refuse it?

If you just devote your faith and dedicate yourself, you can attain the miracles you've always dreamed of.

Hochi was convinced that it would not take long for the Lee Ho Jae Faith to push out the Earth's indigenous religions and the emerging religions of the emerging Hundred Gods' Temple and spread them around the world.

There was no need to worry about anything after the believer earns the reward.

Lee Mi-ja, who was quietly looking around, purchased the lowest healing potion shown on the recommended list.

Then opened the lid and quietly drank it.

She could feel the potion going down her throat and down her stomach.

And she could feel the pain from her back disappear and the stiff muscles relax.

Freed from a long enduring pain, Lee Mi-ja saw Hochi smiling at her.

The figure looked like an angel from heaven and like a miracle.

She was overwhelmed with emotion.

[Faith has risen.]

[Produces 33pt of faith every month.]

[Cumulative total score: 16pt]

The list of recommendations recommended to Lee Mija to

miraculously cure her back pain later.

But that wasn't the next reward she was hoping for.

She had a son with autism.

He was already thirty, but he had not been able to work properly in society or get along with people.

In the meantime, Lee Mi-ja took care of him with utmost care, but as she got older, she felt her limit approaching.

Lee Mi-ja was always worried about how her son would live in a world that became increasingly difficult and complex after she died.

But if autism could be cured as a reward.....

[Recommended list is updated.]

[Miracle-Intermediate Healing: 10,000pt]

[Autistic disorders classified as functional disorders of understanding, sensory perception, and sensory integration are not treated with simple healing potions. Treatment is possible with a specialized potion, but since it is very expensive and valuable, we recommend treatment through an intermediate healing miracle.]

It was possible.

The message announced that autism could be cured.

She had been looking for a way to fix it for a long time, but just as she completely gave up on her son's disability, a solution appeared.

Although she needed a high score of 10,000 points, Lee Mi-ja decided to dedicate herself to the denomination and get the reward.

[Faith is greatly increased.]

There was an uproar.

People became excited about the miracles they just witnessed and were making a fuss.

Hochi carefully observed the people.

No one clung to him or approached him.

It was unclear whether it was because of the magic that was in effect or if it was because his presence changed in people's perceptions.

However, there was one more feature that people haven't noticed yet.

Everyone was busy with checking their recommended rewards, but they were bound to notice it sooner or later.

It was a feature that would enable one to check the faith scores not only of themselves but also the faith and merit value of others.

Hochi didn't like the way the denomination was operated.

Before he arrived, it was considered okay to classify believers and priests by grade.

But with the appearance of the Faith Window, high faith and merit value will now be a new class determinant.

There may be side effects such as jealousy and supremacy, but on a larger scale, even those side effects benefited religion.

And...

The male priest standing behind Hochi turned around and began to run away.

[Koo Jeong-myeong]

Age: 31

Status: Lee Ho Jae Faith (tentative name), Level 4 priest

-Produces Opt of faith every month.

-Greatly contributes to the high crime rate within the denomination.

-Commits assault, verbal abuse, extortion of money, sexual assault, intimidation, fraud, extortion, and human trafficking among believers.

-It is recommended to punish him as soon as possible or to expel him from the denomination.

-Cumulative integrated score: -4,335pt

That man had probably confirmed that he could check other people's scores.

He didn't even have a list of rewards.

It was the right decision to run away before other believers checked his negative score.

They couldn't see a detailed explanation as much as Hochi, but they could see that score.

Minus four thousand.

Among the believers gathered here, few had an integrated score of 100 points.

But a thousand minus points.

It was easy to see how much harm he had caused to the church.

With this function, people can see who had contributed greatly to the denomination and who was a faithful person.

But what about the parasites of the church?

People will be able to crack down on each other and manage the denomination even if Hochi didn't interfere.

Hochi chased after the male priest who escaped.

He headed towards a huge banquet hall when he ran away.

On the table prepared in the banquet hall, there was a splendid dinner that Hochi had never seen before in Seoul.

Young women gathered on the side of the banquet hall, and the priests who seemed to be gathered in one group were also waiting for him.

-Cumulative integrated score: -853pt

-Cumulative integrated score: -1,135pt

-Cumulative integrated score: -421pt

-Cumulative integrated score: -677pt

-Cumulative integrated score: -2,995pt

-Cumulative integrated score: -188pt

They were pure garbage.

Hochi checked the women in the corner of the banquet hall.

Negative phrases were attached at the end of their status windows.

[I am in despair. I need help.]

[I am hoping for salvation. Hope is fading. I'm on the verge of giving up everything.]

[I am obsessed with strong hatred. We are praying for punishment from heaven on the priests of the Lee Ho Jae Faith.]

[I hope there will be retribution to the priests who have committed sin.]

It was terrible.

He didn't even think about finding out what had happened to them.

The painful feelings, such as fear, shame, and despair on the faces of the women appeared dark enough to be read even without a message.

"Welcome. I've been waiting for you. I am Lim Seong-hyun, who is in charge of the denomination."

A man who had a nice face approached Hochi.

Hochi didn't want to talk to him and ignored his greetings

[Lim Seonghyun]

Age: 57

Status: Lee Ho Jae Faith (tentative name), Level 6 class priest, denomination general affairs manager, a great revelator

-92pts of faith is produced every month.

-Has a high level of faith.

-Established the denomination.

-The first preacher of the church.

-Top manager of the denomination.

-Wrote the doctrine of the denomination himself.

- Is respected by members of the church.
- Considered a divine being to the congregation.
- The axis of the doctrine of the church.
- Greatly contributes to the promotion, administration, and management of the denomination.
- The initiator and chief executive of the denomination's business.
- Embezzling church funds.
- Neglecting criminal activities of priests in the church.
- Is in sync with the criminal acts of priests in the denomination.
- Cumulative faith: 2,043pt
- Cumulative merit value: 30,053pt
- Cumulative integrated score: 32,096pt

It was an overwhelming score.

Hochi felt embarrassed at that moment.

He even had faith.

He was a religious person worthy of praise even if he neglected and sympathized with the crimes of the priests.

But that was not the case.

He has contributed so much to the denomination and made himself a divine being only to arouse the faith of the church members.

In essence, he was a pseudo-scammer through and through.

‘Still... His score is too high.’

This was higher than the scores of hundreds of other believers combined.

If faith scores became the basis for one’s contributions to the denomination and if one of the highest scorers, the man named Lim Seong-hyun disappears, then it will be possible that the denomination will suffer major damages.

Hochi was worried.

A plan to cover up this matter appropriately, to forgive and rehabilitate that man, and to leave him to continue serving the denomination had to be made.

However, the women in the corner of the banquet hall were hoping for punishment.

They were hoping more strongly for those priests to be punished than to be saved from their current situation.

And the target priests included a man named Lim Seong-hyun.

But they didn’t have the points needed to acquire the miracle.

After all, they had absolutely no faith to begin with.

It would have been strange if they still had faith in religion left if one considered their circumstances.

On the contrary, that man had a high official merit and score.

Despite his evil deeds, he had that score.

It was certain that he would continue to help the denomination.

‘I heard you have performed an amazing miracle. I can see the rewards I can get. Hahaha. Please sit here. We have prepared a lot of

food for you.”

Hochi was worried.

But he decided at that moment,

“I can’t do this.”

Hochi knew that Lee Ho-jae was not bound by good or evil.

That he prioritizes efficiency over morals.

However, Hochi wanted to punish them even after taking into account Lee Ho-jae’s disposition and his role.

Hochi brought out the strongest, most cruel punishment method ever given to him.

He called to summon Lee Ho-jae.

[Call]

Hochi kept thinking while calling Lee Ho-jae.

Is this really the right decision?

Hochi decided that he had to punish him, and he wanted to do it.

He wasn’t sure what Lee Ho-jae would think of his judgment.

Soon, a noise as if an iron plate was being torn was heard, and the space split.

Lee Ho-jae appeared through the space and said with a smile,

“That’s the right call.”

Translator's Notes:

Janggu and bok – Janggu is a Korean hourglass-shaped drum, while the bok is a barrel-shaped drum, similar to a Japanese taiko.)

Chapter 337

Hongcheon (4)

“That’s the right call.”

Hochi had to think again about what was so satisfying with seeing Lee Ho-jae appear with a wide grin.

He wondered if he made the wrong judgment instead.

He questioned whether calling Lee Ho-jae was too harsh of a punishment for the priests.

Even in the eyes of his family, Lee Ho-jae, who appeared through a tear in space, looked like a demon.

‘Maybe I should have just punished them myself.’

Obviously, from the point of view of the priests, it would have been better for Hochi to give the punishment himself.

However, Hochi took the crimes of the priests very seriously, and he brought up the highest punishment method allowed to him.

“Well done. You did better than I thought. So much more.”

As soon as he appeared through the space, Lee Ho-jae quickly grasped what had happened in the denomination, and started by praising Hochi.

“...really?”

“Of course.”

When I praised Hochi, he looked around.

I could see his face had reddened a bit.

He looks quite happy and embarrassed.

In the past, I used to get irritated when he did that.

Of course, I still feel a little awkward, but I was more satisfied with the fact that Hochi was happy.

“Hello, Lee Hojae. I’m in charge of the denomination, my name is Lim Seong... Heuk..... Ukh.....”

“Yes, shut up.”

I was talking in a good mood, but some garbage interrupted me without notice.

If you’re trash, you should be aware of it.

“You did really well.”

I praised Hochi again.

I wasn’t just saying it.

I wasn’t just praising him because I wanted Hochi to show more enthusiasm to the management.

Hochi did really well.

Religion is a relationship of exchanges made up of false advertising and hype.

The believers wanted a gift, but the gods didn’t have to give a good

product, so they only sold an empty box wrapped in luxurious wrapping paper.

But who would refuse the opportunity to get a real gift?

Hochi's idea was a great sales strategy that would catch the attention of countless consumers at once in a world full of people thirsty for salvation and desire more than ever.

It was a market that was overly saturated

Although I didn't want any of those shares to begin with.

"That's a relief. I thought you might not like it."

No way.

Hochi did so well.

And I would have still praised him even if Hochi had blown up everyone on Earth.

"Then, what about those?"

Hochi asked, looking at the priests gathered on the side of the banquet hall.

There was Lim Seong-hyun, who fell on the floor and was groaning, and the priests who surrounded him.

Why is that guy overreacting like that?

I only blocked his ability to speak, but he is struggling as if he had a mortal disease.

Oh, was it a big shock that he didn't have a voice?

He's a scammer after all.

If a man who lives with his tongue cannot speak, he will starve.

I understood what Hochi meant by asking me.

I guess the pseudo-religion's inner workings were bothering him.

"Your judgment is correct."

I saw the women huddled in the corner.

It was reminiscent of a group of mackerel that united and protected each other.

It wasn't intentional, but anyway, they were harmed under my name.

I felt uncomfortable.

"Seong-hyun, stop groaning and come here."

Lim Seong-hyun, who was struggling in a frenzy, began to crawl at my word.

It was a desperate struggle.

I didn't mean to make him crawl.

But it looks like his knees aren't working well.

"Pl, please save me."

As soon as Lim Seong-hyun opened his mouth, he immediately begged for his life.

It must have been quite a shock that his mouth was blocked.

Or did he notice that I was going to kill him myself?

"Seung-hyun."

“Yes, yes. I was stupid. I should have cracked down on more people. I shouldn’t have let those old men run free. I should’ve rebuked them using my influence..... I.....”

He was lying as soon as he opened his mouth.

Just looking at the priests who were shocked and struggling with betrayal over there, I could easily tell that Lim Seong-hyun’s words were false.

“Seung-hyun, your mom told you not to lie or beg for food before she died.”

Lim Seong-hyun continued to act as a scammer, ignoring even the words of his parents who had been upset all their lives because of him.

He was a very neat piece of trash with no room for rehabilitation.

“That..... that’s..... how.....”

How did I find out about it?

“I, I will be useful, Lee Ho-jae! I am managing the denomination alone! I’m doing it all alone! Well, those bastards are just multilevel cheaters! Without me, the denomination wouldn’t work! I’m definitely useful! Yes! If you let me live, I will rebuild and I.....”

What a fool.

Is it because he’s a scammer?

The force that was now being poured out on Lim Seong-hyun is not the type of pressure that humans can just endure.

Under ordinary circumstances, humans would usually submit and be overwhelmed with the power I am pouring out, but this guy is trying to scam his way out to the end.

“You can’t do this. I founded this denomination! I pulled people together! I built this! With my own hands!”

Now he even raised his voice.

At this point, it’s funny.

“Please…… Please give me one more chance. Just one more…”

“Seong-hyun.”

“Yes, yes. Please tell me what you need.”

“Who am I?”

Lim Seong-hyun, who kept on talking, paused.

I asked again, slowly this time.

“Tell me, who am I?”

“…You are Lee Ho-jae.”

“And…?”

Tearing space and appearing out of thin air.

Manipulating a person’s body and will with a single word.

Reading other people’s thoughts at will.

Worshipped by the members of your new church.

What am I to you, giving you unbearable fear, regret, despair, and hope?

“…God.”

“Then you were aware. I thought you didn’t even know that.”

The one who volunteered to become the head of my denomination.

If he didn’t know that much, then he shouldn’t lead this denomination, right?

Lim Seong-hyun began to froth at the mouth.

It was natural because he desperately tried to speak even when his lungs were being crushed under pressure.

He was killing himself somehow to survive.

“I..... I’m guilty of death. Really..... I.....”

Now that he had reached his limit, Lim Seong-hyun’s voice began to falter.

“Yes, you sinned.”

How dare you pretend under my name.

You made yourself equal to me and were worshiped by the believers.

You used that position to hurt others and did it under my name.

“Then you should be punished.”

“Ye..... Yes, I’ll accept any punishment.....”

Lim Seong-hyun said while gasping for breath.

Yes, saying that makes my heart lighter.

Although it was already light to begin with.

“Eat.”

At my command, Lim Seong-hyun's shadow began to cover his body.

At the end of the shadow split into several branches, a toothed mouth appeared, and began to eat Lim Seong-hyun.

Lim Seong-hyun, who had already reached his limit, could not even scream while being eaten alive.

Only the sound of his bones breaking and the sound of breaking flesh and muscles rang silently.

“Please.....”

Even in his last moments, Lim Seong-hyun tried to beg in a faint voice.

I don't know why all these guys say the same thing before they die.

* * *

“Should you have killed him? Of course, you would kill him.”

Hochi asked me after I killed Lim Seonghyun and sent the women in the banquet hall outside.

Rather than presenting disagreements of my judgment in front of others, it seems that he waited for everyone to leave the hall.

I was pleased.

I thought he would never really grow up.

He had grown really fast since he came out to this world.

“Of course I would kill him. The faith he was holding is a waste. It's all supposed to be mine.”

Although it hasn't been that long.

It was, however, the best outcome that could come out of Earth at this point.

I don't think it's a bad ending for Lim Seong-hyun himself.

Since he became part of the god he wished to be.

“Then what about them?”

Hochi asked, pointing to the priests who were quietly huddled together.

When I looked their way, one of the priests prayed with both hands together.

“Please save me. Please don't kill me.....”

When one of them started to pray, the rest of them followed.

They were saying the same thing

They wanted to be my priest.

“Of course I have to save you. Huh? Did you know how much damage you fucking bastards did to me? It's just scores, but you won't die until you pay back all those minuses.”

I am not just saying it, but if they died suddenly, I was willing to revive them.

Not to resurrect or resuscitate, but as undead monsters such as zombies or skeletons.

You might wonder where I would use them, but those things are surprisingly useful.

“Now, be quiet and listen carefully.”

The priests who were trembling calmed down.

There are two promises they must keep in order to become my priest and not food.

“First, don’t tarnish my name.”

This is really important.

Sell my name and I will be able to pretend to be king on Earth.

It wasn’t like a fox with a tiger’s prestige, but a rat on top of a dragon’s head.

It’s none of my business that my priests eat well and live well.

I just can’t get past them smearing my name for self-interest.

“If you tarnish my name, you will become like the one who was eaten earlier. It’s better not to think that I won’t catch you or will just let it pass.”

If they do, they will be eaten like Lim Seong-Hyun, and their souls will be trapped in my stomach and suffer forever.

The second rule is also important.

“From now on, you can’t be beaten anywhere else.”

It was natural that you shouldn’t be beaten anywhere as a priest.

“Excuse me.....”

“Uh, what.”

“By any chance, what is happening?”

“I’ll make it so that you never get hit again.”

“.....”

As a last resort, I cast curse magic on the priests one by one.

It was a curse where the stigma was engraved on the back of the neck, and from time to time, intense pain will be felt in the area where the stigma was located.

The way to get rid of the curse is to achieve the set goal.

Otherwise, it was a curse that caused a shock from the pain that was directly transmitted to the brain through the back of the neck.

The pain that could lead to death drives a man to the limit of his existence itself.

All desires will be lost, and miscellaneous thoughts will go.

Soon, they will neglect survival and forget even suicide, and try their best to avoid suffering even momentarily

It was a curse I developed a long time ago to whip Hochi who did not want to become strong.

Even that Hochi had tried desperately until he grew enough to break the curse on his own.

Since then, our relationship has been completely different.

Anyway, it had an extremely powerful effect.

“Well, it would be safe to cast that one.”

Hochi said.

As long as all actions are rated as a result of faith and public value, they will not do anything but make their negative scores positive.

“Now. You’ve come this far, but would you like to see the congregation?”

Hochi asked.

I shook my head.

“No, I left the challengers on the 60th floor, I have to go.”

Above all, Hochi was doing so well that I had no need to interfere.

“And I don’t think I have to come out for nothing. You’re doing really well. Please continue what you’re doing.”

“Really?”

Hochi asked back with a childlike smile as usual.

I also smiled and nodded again.

Smiling, I opened the passage and returned to the 60th floor.

Chapter 338

Seoul (22)

“That’s too bad.”

The mantis, who was quietly eating food, muttered during the uproar.

Hochi had no choice but to ask it a question.

Was there anything regrettable about the current situation?

“What do you mean?”

“I could have eaten him.”

Hochi had to think about it for a while before he realized that what the mantis said was about Lim Seong-hyun who was eaten by Lee Ho-jae.

“Come on, you’ll get a stomachache.”

The reason Lim Seong-hyun was eaten is simple.

He gained faith by selling Lee Ho-jae’s name.

And the amount of faith he accumulated was quite large.

Regardless of the severity of the sin, Lim Seong-hyun was destined to be eaten when he met Lee Ho-jae.

And Lee Ho-jae is not someone who would hesitate to eat his own kind.

Lee Ho-jae wasn’t the type to get entangled in negative relationships

in any way.

Hochi, an experienced man, knew better than anyone.

“Let’s get out of here.”

The believers were still waiting for him even though Hochi had nothing more for them.

But he still had to strengthen and build trust with the members who were still confused and anxious.

It was for the religion, not for them.

“Can’t I just wait here?”

The mantis who was eating rice puffed its mouth.

“No.”

The mantis also had work to do here.

It was able to change appearance freely.

It can play the role of the church’s mascot, or it can blend in among the congregation and get a glimpse of their atmosphere.

It was useful in many ways.

“I told you that if you work hard, you will be free again later.”

“I don’t want to. I want to live with my master forever.”

Here, the master meant Yong-Yong.

Hochi thought seriously.

Shouldn’t we force that insect away from Yong-yong?

There was only one reason why the mantis liked Yongyong, calling him it's master.

It's because he gave it food.

Food that was nutritious enough to be incomparable to that of humans.

After giving it some thought, Hochi decided to leave it to Yong-yong.

Hochi thought he would do well on his own.

* * *

“...you want me to go too?”

Again, she spoke informally.

As soon as Park Jung-ah heard me, her mood changed.

“Yeah.”

Park Jung-ah's eyes sparkled even more sharply at my answer.

Wow, isn't that a skill at that point?

I asked Park Jung-ah to go to the new tutorial I made with the other challengers.

The challengers were a valuable resource.

Over the past decades, Gods have mined the power of the source from Earth.

As a result, the planet's sources are almost exhausted.

Once the earth's sources run out, the earth will slowly begin to fall.

Environmental deterioration and resource depletion.

The earth has already been ill with environmental pollution caused by technological advances.

I'm not even sure how long it could last.

Kirikiri said that the source also affects the development and creation of planetary civilization.

Considering that, it would be wise to move the Earthlings to another planet as soon as possible.

I haven't decided whether it would be a blank space in the Tutorial stage or another dimension connected by a dimensional gate, but it was true that a lot of work was required in the process.

And those challengers will be in charge of that effort.

Challengers were essential since I couldn't do everything by myself.

And in order for them to be of use, that much training was also necessary.

"I... To be honest, I don't want to manage people and do anything like that anymore."

Park Jung-ah said.

Of course, I was trying to send her with the challengers because she could be trusted, and also because she had a long history of leading and managing people.

"To be more honest, I just want to go back to Earth and rest. Can't you just leave me out of it?"

"No."

Park Jung-ah's face fell.

My words would sound disappointing enough at her who lost interest in vigilante work and was just waiting to come out.

“Can you explain why?”

Of course I could explain.

“You need training too.”

Although there was no difference in strength between Park Jung-ah and me in the past.

I flew too hard now.

Park Jung-ah was a challenger of easy difficulty, and she didn't even try to develop strength unless it was for self-defense.

Compared to that, I...

“Honestly, it's difficult to control your strength.”

Really.

It's not that I'm just giving her a hug and doing nothing since it's been a while.

If you move hastily, you may have a terrible accident.

“It's okay to give a little hug or hold hands like now. But we... we can really only hold hands if we were to sleep.”

“...I will go.”

Park Jung-ah put her hand on her forehead and replied with a long sigh.

Actually, she said this was a problem she was expecting to some extent.

Perhaps that is why she gave up quickly.

So, the challengers, including Park Jung-ah, were moved to the tutorial.

Just before the move, Lee Yeon-hee gave a nasty smile to Park Jung-ah from behind my back, but she didn't go any further.

The new tutorial the challengers were moved to was inside Yongyong's Tower.

It was so spacious that it was enough to use some of it as a training place.

Yong-yong decided to take care of the training process and the challengers.

Yong-Yong completed my education from start to finish, and since he is such a sweet child, I thought he would be suitable for tutorial management.

Yong-yong liked it because he thought it would be fun.

Yong-yong will probably do it better than me.

* * *

Time passed quickly.

Looking back now, the days on the 60th floor have passed really slowly.

Hochi, who had never done anything ambitious in his life, felt that the days of managing the church were really flying by.

The church was quickly normalized.

Even Hochi himself was surprised.

People were more careful of their actions.

Public value was a really comprehensive concept.

People who knew about their behavior, the atmosphere within the church, and rumors were also affected, always tried to say good words and do good things.

He wondered if it would be a little hypocritical atmosphere.

As the church was founded by a group of pseudo scammers, Hochi thought that such an atmosphere was also needed for a while.

Contrary to Lee Ho-jae's wishes, the priests who were former scammers were no longer available.

What Lee Ho-jae overlooked was the fundamental difference between Hochi and the priests.

Hochi was able to endure the pain from the curse stigma behind his neck and grew.

However, the priests could not bear the pain.

They just struggled and died.

But they didn't really die.

The power contained in the curse will automatically heal when the subject suffers serious damage.

Because of the healing, their senses were always clear and even their minds remained intact.

Eventually, the priests were suffering endless pain without dying or losing their senses.

While slowly paying off their negative public value.

Their presence was a warning to the people of the church.

You can end up just like them, so don't act rashly.

As a result of their suffering, they were earning the church's merit value little by little and canceling their negative scores.

It was expected that within half a year all the priests would be free from suffering.

Of course, even if you were free from pain, there was a high possibility of going crazy or becoming crippled.

Hochi would not worry about that until after the punishment of the criminals.

As all the priests who were in charge of management were out of power, Hochi couldn't leave the church and was forced to sit tight.

No matter how much time passed, it was natural that the work he had to do would increase rather than decrease.

The church was expanding rapidly.

Apparently, Hochi's method was peculiar.

Instead of a mystical and great god, it made people believe in a clearly visible reward.

Maybe the believers worship Hochi's rewards more than Lee Ho-jae.

But as a result, they came to worship Lee Ho-jae, the owner of the reward.

In order to reward him, he began to suggest to himself to increase his faith.

In fact, the faith of believers compiled through the faith window was increasing explosively.

It was not only the faith, but also the merit value of the church.

Whenever they had time, they visited hospitals or nursing homes, gathered people, presented potions obtained as rewards to patients, and advertised the church.

Although using rewards for others could have been considered a loss.

That action resulted in more public value.

Each time, dozens or hundreds of new members were created.

In fact, the easiest way to get public value was to buy them with money.

The believers who had the money to spare from their own assets, gave a large donation to the church and established denomination branches across the country.

Thus, the church spread rapidly throughout the country.

“We need more publicity.”

“But there are no places in the country that have not already been disseminated with church leaflets. There are limitations in general promotion.”

It was safe to assume that there was no place in Korea where church leaflets were not spread because of the believers who competitively spread leaflets even if no one told them to.

Probably, the whole nation at least once received a leaflet from the church or saw a leaflet that fell on the street.

“In fact, with this level of publicity, more people should have turned to the church. But I think that’s not the case because of our church’s bad image.”

People were active in the meeting.

They have no choice but to be.

Just giving a good opinion at a meeting increases your merit value.

Everyone wanted to attend this conference.

If they couldn't participate, they even asked the other participant to give their opinion on their behalf.

Hochi felt satisfied and proud.

The idea he came up with was great.

'Am I a genius or what?'

Hochi, sitting at the head of the conference hall, was happy with such thoughts.

"I think it's time to change people's perceptions about us rather than letting more people know about our faith."

The meeting ended with a goal to change the public perception of the Lee Ho Jae Faith, who had a negative image of pseudo, scamming, and multi-level marketing.

* * *

Recently, similar comments were also seen on the web.

-Believe in the Lee Ho-Jae Faith!

-Believe in the Lee Ho-Jae Faith!

-Weight loss pills, hair growth pills, height growth pills, panacea, you can have anything you want! [http://www.leehojaeeeee.com/mainpage/hj11111... ..](http://www.leehojaeeeee.com/mainpage/hj11111...)

No matter what news comment window you see, the best comment that always received the most recommendations were comments about

the Lee Ho Jae Faith.

It was a systematic comment work by the members of Lee Ho Jae Faith, who learned that even if they constantly commented, the public value was gradually rising.

Of course, there were many people who didn't like those comments.

In fact, there were far more people who looked down on it than those who didn't.

☐ Those Ho-Jae bastards are here too.

☐ I don't want to see them, really.

☐ Wherever you go, those guys are everywhere. I just have to ban all IPs.

☐ Do not go on the link to their address by any chance. It will catch the LAN line virus.

Days later, a briefing session was held on the dimension gate under the joint leadership of Kim Minhyuk and the Korean government. Its purpose was for Kim Minhyuk to explain exactly what a dimension gate was.

It was an event to inform the public about the expeditions between dimensions that will be possible in the future due to the dimension gate and the enormous benefits that the expedition will bring.

High-ranking officials of the Korean government as well as foreign governments sent agents to express their interest.

A large number of high-ranking Awakened were also invited.

The event was broadcast live on TV and on the Internet.

It was supposed to be known only as an article, but it was due to the Korean government's insistence that they should inform more people

about the Dimension Gate and deliver hopeful stories to the people quickly.

Recently, the issues related to the Awakened were treated like entertainment, so it was not that awkward.

In an unusual move, Lee Ho-jae also participated in the event and showed up.

Kim Minhyuk was in charge of all the explanations, but just having his face on the TV screen was significant.

“It’s still annoying.”

It’s still annoying to be bothered like this.

Lee Ho-jae frowned while breathing the air inside the cloudy event hall.

“You should come and see us. This is also important. Do you know how much the church is looking forward to this?”

Hochi carefully persuaded Lee Ho-jae.

In fact, the biggest reason Lee Ho-jae attended the presentation today was because Hochi asked him to.

Lee Ho-jae couldn’t refuse Hochi’s request, who was really passionate about the church work.

Originally, the appearance of a god on TV itself would degrade the mystery and damage the authority.

On TV, Lee Ho-jae will look just like a normal human being.

However, thanks to the way Hochi operated the church, there was no need to adhere to mysticism anymore.

People will probably pray and devote their faith to Lee Ho-jae even if

he appears on comedy programs.

“Hey, look over there. All those holding up placards are our members.”

The general public was also invited to the presentation.

Since Hochi also asked Kim Min-hyun to invite them, the general public audience present were all members of the Lee Ho Jae Faith.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

“Ho-jae looked here!”

“Lee Ho-jae! Lee Ho-jae! Lee Ho-jae!”

It was a mess.

The people who were preparing for the event looked back in surprise at the screams and shouts from the crowd.

Even the invitees who were entering the room glanced at them, wondering what was going on.

Lee Ho Jae naturally turned his back as if he had never heard the uproar.

He called Hochi.

“Hey.”

“Hmm?”

“It’s embarrassing, so please tell them not to do that.”

Chapter 339

Seoul (23)

“Why? They came for you.”

“It’s still embarrassing.”

I don’t know if this is a concert hall or a church.

Why are you doing that at a serious briefing session?

“Are you embarrassed?”

“Where is the mantis?”

I changed the subject.

Once you give Hochi something to play with, he’ll be doing it for days and days.

“In the church. It was more popular than I thought.”

It’s good.

The mantis had already mixed in with the people.

Of course, it won’t be very good at dealing with people.

However, its lack of social skills can be filled with excellent abilities.

Considering that the awakened who gather believers can become gods, it is a more standard route.

“It’s perfect to use as a denomination mascot.”

It had enough power and suspense to become a symbolic being.

When I used a frog as a mascot on the stage when making a sect.....

Well.....

I made a mistake in thinking.

I wasn't going to think of it here.

“Hahaha, nice to meet you.”

There was a person with a Korean textbook accent who interrupted the awkward air just in time.

It was a voice trying to forcefully show off its superiority, but I heard a slight tremor at the end of each word.

“Oh, yes.”

He suddenly reached out his hand, so I reached out and shook his hand.

He was a very old man.

A hearty one.

To the point where the term ‘honorable old man’ is appropriate.

The man shakes hands with one hand, tapping my arm lightly with his left hand.

And *pop*, I heard a sound.

The flash went off and a picture was taken.

When I looked at the man again, I could see the flowing sweat on his open forehead.

The human body, swamped with excessive excitement and anxiety, releases sweat to maintain body temperature and relieve tension.

“...Hahaha.....”

The meaning of what just happened was obvious.

Shaking hands and striking the arm with the other hand is a gesture of an upper person encouraging a lower person.

Promoting such an appearance and taking a picture at the right time.

And to promote to the public with the photo.

That's probably the purpose of this old man.

“I'm sorry, that wasn't bad by any chance, was it?”

There was still a light of fear in the eyes of the man who spoke in a friendly manner.

Oh my God, I can't believe I shook hands like this.

Who do you think I am?

Apart from that, the man felt bold.

Fear is a realm that belongs to nature, not reason.

It wasn't easy to suppress that and compose a photograph to use for promotional purposes.

“Cute!”

Yong-Yong's face popped out from behind the trembling man's back.

Yong-Yong, who was looking around, seems to hang on the man's back.

“Ahaha, it’s cute!”

“Uh, what... What!”

The man was embarrassed when something hung behind his back and tried to turn away.

Yong-Yong didn’t even care and climbed over his shoulders.

“Cute! Cute!”

Yong-Yong exclaimed, hitting the man’s wide forehead with a thud.

I understand.

How funny does that man look in Yong-Yong’s eyes?

It’s just ridiculous to me.

He was ignorant of the knowledge of the earth, such as courtesy, social status, and respect according to age.

Instead, what would this situation look like to Yong-Yong, who only sees its essence?

I wanted to be in Yong-Yong’s position.

The man who was in trouble with his blushing face soon began to laugh.

He looked at Yong-Yong and thought of his cute grandson, and he was happy to see Yong-Yong hanging onto him.

Yong-Yong’s consideration seems to free him out of pressure.

“Hey.”

I said, tapping Hochi’s shoulder.

“What?”

“You, your strength is overflowing again.”

“Huh? Is that so?”

This half penny guy.

I have to catch him and train him some time.

Hochi still has no power control.

As usual, it was more so when he was with me.

He was mistaken.

When I and an ordinary human are in the same space, Hochi becomes unable to recognize human power and his own power ends up leaking out.

Still, though, he has become much better than when he first came out.

It was a level that could still feel overwhelming to the general public, but not to the Awakened.

It's been like that for a long time.

Anyway, if you are an Awakened, you can manage to withstand it.

If you are not with me, the general public will just become nervous without even knowing it, and it will stop at the level where the presence becomes clear.

The photographer who came with the man pressed the shutter of the camera towards the man and Yong-Yong playing around.

Are you going to use that as publicity?

I was thinking about sanctioning him, but Kim Min-hyuk came over.

“Hey, who is that?”

“...It’s the President.”

Kim Minhyuk, who told me by whispering, approached the man.

President?

What should I do?

Kim Min-hyuk talked politely to the president.

In the news, Kim Min-hyuk seemed to be treated as a public figure by the government.

They seemed to have met and talked a few times.

Then it turned out that there were people who seemed to be attendants and bodyguards camped out a little further away.

There are also a few Awakened.

I didn’t notice at all.

But does that mean anything?

* * *

Kim Ui-seok entered the break room and pulled his tie.

“Hoo.”

He exhaled heavily, but his lungs still felt tight.

The tension didn’t go away.

“Are you okay?”

After waving his hand at the aide who asked about his condition, he slowly drank the prepared cold water.

Even this country’s president couldn’t withstand it.

In the past, the president was the highest and most honorable of all.

He had that much power.

But he didn’t these days.

These days when the operation of the state itself has become in jeopardy, the president has become a job that is shunned.

He bowed his head frequently to others rather than talked down to them.

There were more days spent in front of his desk at night than laughing and spending time drinking wine.

There were several accidents a day he could not handle, and he had to bear the full responsibility for it.

‘What did I do so wrong? Did I sell my country in my past life?’

He sometimes thought so.

President Kim Ui-seok had a hard and difficult daily life.

It was like that today.

The Dimensional Gate’s briefing session will be the starting point for completely handing over the leadership of Korea to the guild.

From the government’s point of view, the installation and management of dimensional gates led by the guild should not have been done.

But what if there was no way to stop it?

However, the lawmakers who opened their mouths condemned his judgment.

So instead of sanctioning the guild, Kim Eui-seok decided to put out a spoon for them.

The government would be stuck in the guild and become parasitic, but in reality, the guild had more power than the government.

It was the government that ran the state, but there was a huge difference in practical force.

Years ago, when guilds were established in Korea and left to settle, the power game between the government and the guild was already over.

Even the Association of Awakened, which was an independent armed group, was absorbed into the guild.

Now, even if Kim Minhyuk entered the Blue House* and sat in the presidential seat, there was no way to stop it.

Their superpowers made it possible.

In fact, there are some countries where dictatorship by the Awakened people is taking place.

What happened today was a show to get a little breathing room in such a situation.

It was the photo showing his initiative by gently shaking hands and taking advantage of him as an elderly person.

That was all Kim Ui-seok could do.

“Your Excellency... Are you really okay?”

The aide asked again.

His hands were swollen.

The awakened Lee Ho-jae just pretended to hold his hand.

But Kim Minhyuk didn't.

He didn't let go during the conversation, squeezing his hand.

Kim Minhyuk used his own strength.

It was a warning.

Don't waste your time with Lee Ho-jae.

This has never happened before while facing Kim Min-hyuk

Probably so.

After some time, the bruises were coming up black and blue.

Along with the stiff pain.

When he reached out to his aide, he applied the medicine to his hand.

Kim Eui-seok was sad about his situation.

He tried to suppress his sorrow, quietly gave his hand over, and remained silent.

The aide was also moved to tears seeing the emotions rising and he cleared his throat.

His most reliable man.

He was an old friend.

The memories of the day he promised to become president when they hit the soju glass and burned it together are still good.

The conclusion was drawing such a shabby ending for them.

“Sir, the photos taken were posted as breaking news in the press.”

“...Did it go well?”

“Yes. The composition came out really beautifully. It’s good news to the media.”

The attendant explained whether he noticed the gloomy atmosphere, and explained the progress in a brighter voice than usual.

But it was a relief.

At the very least, the people will think that the world is leading a remarkable event, such as the establishment of a dimension gate, where the state and the guild are on an equal footing.

It was a relief too.

It was a relief, as Kim Eui-seok kept repeating when he was alone.

[You have obtained a large amount of merit value.]

[You have obtained a merit value of 12,200pt.]

[Acquired the title ‘The Church’s Most Contributor’.]

[Additional points of 2,000pt were obtained due to the title.]

[Acquired the title ‘Most Contributor of the Month’.]

[You have acquired 500pt of additional points due to the title.]

[Acquired the title ‘People who may be the political supporter of the church.’]

[Additional score of 200pt was acquired due to the title.]

[It greatly changed the perception of the church.]

[The public perception of the church will change from ‘multi-level pseudo- church’ to ‘multi-level pseudo-church that also shakes hands with the head of state’.]

[Because you are not a believer, you cannot use the points obtained through the church’s merit value.]

[In order to use points to obtain rewards, you must become an official member of the church.]

[The nearest branch of the church is located in 224, Iseong-ro, Gangnam-gu, Seoul...]

Kim Eui-seok was so surprised that he had to stand still for a while.

He heard this message appear in front of the Awakened people in the Tutorial.

He didn’t know that would also happen to him.

After trying to understand the situation for a while, he was able to recognize what “church” the message was referring to.

“Your Excellency?”

“...Assistant Kim.”

“Yes, what’s wrong?”

“How much do you know about the Lee Ho Jae Faith?”

* * *

“Where is Hochi?”

“Well, I wonder if he went to the church members.”

Is that so?

Hochi that naughty kid.

He told me to come.

I don't know where he went after throwing me away.

Yong-Yong, who was sitting on my lap, yawned.

Waiting for the briefing session to begin seems boring.

By the way, why is my son's yawning so pleasing to hear?

"Okay, before the briefing session! There will be a congratulatory performance from the girl group, Unnamed!"

The voice of the moderator ringing over the microphone rang in the presentation hall.

I was kind of puzzled.

"What is the big celebration?"

What is the relationship between the Dimension Gate and the girl group?

The Gate's briefing session is an event that the world is paying attention to.

There's no need to refresh the atmosphere, and everyone who is invited to this place or who will be watching TV will focus on the explanation.

"Hochi asked me to do it."

"Hochi?"

Hochi, why are there so many orders?

It was Hochi who asked me to attend.

It was Hochi who invited the congregation to the event.

It was also Hochi who told me to keep Yong-Yong on my lap.

“Where is this guy?”

I tried to find Hochi’s energy, but I felt a fake energy in all directions.

Although Hochi may not know anything else, he’s really good at hiding.

I used to train Hochi, but I still find it hard to find him.

You can’t completely hide from me.

Instead, Hochi artificially spreads his energy and escapes from my gaze.

If this guy is determined to hide, it’ll take some time to find out where he is.

“I’m a little nervous about this.”

I couldn’t figure out what kind of nonsense Hochi was doing.

Translator’s Notes:

**Blue House – is the Korean President’s executive office and official residence.*

Chapter 340

Seoul (24)

“There are no rules?”

“Yes.”

In response to the aide’s answer, Kim Eui-seok felt embarrassed.

“You don’t have to pray, keep any religious items, or pay contributions like tithing either.”

“...Then how does this hold up as a religion?”

It was Kim’s honest feelings.

The most essential thing to religion is the god who is idolized and the people who idolize it.

But for that, practical rules were needed to bind people; thereby making themselves feel subordinated to God.

And...

“Why is there no compulsory donation? How is the church running?”

“It is said that it runs from the voluntary donations to the church.”

‘What nonsense is that... ’

Of course, there are religious people who donate money.

They are enthusiastic believers who pour out their personal savings for all kinds of religions and make donations.

But running a denomination on that alone?

If the Lee Ho-jae Faith was a small religious group buried in a rural corner, it would have made sense.

However, the Lee Ho-jae Faith was a large-scale denomination that had recently expanded its status nationwide.

Can the operation of such a denomination be supported by only donations?

“That... It is said that the donations collected are substantial. Sir, first you need to know, there is a unique system of faith and merit value in the Lee Ho-jae Faith.”

Kim Eui-seok listened to the aide's explanation for a while.

It wasn't a difficult story to understand in general, but it was difficult to understand with Kim's way of thinking.

Religion usually promises miracles, and in return, forces believers to believe.

However, the Lee Ho-jae Faith was at the level of bringing miracles to the believers.

Who wouldn't pay attention to such a thing?

It was also understood why the church operated solely on donations.

Probably, the level of donations overflowed to the extent of being difficult to handle.

Who in this world was not desperate for something?

After all, everyone wishes for a miracle.

“About those miracles... Did you find out what it was?”

“Yes, I did... In fact, there was a member of the church among my staff. It was thanks to him that I was able to get a list of miracles. Here you are.”

Kim Eui-seok received the file handed over by Assistant Kim,

“Thank you for preparing this right away. Yes, I’ll talk to a friend of that congregation, so get ready.”

Then, he opened the document file.

A list of miracles was written on more than a few documents.

Reading those miracles, Kim Eui-seok began to feel dizzy.

[Potion-Lowest Healing: 50pt]

-Although it is the lowest level, it is known to show excellent effects on wound healing.

It was the potion the Awakened used the most in the Tutorial.

Not long ago, this potion was the ultimate goal of the prototype that the scientists were furiously researching in the United States.

[Potion-Low Level Disease Healing: 400pt]

-Similarly, it is a low-grade potion but is known to have a better performance than the basic potion.

According to the testimony of the Awakened, this could be used to cure early-stage cancer without any side-effects.

...

“Then all hospitals would be closed...”

It was a ridiculous reward.

Meanwhile, according to the data, the Intermediate Potion and Healing Miracles could be used to cure most of the incurable diseases on Earth.

There was no sense of what would be possible at the higher grades.

And beyond the healing aspect...

[Miracle-Intermediate Shield Generation: 4000pt] (lasts for 600 minutes.)

[Miracle-Summon the Supreme Guardian: 50000000pt] (may fail depending on the circumstances of the guardian.)

[Food-Cheese pork cutlet set: 2pt]

[Food-Rice 2kg: 1pt]

There was really nothing special.

Kim Eui-seok focused on the food items next.

If that was really possible, then they could get around the food shortage somewhat.

[Miracle-Revival: 100000000pt]

[Miracle-Resurrection: 8000000000pt]

“...Is he really a god?”

If not, then the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple must be backing him.

Otherwise, these miracles couldn't be explained.

-Miracles that require more than a million points are likely to be false products.

Kim Eui-seok was of the opinion that the Awakened Lee Ho-jae was using the potions he obtained as a reward for clearing the Tutorial to scam people.

However, assistant Kim's further explanation also made sense.

Low scores can only be used to claim potions and other small items, and no one had high enough points to be able to claim the high-tier rewards.

There aren't many people who can achieve that score anyway, so it won't be a problem.

'But... '

[Kim Eui-seok]

Age: 72

Status: A person who may be a political patron of the denomination, an informal believer

- Produces 11pt of faith every month.

-Witnessed the existence of miracles and began to have faith.
However, they are not yet registered as an official member, thus they cannot get rewards.

-Has accumulated enormous achievements in improving the awareness of the church.

-Cumulative faith: 11pt

-Cumulative merit value: 14900pt

-Total score: 14911pt

Kim Eui-seok himself quickly collected 15,000 points.

But one thing that bothered him was faith.

After listening to the explanation from his aide, he knew what faith meant.

Just hearing about the church and miracles gave him a sense of faith... If not... ’

It was because of his 15,000 points.

He looked at a list of miracles, and contemplated what he could buy with his score.

He started thinking unwittingly.

Then he started to feel excited.

[Ability-Strength 1: 100pt]

[Skill Ability-Flame Radiance: 1500pt]

Was there anyone on Earth who had never thought of wanting to be an Awakened?

Flying between buildings and defeating monsters with all sorts of brilliant abilities.

However, in order to become an Awakened, it was necessary to clear the randomly summoned Tutorial.

Even that opportunity disappeared as the summoning from the Tutorial stopped completely.

Kim Eui-seok looked down at his swollen hands.

He honestly admitted that he wanted to try it.

He had 15,000 points.

His heart fluttered and his stomach turned from the excessive excitement.

[Faith is greatly increased.]

[Produces 22pt of faith every month.]

Assistant Kim, who had been out for a while, came in and said,

“Your Excellency, there is someone who came to see you.”

When Kim Eui-seok, who was in distress, raised his head, he saw Assistant Kim’s nervous expression.

“Lee Hochi, the clone of the Awakened Lee Ho-jae...”

Kim Eui-seok interrupted his aide mid-sentence and said,

“Let him in.”

He had heard the story of Lee Ho-jae and his clone several times.

It was difficult to understand with his own common sense, and only after hearing it several times was he able to understand.

However, what was important now was not the concept of a clone, but that a man named Lee Hochi was the manager and head of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

“Hello?”

Hochi came into the breakroom and greeted him calmly as if he were greeting the owner of a local convenience store.

Kim Eui-seok was a little surprised.

Even though he had the same face as Lee Ho-jae who he encountered earlier, the impression was completely different.

Hochi, who had a clear, somewhat humorous smile on his mouth, said,

“I came to preach the word of god.”

* * *

“I really can’t find him.”

Hochi was very determined.

“Shall I look for him?”

Asked Yong-Yong, who was sitting on my lap.

He looked at me with his bright, blue eyes.

It was cute.

“No, I will do it myself.”

I sent a message asking to not find him and leave him alone.

I didn’t want to waste his hard work by looking for him.

I can just ask him what happened later.

After their first performance, the girl group started singing a second song.

I thought they would go down after only one song.

“How many songs are they singing?”

“Five songs.”

“...What? Why five songs?”

“Hochi told me to let them sing as many songs as possible.”

What?

Did Hochi become a fan of that girl group or something?

I couldn't understand it.

I saw huge screens on both sides of the stage.

The faces of the girl group members were shown on the screen, but it occasionally showed the faces of the special guests among the audience.

Most of the people invited were either Awakened or politicians, and they wore tired expressions whenever their faces were shown on the screen.

It was obvious they were bored.

It was a natural reaction since they were expecting the explanation of the Dimension Gate, and not an idol group performance.

The cameras focused on the audience again.

And among the audience... were my followers.

Some put on T-shirts with my face printed on them and displayed strange placards such as ‘The great Lee Ho-jae uses teleportation’** and waved the flags in a lemniscatic pattern, which seemed to be the symbol of the church.

The believers also shouted when they knew they were being projected on the camera and fluttered their flags more excitedly.

A shout of ‘whoa!’ rang from behind my back.

The camera movement was strange.

Usually, when shooting a place other than the stage, it only illuminates a short moment, about a second or two.

However, it zoomed in on my believers.

Meanwhile, the girl group's song ended and silence came for a while.

In between those short silences, a loud voice shouted.

“Cool-headed charisma, Lee Ho-jae, fighting!”

It was so loud, and the scream was enough to be heard right in front of the stage.

I reflexively covered my eyes with my hands and ducked my head.

The camera was pointing towards me.

What was this damn Hochi up to?

I thought he was going to do something, but I wouldn't have prepared for this kind of operation.

“Hey, tell them to put the cameras away.”

I told Kim Minhyuk while keeping my head down. Shrugging, Kim Minhyuk replied,

“But how do I get rid of those?”

The camera, which zoomed in on me for about 3 seconds, focused on the stage as the girl group's next song began.

“Lee Hochi, this guy...”

“Hey, but what was that? What was with the cool-headed something?”

“...It was my nickname when I was a pro gamer.”

The Dimensional Gate's briefing session was held successfully.

There was a comment that the unexpected appearance of the girl group was suspicious, but it was generally positive.

The Dimensional Gate that will present a new paradigm to the chaotic government is created in Korea, and is also created by a Korean Awakened.

The news that it will be run by the Korean government and the guild brought great excitement to Koreans.

Even on the Internet, it became a hot topic.

However, there was another topic that was as controversial as the Dimension Gate.

[Dimensional gate briefing session. Strange audiences appearing there.]

[Wow, those Ho-Jae guys go all the way over there, so extreme.]

[Isn't that a problem? It's annoying at national events.]

[A pseudo-religion extreme enough to be out in real life...]

[They're a cult who believes in Lee Ho-jae as a god. Wasn't Lee Ho-jae invited?]

It was natural.

It was because of Hochi that they got invited in the first place.

[But isn't that a pseudo-religion? Or is it just an ensemble group?]

[It's a pseudo-religion. It has been a famous pseudo-religion in

Gangwon-do since several years ago.]

[They look like Lee Ho-jae's fan club instead of a religion. Only crazy guys would see him as a god and make a slogan like 'The great Lee Ho-jae uses teleportation'.]

[Admit it. The funniest part of yesterday's briefing was Lee Ho-jae getting embarrassed.]

[They're having fun with each other.]

[I know. It's just like a fan club meet. Besides, it's an event that Lee Ho-jae organized anyway, so he can invite his fans.]

Public opinion on the Internet was going toward Lee Ho-jae Faith being a fan club wearing a religious mask rather than a pseudo-religion.

[It is also a good fit.]

[It sounds like a fan club. What kind of fans does he have?]

[Are you ignoring our brother Ho-Jae? He used to have so many fans.]

[I also cheered for Brother Ho-jae in high school, but it was a shock when Ho-jae lost to Kim Sung-hwan and announced his retirement.]

[By the way, look at how Lee Ho-jae is still embarrassed by his fans hahahaha.]

[Even when he was active, he told his fans to be quiet because he felt embarrassed when they cheered for him.]

[Even so, when I saw him, he gave me an autograph, and he talked to me kindly. I had the autograph before, but I lost it while evacuating to Seoul.]

I remember I had a lot of female fans too.

[It was really awesome then. Right now, it's a glimpse of the past, but at that time, it was really cool. I watched the video of the contest in a PC room with my friend.]

[What kind of person likes esports but doesn't know Lee Ho-jae? Even foreigners would know about Lee Ho-jae.]

[When was this old esports. Is it a true story?]

└ [Link] A collection of Lee Ho-jae's dark history as a pro gamer. "Utube"

[Lee Ho-jae Faith necklace from the President. What is the relationship between Lee Ho-jae Faith and President Kim Eui-seok?]

[Girl group Unnamed leader Lee Ye-i, and her family are all members of the Lee Ho-jae pseudo-religion.]

It's a mess.

One thing is for certain, the talk of being a pseudo-religion was not seen.

It was covered with more stimulating content.

Occasionally, I saw comments saying that the opinions of the pseudo-religion were being erased, but even that soon disappeared.

It will definitely help improve the image.

It will be a bit funny, but if you remove the pseudo image and absorb people, the game is over.

Once you soak your feet in Lee Ho-jae Faith and learn about miracles, it will be difficult to get out of it.

In addition, the president and girl group members who were invited to the event added support to the church.

Honestly, I had to admit that Hochi was doing well.

But.

What was embarrassing was embarrassing.

“Yong-yong. No, old man.”

“Huh? What’s wrong?”

“Catch Hochi for me.”

This naughty boy. Where the hell are you hiding? Just get caught. See if I let you go.

Translator’s Notes:

‘The great Lee Ho-jae uses teleportation’ **: Is a parody of 장군님
축지법 쓰신다(The Great General uses teleportation) which is a North
Korean song praising Kim Jong-il.

Chapter 341

Seoul (25)

Once again, the times were changing.

As the Gate and the Awakened began to move away from life, something new appeared.

The Lee Ho-jae Faith, which first appeared in front of the public at the Dimension Gate briefing session, was expanding its influence surprisingly quickly.

In a way, it was natural.

The characteristics of the Lee Ho-jae Faith embraced not only existing religious people but also atheists.

It presented miracles that could be seen and experienced within a short period of time to each believer.

There were many believers who didn't even care about the miracles offered yet gave their faith.

However, in the case of believers who were really desperate for the miracles offered, they began to convert to the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Atheists were also quickly absorbed.

The atheists long-standing claim that an unproven god is no different from a flying spaghetti monster did not apply to the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Lee Ho-jae Faith showcased the existence of miracles as well as the existence of god.

Because of that, there were some questions floating around regarding

the lack of mystique in the religion and how Lee Ho-jae, a human, was a god.

Hochi, the operator of the church, did not care.

In the first place, Hochi did not value the depth of faith.

He thought it didn't matter whether the congregation regarded Lee Ho-jae as a god, an idol, or like a neighborhood brother.

They entered the Lee Ho-jae Faith anyway.

As they build merit value for miracles, they will realize that at some point they must raise their level of faith, not merit value.

Once they compare those with high faith and those with low faith, they will naturally realize the difference.

In fact, there were many believers who did not consider Lee Ho-jae a god.

Yet despite their beliefs, a certain amount of faith and merit value were still steadily coming in.

[Jehovah is our Savior. Trust in Jehovah and go to Heaven.]

At the entrance of the station, next to an aunt holding a picket, a member of Lee Ho-jae Faith stood with the same picket.

[Lee Ho-jae Faith is free from the constraints of a church]

It was too rude to push against their god, but the members of the Lee Ho-jae Faith didn't care.

If that picket is really blasphemous, just holding that picket will hurt your merit score.

Just by standing in a crowded place with a picket, they could see that the church member was gaining merit value, and that was an act that

helped the church.

The same was true in the web.

Those whose faith was not even visible were commenting eagerly for the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

☐ Only two hours if you work hard. One point in two hours. And one point is a good meal. Honestly, this is better than having a job.

☐ Really. Even if you post comments while watching a video, your merit value goes up.

☐ It's too sweet to comment while playing mobile games.

☐ Who would choose not to suck this honey, kekeke. Do you still think it's a multi-level business?

There was a boasting post in the Internet community saying that writing comments gave merit value.

Of course, just posting such a boastful article raised the public score.

☐ [Link] How to sign up for Lee Ho-jae School online. <http://www.blog.never.com/dd11233...>

☐ Because it is organized, let's go in and join. In particular, the unemployed people in the corners of the room, who have nothing to do, can manage to live by just doing this. If you collect enough merit points, you can be prepared for a big illness later or get things like abilities.

They were advertising very excitedly.

Some people felt anxious about the spreading day by day.

Isn't that a new type of voice phishing scam?

Are their families and relatives who joined the Lee Ho-Jae Faith really all right?

The government's press conference was held at the petition of the people.

As a spokesman for the Blue House, a government official in front of reporters was wearing a Lee Ho-jae Faith necklace.

As the spokesman entered the conference hall, he was extremely anxious.

He was a devout religious person.

Since he was a child, he went to church every weekend, and he was proud of it.

But he was a public official who only represented the position of the government.

He was the husband of a wife who was undergoing chemotherapy for stomach cancer.

The spokesman kept his mouth shut and made his resolution.

He said to the reporters that the Lee Ho-jae Faith was a formal religion with no problems and Korea was a country that allowed religious freedom.

Finally, it was notarized in the name of the government that there was no illegal activity happening in the faith, including its missionary work.

The spokesman learned why the president made him do that and looked at him with regret and envy.

[You have obtained a large amount of merit value.]

[You have acquired 33,302 pt.]

[Acquired the title ‘Top Contributor of the Month’.]

[You have acquired 500 additional points due to the title.]

[Advanced healing potion can heal even terminal cancer cells. In addition, it also provides excellent nourishment and tonic effects to the disease tolerance of the body...]

The spokesman briefly forgot his words at the amazing sight that appeared before his eyes.

He even forgot that beyond the message, reporters were pushing cameras and microphones towards him.

He muttered quietly.

“33,000 points...”

And the Republic of Korea turned upside down.

That the spokesman muttered 33,000 points.

It must have been the official value of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

People checked the list of miracles.

The list of miracles is already widely known, and anyone on the Internet could find it by simply searching.

What stood out most was ability.

It takes 100 points to increase 1 point of strength.

How about putting all 33,000 points on your strength stats?

Strength ability alone becomes 330 points.

The Awakened believers said that the strength stats showcased on the

shop were about a tenth of the efficiency compared to the strength stats in the status window obtained by the Awakened in the Tutorial.

In other words, the strength of 330 points reached 33 for the Awakened.

When Lee Ho-jae reached level 40 on the 19th floor, his strength was just 40.

Having only 33 strength stats was enough to be recognized as an A-class Awakened.

People who were quietly joining the Lee Ho-jae Faith and drinking its honey began to openly reveal that they were members of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Politicians whose positions were at stake, chairmen with little to no time left, as well as foreign leaders.

They tried to obtain merit value in the Lee Ho-jae Faith by mobilizing all their influence, including wealth, manpower, and power.

It wasn't just those with power.

The same was true of self-employed people, like those who owned small supermarkets.

'Believers of the Lee Ho-jae Faith get to shop free of charge.'

All items were provided for free as long as they showed the symbol of the Lee Ho-jae Faith and proved that they were members of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

So instead of money, they earned merit value.

It wasn't too bad.

Most of what could be obtained with money could also be obtained using the points system.

However, most of what could be obtained using the points system was not available to purchase with money.

Soon, the Lee Ho-jae Faith's official currency began to overtake as a new key currency.

Thus, the Lee Ho-jae Faith did nothing, and the tax was being multiplied several times a day.

President Kim Eui-seok was openly saying that he would surely complete the Lee Ho-jae Faith's designation of diplomatic relations within his term of office.

It wasn't because of his devout faith, but because of his strong will to achieve the public value he would get from the designation of diplomatic relations.

"You did a good job."

"Right?"

Hochi smiled.

Was this within this guy's calculations?

Or maybe it just happened, like a cow catching a rat while walking backwards[1]?

In any case, the fact that the result was a jackpot did not change.

Hochi eventually got caught by the old man.

Hochi, who was grabbed by the back of his neck due to the old man[2], was hanging quietly like a cat being carried by the nape of his neck, looking quite confident.

"But my image is a little..."

"Well, that's good enough"

...There was nothing to say.

In the first place, it was me who said that if the results are good, it was okay to ignore the small things.

Surely, the religion spread quickly.

Hochi had overperformed.

He did so well for what he had as a test before entrusting the believers he had collected from the God of Hope.

I didn't have to open the Religion Window I made to check it.

The Religion Window was just a device to make Hochi feel interested and intuitively see the situation.

Even if I closed my eyes, I could feel the faith of humans from Korea and all over the world being sent to me.

I was in a good mood.

Earth is the land that I took over from the Hundred Gods Temple.

So I became the owner of Earth, but if asked if Earth was my sanctuary, I had to answer no.

I didn't have my faith in the land.

Simply garnering faith from the land did not mean it was my sanctuary.

It meant that my laws were the first priority on the land.

The most significant difference between a god and a non-god is that he manipulates the laws of the world at will.

No matter how much power a non-god wields, even if it were comparable to a god, they would be turned into a frog at the word of

the god.

Such was possible in the physical world.

But it wasn't without any price.

In order to tweak the law, one had to pay a price.

However, there wasn't such a consumption value in the sanctuary.

Because I am not breaking the law, but realizing my will exists above the law.

My sanctuary had that meaning.

So, if I encountered the gods of the Pantheon on the 61st floor, and collided with them, as if without any concern, I would be able to win.

And before I started work, I was trying to connect Earth and the 61st floor.

Lastly, it was also the reason for not putting much effort into Earth.

However, Hochi has laid the groundwork for turning the planet into my sanctuary in a short period of time.

It won't be long before I completely sanctify Earth.

"Yes, good job. Would you like to go to the apartment and take a break?"

"No, I have to go to the church."

I was very proud of him.

I sent Hochi and sat down and closed my eyes again.

"Is it good?"

Asked the old man.

It must be good.

It was the same on the 61st floor, but this feeling was always good.

I saw the faith I received from my believers.

Most of them were living a normal life.

In the corner of the room, on the street, and at work.

Through them, I could see and experience the world.

It felt different from the world of the 61st floor, which blindly pursued only battle and victory.

From time to time, I was able to recognize where the believers were.

I also sympathized with the topic of the conversation the believers were talking about.

[Sorry.]

A voice came in quietly.

It wasn't someone's voice.

It was the voice of this planet, Earth.

[Sorry.]

Earth was apologizing to me.

It wasn't just me.

It was apologizing to everything that was alive and breathing in this world.

I was the only one that could understand it.

[Sorry.]

Now, no one cares about it, but it has always been the home of the people and everything in the world.

Since the birth of man, it received the faith of humans.

Unable to wield one's faith in one's own self.

[Sorry.]

So, the one god in the human world, who could not save anyone and just listened to the prayers of numerous existences was endlessly apologizing.

“That’s interesting.”

“What is it?”

The Awakened extracted Earth's source to the limit.

There is a little left, but it won't be that much.

Kirikiri predicted that this planet would soon be destroyed.

If you think so, maybe.

[Sorry.]

Wouldn't that apology be considered the last will of Earth?

How would it feel to be an incompetent god, who had to watch their believers die in vain, just for the hope of salvation for so long.

I didn't know.

I didn't even want to imagine.

[Sorry.]

I replied to the voice.

“Stop it, I understand.”

Earth was annoying.

* * *

[Pros: 100 votes, Disagree: 0 votes]

[The voting ends.]

“Ho-a-am.”

Kirikiri yawned loudly.

It was a very long voting session.

It wasn't unusual for the Hundred Gods Temple where a single agenda could produce dozens or hundreds of votes.

But this agenda was really, really long.

It was difficult to achieve a unanimous agreement because of the complex interests involved.

In any case, the voting went as intended.

As a result, the Hundred Gods Temple was completely removed from Lee Ho-jae.

After clearing the Tutorial, they agreed to completely ignore his status as a challenger and to treat him as a separate entity.

What will happen...

“You’re finally going to live.”

“God of Hope?”

A fluttering fly flew over Kirikiri’s face lying in the field.

“It’s me. Who could it be?”

“Hi-hing, you have become so weak that I did not recognize you as the God of Hope.”

“...”

The God of Hope was quietly silenced by Kirikiri’s words, as he was offended.

The God of Hope, who flew around for a while, soon left Kirikiri’s room.

She knew what he came to say, but she wasn’t in the mood to accept it now.

The God of Hope will start moving again.

The God of Hope was relatively free from restrictions, but that did not mean complete freedom.

Now that Lee Ho-jae has completely disappeared from the axis of constraints, the God of Hope would finally resume his activities.

And now he would approach Ho-Jae not as an individual, but as a member of the Pantheon.

The relationship between the Pantheon and Lee Ho-jae could not be said to be friendly, no matter how it seemed.

The protection period was over and now...

The die was cast.

It was unclear whether this would end up beneficial for them... or if this was equivalent to poking a beehive.

Translator's Notes:

[1] A cow catches a rat while walking backwards

Chapter 342

Seoul (26)

“Wow... really, Wow...”

She heard a murmuring voice next to her.

He seemed to be admiring something, but in reality he was lamenting.

“Ha... This... Such a dick.”

Park Jung-ah had no choice but to lower her head without realizing.

It was a murmur in the air, but it was meant to be heard by Park Jung-ah.

Still, she couldn't say anything.

Because she sympathized with his feelings.

[You have cleared the mission. (Mission Level: 10)]

[You will be moved to the next mission area]

[Remaining break time: 300 seconds]

“...Wow, really crazy... absolutely crazy.”

A new message window announced the remaining break time.

Right after the battle was over and she had barely put her butt on the ground.

But the next mission was after only a 300 second break.

This wasn't just harsh, it was cruel.

“Fuck! I want to get out of here! Let me out, motherfucker! You bitch!”

A man's half-sad voice rang.

Maybe it's the feelings of everyone here.

However, few people raised their voices like him.

Most of them were exhausted and tired, so they had no energy to do so.

Park Jung-ah quietly inhaled the potion.

It was a really dirty and tasteless potion, but it seemed that she couldn't bear it if she didn't dampen her throat with it.

There was a person approaching Park Jung-ah, who was drinking her potion as if drinking beer.

She had a familiar face.

She was a female challenger who, not long ago, stayed on the 90th floor.

“Sister.”

She was an attractive challenger with cute, elongated limbs.

When she cleared the Tutorial and returned to Earth, she said she wanted to be a celebrity and that she didn't want to be an Awakened.

Listening to her words, Park Jung-ah also thought it was a good dream.

However, at the moment, her appearance was so shabby that it was almost pathetic.

Her sweaty hair was clinging to her cheeks and to the back of her neck.

Her sloppy eyes seemed somehow out of focus.

“Help me.”

What she said was a spectacle.

However, Park Jung-ah could relate.

Sadly.

Unlike in the original Tutorial, in Lee Ho-jae’s Tutorial, one did not have to worry about losing their life.

However, it was so difficult that they felt that they could die.

The challengers cried out that it would be better to risk their lives.

Missions usually consist of battles.

About a hundred people teamed up to fight in things such as raids, sieges, pursuits, and all-out wars.

It was a repetitive cycle.

An endless one.

After a mission that lasts for a couple of hours if it is short and a few days if it is long, the next mission begins after only 300 seconds of rest.

From the challenger’s point of view, it feels as if there is no such thing as a break.

The designer’s intention seemed to be stuck in her ear.

‘You’re going to automatically recover anyway. No fatigue remains. You don’t need to rest, Right? You’re not hungry and or sleepy here either. Hahaha.’

But, damn it, her mental exhaustion continued to accumulate.

Even the difficulty of the mission was of a heinous level.

Though It wasn’t unreasonably difficult.

He maintained the level of difficulty that would be enough to always be struggling, and that if she did her best, she would be able to always achieve breathtaking success.

[Mission Level: Level C-10]

It was Park Jung-ah’s level.

She was 10 levels into the C grade.

Like Park Jung-ah, the top challengers of the easy difficulty and medium difficulty, were in this C-grade section.

Level C consists of 20 levels.

At the end of each mission, the system equates each individual’s performance.

The mission level changes according to the individual’s rank, and the challenger is sent to a mission with a difficulty level suitable for them.

[1st place-Park Jung-ah]

[2nd place- Jang Chae-in]

[3rd place- Carl Bora]

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.

.

[Mission level changes.]

[Mission level: 10 -> 12]

[Congratulations! You have been promoted two levels due to your outstanding performance.]

Seeing that made her sick.

The next mission would be more difficult as the level had risen by two levels.

But she couldn't even complain.

“...Sister, I've been placed into Level 7. Help me...”

She patted the back of a female challenger who was breaking down and was starting to cry.

When they first started getting a feel for the system, several challengers deliberately failed the mission and tried to descend to a lower level.

Of course, low-level missions would be much less difficult.

It was an accurate prediction.

As the mission level fell, so did the difficulty.

However, the missions got messier.

Not only was there a lot of dirt and smelly filth, but devices that triggered horrors were hiding everywhere.

A dark enclosed space that seemed to choke the air out of you, a magic that reminded you of past nightmares.

Grotesque screams rang around, and images of ghosts covered in blood were seen.

From the mission to rescue your companions among hundreds of thousands of doppelgangers, to the mission to escape the endless maze.

The missions below Level 10 were obviously neither difficult nor dangerous.

However, it threatened mental health to a serious level.

Thanks to this, all the challengers who were down there were desperately trying to climb up.

But that wasn't easy.

It wasn't easy to stand out and get a high rank among the other desperate challengers.

In addition, if they did not correctly manage their concentration and mental state from endless battles, they would make mistakes.

Everyone did.

Park Jung-ah had gone up to Level 19 before.

However, she made a big mistake in Level 19. She could have been promoted to B class, but instead fell to Level 15.

After that, her concentration fell and she fell to Level 6.

In the Level 6 mission, after being isolated in a sewer with dung lying around accompanied by giant rats for about two days, her concentration and motivation had returned.

She was crawling back up.

[Personal mission has been assigned.]

[Miracle-Summon Lesser Guardian]

“Huh?”

A new message appeared in front of Park Jung-ah, who was preparing to move to the next mission location.

[Condition of Dispatch Challenger]

1. Suitable for suppressing non-Awakened criminals.
1. High possibility of cooperation in suppressing criminals.
1. No possibility of escape attempt.
1. There is a willingness to protect the guardian.
1. More than 80% confidence in Lee Ho-jae.
1. [All dispatched challenger requirements are met.]

[Would you like to accept the dispatch?]

“...Yes.”

Park Jung-ah tried to accept the request of the message.

She had no idea what it was.

She thought the situation would never get worse than here.

[GM Benedictus Lericia Piacan Raucones Naupolion Nice Tiamat Carcearin Balakas Shanso Gardandes Nessario III confirms your

suitability]

[The challenger dispatch has been approved by GM.]

[(Special) dispatch mission is granted.]

Description: On the way home from school and part-time work, there was a girl who was attacked by gangsters.

Crimes such as kidnapping and human trafficking have occurred frequently in the area.

The gangsters who attacked the girl are also believed to be of that kind.

The girl, who is the target of the guardian, is a child of the devout Lee Ho-jae Faith family, and she herself is a faithful believer who consistently produces faith every month.

The girl who encountered the assailants quickly opened a religious window and asked for help from Lee Ho-jae.

Lee Ho-jae decided to dispatch a guardian at the request of the girl.

[You can go right away.]

[Would you like to go?]

“Yes.”

Park Jung-ah replied immediately.

The question that had been there a second ago had disappeared.

She quickly figured out what she had to do.

The surrounding environment changed rapidly.

Her vision rapidly darkened, but thanks to her 15 years of staying in the Tutorial, Park Jung-ah possessed all the stellar miscellaneous skills.

Her vision in dark spaces was ridiculous.

“What.”

“Who do you think is there?”

Streetlights stood sparsely around, but the streetlights were broken in this place.

In this dark space, it was difficult to distinguish anything other than the walls blocking both sides of the street.

In the dark, the guys with iron clubs and baseball bats moved busily.

In between them, Park Jung-ah saw a girl being held by them.

“What, is that a girl?”

“Let’s catch her too.”

The big guys who found Park Jung-ah chatted.

It was a tone that seemed to be collecting garbage, not people.

Park Jung-ah opened her inventory and found a suitable weapon.

The cutlery was not appropriate.

In these situations, she always preferred heavy blunt force.

The big guys approached Park Jung-ah, who didn’t run away.

He seemed to be approaching and trying to surprise her.

The big guys moved as if they had one mind without discussing anything.

She could see that those guys had done these things at least once or twice.

“Bring it on!”

The big guys rushed with someone’s call.

Park Jung-ah just swung her club and struck the top of his head.

Along with the sound of cracking, a large body slumped on the floor.

The other big guys who tried to rush in, flinched and stopped moving.

Park Jung-ah rotated her club in a big circle.

If it had been a while ago, it would have been really awkward.

But now, she has been fighting for a long time and practiced moving her body.

Perhaps, because she had tangoed with death numerous times in the new Tutorial, the long-time use of her club was very familiar.

“You know what? I really hate people like you.”

Park Jung-ah said so.

She flinched and turned back towards the big guys wondering whether or not to run away.

* * *

One thing that worried her was how to deal with those bulky trash.

In the Tutorial, Park Jung-ah sentenced all criminals who committed

violent crimes to death.

The situations where the victims were continuously hurt were common, as repeat crimes were very likely, according to the statistics in the Tutorial.

Through unusually harsh punishment, crimes were prevented from happening in the first place.

But what to do outside of the Tutorial.

Park Jung-ah thought of this out of nowhere, and she wondered what kind of judgment she should make.

She wondered if the system would replace the ruling through a message, but that never happened.

In the end, Park Jung-ah decided to end the punishment by giving the men a silent beating until they passed out and were broken in a few places.

Those big guys won't be able to eat nor be able to live by doing physical work in the future.

“...I, I..... Shall I call the po- police?”

Asked the girl, trembling.

Even though it was late at night, she was wearing a school uniform.

The schoolgirl was knocked on the head by the big guys, but she was able to wake up quickly thanks to the potion Park Jung-ah had.

But the shock remained.

Seeing the girl trembling greatly, Park Jung-ah felt a corner of her heart becoming sore.

“No.”

If she does that, then things get complicated.

In addition, she did not want this schoolgirl to go to the police station as a victim and suffer stress and mental pain.

After she returned, she may be caught up in a secondary crime of retaliation.

It was also important to find out all the criminals, but she judged that the first thing to do was not to harm this child.

She thought it would be better to just leave those guys unattended.

Park Jung-ah felt uncomfortable with her own judgment.

She said so and moved on.

The days of her crying out for her principles were long gone.

After a long period, the girl looked a little calmer.

She said she was still a student and that she felt dizzy.

She was exhausted.

“Well... When the request has been completed, it asks me to click Done. That’s how you’ll be called back..... Would you like me to press it?”

“No! Don’t press it yet!”

Park Jung-ah shouted reflexively.

As soon as she was summoned back, she could feel the intuition that she would be participating in a new mission.

“I’ll take you home. Then press it.”

“Yes... thank you so much.”

“Thank you.”

Park Jung-ah grabbed the girl's hand and walked.

The schoolgirl did not have much strength in her legs, thus she walked slowly.

However, she did not support the girl.

This seemed meaningless, but this trivial act of returning home on one's own feet was a mentally significant act that helped to brush off bad memories.

She simply held the hand of the schoolgirl, grabbing her hand, and supporting her from time to time when she staggered.

It was a rare type of back alley.

You had to climb a steep uphill road.

It was such a neighborhood that is usually called “Sandongne”.

(T/N: Sandongne, where the neighborhood is located on an uphill area, google image 산동네 for reference)

The dim streetlights and the stale night air.

The moon, floating alone in the night sky where a single star was not visible.

And the sound of a car that came in clumsily mixed with the sound of the wind.

This felt surreal for Park Jung-ah.

She was now on Earth and back in Seoul.

She was in her hometown, that she had imagined in her mind for so long.

She was in a good mood.

There was one thing that was definitely good.

‘I wonder if they’re watching?’

She looked up at the night sky where nothing could be seen, thinking so.

* * *

Of course I’m watching.

I thought of going to see Park Jung-ah in person, but I didn’t do that.

I thought it was still time to wait.

I prepared a message for her while lying on the sofa armrest.

It was a message to a girl named Choi Yoo-jung, who had just been saved by Park Jung-ah.

[You used ‘Miracle-Summon Lesser Guardian’.]

[There are not enough points for ‘Miracle-Summon Lesser Guardian’.]

[Current total score: 84 points]

[The points for the ‘Miracle-Summon Lesser Guardian’ are 100 points.]

[With Lee Ho-jae’s authority, a Miracle-Summon Lesser Guardian is forcibly used.]

[The guardian is being summoned. Be prepared for their arrival.]

These are the messages that appeared before Choi Yoo-jung's eyes.

With Park Jung-ah's farewell, I sent new messages to her who arrived safely.

[It is a secret that only we know that a miracle was used even though the points were insufficient. You can't tell other people.]

I was going to send a message in a systematic way, but I just sent it my way.

I thought it would be better.

The stiff tone of the system could be seen as crass.

In fact, the fact that God saved a believer in danger was something to be advertised.

However, Lee Ho-jae Faith was a special case because it was not unusual.

Lee Ho-jae Faith's system should always be fair.

If you could get a miracle regardless of the score, who would be willing to sacrifice anything to earn points in it?

Fortunately, Choi Yoo-jung prayed with her hands together and replied that she would.

[In return for the promise of secrecy, 10,000 additional points will be paid.]

Choi Yoo-jung was delighted and informed her family about this.

She said, of course, that she kept a secret, she prayed, and she suddenly scored.

Her family was greatly pleased.

They looked happy, saying that a score of 10,000 points would be enough to move to a house in the city.

They took out a chunk of pork that had been frozen in the corner of the freezer as I watched them, excitedly eating.

It felt good.

I honestly admitted it.

I started acting as the god of the Earth.

It was more fun than I thought.

Chapter 343

Seoul (27)

People were starting to get used to the temple building that popped up from the former soccer stadium.

Those who condemned the existence of the temple quickly disappeared, instead claiming that the excessively high building threatened flight safety over Seoul.

It was natural.

The government remained silent no matter what the people said about the temple.

The people wondered how they would demolish a building that had been created overnight, and whether it was possible in the first place.

Even those who raised their voices against the temple said that they would rather impose a fine or tax on me rather than demolish the temple.

But now, their voices were also disappearing.

After the Lee Ho-jae Faith began to spread in earnest, there was an atmosphere that bore down on people like them.

I looked out at downtown Seoul from the temple.

Thanks to its high location, the entire city could be seen at a glance.

To be honest, it wasn't such a good sight.

“Oh, look at the air.”

This is a city where people live.

In the Tutorial, I've been to many places, but I've never seen a city with such serious air pollution.

I went to a place filled with all kinds of odors and toxic gases, but it was not a place where people lived.

"It smells bad too."

[Sorry.]

Earth, which had been quiet for a while, apologized again.

Well, I wasn't talking to you.

No, looking at it, I was right about what I said to Earth.

[Sorry.]

I said yes.

Earth talked from time to time.

Usually when I think of Earth, I think of the environment including the earth or the sky of this planet, or I think of the world as a whole; it was like that.

Maybe it has always been like that.

Every time people think of Earth, their faith builds up little by little.

Just like how I respond with a system message whenever I gain faith from believers.

Earth would have only apologized every time.

That would have been all it would do.

Even if it could do more, only I could hear its words.

The wind blew out the murky air in Seoul.

At the same time, I wanted to create a strong wind, but if I did, those who walked the streets in broad daylight would be mutilated.

A lot of time was wasted trying to move the wind at the right intensity.

It was a temporary measure, but a little bit of contaminated air went away.

It will be better for a while.

Let's seriously think about purifying Earth's environment later.

I can ask Kim Min-hyuk to figure out how.

Recently, he moved to the temple and lived there.

It was almost completed so there was no inconvenience in life.

Rather, the accommodation was uncomfortable due to how "perfect" it was.

As Yong-yong's decorations have not yet been completed, it can't be opened.

In the near future, believers will also be able to visit the temple.

On the lower floors of the temple, there was plenty of space for the members who visited the temple.

From a distance, Hochi was holding his cell phone and talking on the phone.

Hochi was more and more frequently talking to humans.

It was unavoidable because he was busy taking care of the Lee Ho-jae Faith every day.

The Lee Ho-jae Faith, which seemed to only grow, was experiencing some ups and downs recently.

There have been several incidents in which believers who have secured a large amount of public value by pouring capital money in the early stage have used the score to play foul.

Of course, as soon as they did such an act, the public value was reduced.

Because of such actions, the church's image was deteriorating.

Negative behavior of individual members of the congregation immediately affected the score, and these events could have become even more serious if it were not for a system that others could check.

There were also conflicts with existing religions.

Existing religions that have been rooted in Earth before the introduction of tutorials and the Hundred Gods Temple.

Most of those religions either partially admitted tutorials and Gods Temples, or distorted them all as being part of the religion.

From the standpoint of existing religions, they would have wanted to completely deny the Hundred Gods Temple and Tutorial.

They couldn't pretend to know the monsters that appeared in front of their eyes and the rise of the Awakened who fought against them.

Because of this, they had to go back and forth through their old doctrines to find clues and connect stories.

From the standpoint of such religions, the rise of the Lee Ho-jae Faith was inevitably threatening.

It was just a simple thought.

In the case of the Hundred Gods Temple, even if the facts were distorted and related to existing religions, there was no response.

However, when they say that they have a religious connection with Lee Ho-Jae, a protest from my denomination immediately rushes out, demanding them not to speak nonsense.

Every time they protest, they will get public value, so the believers will protest more confidently and stubbornly.

Moreover, the system Hochi devised was overly lethal.

Beyond religion, it was shaking the existing economic and social systems themselves.

The theocratic state theory is already spreading in Korea.

Eventually, the existing major religions identified us as pseudo-religion and began a campaign against us, unlike when the Hundred Gods and the Tutorial appeared.

While considering dropping a bolt of lightning on top of the protest site, Hochi argued that it would be better to overcome and solve the problem with the believers at the religious level.

The operation of the denomination was completely left to Hochi, so I decided to follow Hochi's opinion.

Thanks to that, Hochi, who was already busy, became more busy.

Well I didn't want to stop him even though he said he would volunteer to work hard.

It wasn't just bad news.

As the number of businesses incorporated under Lee Ho-jae Faith increased, Hochi added the option to add the products of those

businesses to the system.

I had to store the business's products in my subspace and distribute them to the system, so I was able to run them immediately.

Thanks to this, the list of rewards had increased significantly.

All kinds of businesses were incorporated into the system, starting with hospitals and pharmaceutical companies whose institutions were in jeopardy due to the Lee Ho-jae Faith's compensation system.

So, the number of members who spent both daily life and work at the Lee Ho-jae Faith increased.

It had a good effect on both the growth of the denomination and the increase of faith.

Thus, the Korean economy itself was being absorbed by the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Won is now used only when using vending machines or products and services that are not handled by Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Not long ago, Hochi said he was preparing a plan to include the credit card companies in the system, so that would soon disappear.

Naturally, the value of the won plummeted.

Originally, it was a situation that would have a devastating negative impact on exchange rates and trade.

Fortunately, after the cataclysm of the monsters, the trade routes between countries were greatly reduced.

The global trend was economy centered on the domestic market or neighboring countries.

In the case of Korea, most of the trading came down to Japan and China.

At the very least, it was to export the Awakened to earn foreign currency and to bring in some food or industrial products.

In the case of food, both Japan and China were in short supply, so it was not necessary.

“But who is Nakamura?”

Before I knew it, Hochi came back from the phone call and I asked,

“A cabinet member I met when I went to Japan.”

It was an unexpected person.

I thought it would be a Japanese cartoonist or novelist.

“This time, they helped establish Lee Ho-jae Faith’s Japanese branch. They also promised to cooperate with the denomination in the future.”

What, really?

Hey, why are you so competent?

At this point, it feels a little strange.

Hochi was smiling confidently.

When he first took over the job, he completely disappeared as he was somewhat anxious or unconfident.

Now Hochi himself was sure he was doing well.

“Ha!”

Instead, his nose was rising with a momentum to pierce the sky.

Hochi returned from the phone call, so I sat on the couch again.

“By the way, the mantis doesn’t think about coming out of the church.”

Kim Min-hyuk said.

The mantis was becoming the leader of the Gangwon-do denomination.

Well, it wasn’t very different from the truth.

In fact, it was emerging as some kind of guardian.

It was the mascot of the denomination, and it was taking in a little bit of faith.

If it continued like this, I thought that sooner or later it would easily gain godhood.

There was also the power it regularly received from Yong-yong, so it was almost definitely going to happen.

“What is it?”

Kim Min-hyuk had been taking a break since earlier.

That’d been the case even before Hochi got up to speak on the phone.

I don’t know what he wanted to say, to call me and Hochi, but he wanted to tell the matter as soon as possible.

To be honest.

Waiting for someone who feels like they can talk, is quite a pain, from the standpoint of being able to read other people’s thoughts at any time.

“Oh, well, I got a call from the United States.”

“United States?”

“Huh. Some of the Awakened people in the US lab are from Korea. I got a call through them, but.....”

Well, good.

I’ve decided.

Let’s seriously think about hitting Kim Min-hyuk later.

“They say it seems like a meteorite is flying to Earth?”

“Huh?”

A very strange story popped out of Kim Min-hyuk’s mouth.

What meteorite?

“It was observed yesterday. There seems to be a giant meteorite flying towards Earth.”

It was definitely an unexpected issue.

“Oh really?”

“Huh.”

There are really special things in life.

What crime did the earth commit that only bad news kept popping up since the beginning of the 21st century?

[Sorry.]

I ignored the earth’s apology and asked Kim Min-hyuk.

There was one questionable thing.

“But if it’s flying in, what else is there? You’re not sure are you?”

“Because I hadn’t observed it at all until a while ago, I found out about it out of the blue. I don’t think we have confirmed it yet. Still, the contact sounded almost certain.”

Well, I see.

“So I mean.....”

Kim Min-hyuk dragged his words again.

I was urged to feed him honey chestnuts so at least he wouldn’t get hurt.

I thought about it for a while, but eventually decided to quit.

Kim Min-hyuk was too weak to hit with his light heart.

I thought that I should put this guy in the Tutorial and train him.

“That... What you did... It’s not you right?”

Kim Min-hyuk asked, looking at my eyes.

“Huh? What?”

“You mean that meteorite, isn’t that something you made or dragged here?”

“...not really.”

Kim Min-hyuk threw off his hesitant attitude and smiled broadly.

“Yes! As expected! I believed in you, man. No matter what you’ve done, I don’t think you would drag a meteorite to Earth.”

Then, he sighed for a long time.

When I looked at his face, it looked like he had lost ten years.

This motherfucker, you doubted me, you're suspicious of me.

What do you usually think of me?

Recently, I was annoyed due to seeing people who were working against Lee Ho-jae Faith.

I left it to Hochi, but I still didn't like it.

Kim Min-hyuk also knew that.

Then, when he heard that a meteorite was flying in the car, I guess he thought I was trying to drop a meteor over the heads of the opposing activists or religious groups.

I understood.

That's understandable.

Still, I didn't feel good.

“Get some athlete's foot.”

Kim Min-hyuk trembled.

“Suddenly, my foot seems to be itchy, but is it just my imagination.....?”

Why blame your imagination?

To heal that, you'll need potions, not regular athlete's foot medicine.

Originally, I tried to give him circular hair loss rather than athlete's foot, but it seemed too severe, so I compromised with athlete's foot.

“Anyway... So, a request for cooperation came from the US' side. It is impossible to stop meteorites with only technology. Can you stop it?”

Kim Min-hyuk asked.

It was much more comfortable than when he asked if I was dragging a meteorite.

“Of course.”

In fact, I can do anything with inanimate objects.

Whatever it really is.

“Can you make the meteorite stop without any damage?”

It’s easy.

I just need to erase the kinetic energy.

“Is it possible to make the meteorite into Kim Min-hyuk?”

Hochi intervened from the side and asked.

“It is possible. It’s like pouring out my power into useless places.”

I could have done it.

After the meteorite is reduced, it could be transformed into a human body, and Kim Min-hyuk’s memory, personality, and soul could be injected into the body.

It wasn’t easy.

It was a meaningless waste of power.

“Why is that an example...”

“It would be best to just blow it up in the atmosphere in moderation. I think that will be the least troublesome.”

When a meteorite approaches Earth enough, it just bursts.

Like a fireworks display.

“Then would there be additional damage from the fragments?”

“That’s something I can handle easily.”

In fact, if Earth had been sanctified, a much more colorful and fun way could have been used.

There was a lot of faith in my religion on Earth, but it wasn’t enough to make it my sanctuary.

A sanctuary has great significance to its God.

The biggest difference between a deity and a non-deity is that they can twist the laws of the world.

The divine power, which begins with the power to interfere with others, changes the world itself.

Individuals who have full control over themselves will be able to interfere with other microcosms outside through divine power.

And the individual who is able to interfere with another microcosm soon reaches the level of interfering with the grand universe.

A god can use its divine power to modify the laws of the world in the direction he wants.

And the god who is united with the world through a sanctuary becomes another being.

It is the same in that it modifies the laws of the world.

However, the cost of the modification disappears.

Therefore, the power that a god exercises in his sanctuary is not a

twisting of the law.

It's the redefining of the law.

I explained it to Kim Min-hyuk and Hochi.

Both of them have recently had a growing interest in Godhood.

"Something just doesn't come across."

Kim Min-hyuk said.

It's a story too far from himself.

Hochi looked similar.

I decided to give an example that touched a little.

"If Earth was my sanctuary, I could explode a meteorite and change all the fragments that fall into pieces and fall into Kim Min-hyuk. Let thousands of Kim Min-hyuk fall from the sky like hail. At no cost. Or you can make Kim Min-hyuk fall from the sky instead of rain. Not once, but every time. Until the end of the world."

"Ah, I get it."

"...It's a clear explanation, but why is that the example..."

The theology class stopped right there.

Although both are showing interest.

Actually, it's going too far.

Kim Min-hyuk was natural, and even Hochi was.

"Returning to the previous story, Can I ask you if you could come to the US the day after tomorrow. Oh, and the story about the meteorite

is absolutely secret.”

“US? It’s annoying.”

Can’t I just tell them to come here?

Meteorites will be handled roughly.

In Korea, there are people who believe in me and support me.

In America... it was an annoying situation, they’d be asking questions.

I wanted to send someone else as my agent.

Everyone was busy now.

It will be a little hard, but I’m just thinking of asking Hochi.

I suddenly saw Hochi sitting next to me staring at me.

“What is wrong with you.”

“Hey hey hey.”

“What, why.”

“Can we spill the information that the meteorite is flying in?”

Hochi’s eyes were twinkling.

Chapter 344

Seoul (28)

“Dr. Han!”

“How did this happen..... Please say something! Wait...!”

Dr. Han Myeong-ho got up while avoiding his clamoring colleagues.

He strode to remove those who followed.

There were some who followed, but no one was able to keep up with the alarming speed of the top Awakened, Han Myeong-ho.

Han Myeong-ho was able to get rid of them in no time.

Han Myeong-ho, hiding between the emergency exit stairs, wiped off his cold sweat.

It wasn't sweat from exercise.

In order for Han Myeong-ho, one of America's greatest Awakened, to sweat from a workout, he had to run a marathon.

It was a cold sweat caused by mental stress.

Han Myeong-ho was recruited to the US after clearing the Tutorial.

And he had never been dissatisfied with that fact.

The United States maintained its position as the world's most powerful country even after the cataclysm.

Although the sea routes in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were

blocked, the North American continent had abundant resources to survive.

America's influence over South America was still there.

The Awakening Force, the Navy, and Air Force were cut in half, but in return, they defeated the G-class beasts that appeared on the coast near New York, and have not suffered serious damage from the beasts since then.

Above all, there was too much piled up before the cataclysm.

Therefore, Han Myeong-ho chose the United States.

Han Myeong-ho, who was one of the few Awakened who studied magic itself, was recruited to the United States as an Awakened and a researcher, and since then, he has been receiving good treatment and continuing his research.

Not long ago, he even made tangible results as he began clinical trials of drugs that had an effect similar to the lowest potion in the Tutorial.

But that was the story until yesterday.

Han Myeong-ho sat down on the stairs of the emergency exit and picked up his cell phone.

As soon as he opened his portal site, he noticed a provocative phrase.

[A real version of Armageddon. An asteroid impact is imminent.]

[The diameter of the asteroid 'X' is 33 km. Three times the size of the asteroid that fell in the Cretaceous Period 6 million years ago.]

[Experts say "There is really no way to prevent destruction."]

[99% of life on Earth's surface will go extinct.....]

It was a topic that was currently covered throughout the world.

Of course it had to be.

Who wouldn't be shaken when the Earth was about to perish.

Astronomers around the world continued to prove that the asteroid's approach was true.

Now people weren't wondering if the asteroid's approach was real, they were worried about how to survive.

"Sigh. I'm going crazy, really."

The problem was that this information was from Korea.

Asteroid related information was delivered from the United States to Korea, and within 10 minutes of requesting cooperation, all Korean media outlets began reporting on the asteroid.

All at once, fiercely as if bombarding.

Anyone could have guessed that the information was leaked from the Korean side.

Whether that was intentional or not, however, could not be said.

The biggest problem in this messy situation was Dr. Han Myeong-ho was the liaison between the United States and Korea.

This caused Dr. Han Myung-ho to be blamed for the leak of information regarding the asteroid.

Such a thing had to be stopped no matter what.

He was still being questioned by his colleagues, but practical reprimanding would come soon.

It wasn't about being dismissed, but he couldn't rebut if he were to be punished.

[There was a riot in California. Many police officers have died due to the unrest.....]

[Empty convenience stores. Increased violence during shopping.....]

“Uh.....”

Han Myeong-ho held his cell phone and bowed his head.

The situation was a bit serious.

When a huge natural disaster is foretold, society falls into chaos.

It always happened.

However, what made this incident different from before was that it was complete destruction, not just something on the level of a natural disaster.

And the fact of the matter is that the citizens have already experienced the monstrous cataclysms, so they are now ready to do anything to survive.

Finally, there was a mixture of Awakened people among such citizens.

Far from the government's efforts, there was a row of unrest that required the police to be dispatched.

This is why the US government tried to control the information.

However, the US government had not been able to prevent information that had been spread widely from Korea.

He was so distracted that he couldn't even prevent scientists from other countries from making follow-up announcements, so people thought that the cause of the incident was Han Myeong-ho himself.

Han Myeong-ho grabbed his cell phone tightly and sat down on the floor.

He was confused because he thought that he was the starting point of all this havoc.

It was a little cool as the cold floor touched his hips.

He looked for a name in his cell phone directory and called him.

Fortunately, the other person answered the phone this time.

The person Han Myeong-ho called was Kim Min-hyuk.

Vice-manager of the Tutorial's Korean server vigilante.

Korean guild leader.

And not so long ago, he was the person who he had informed of the asteroid and asked for cooperation.

“Oh, brother!”

[Uh, is it Myeong-ho?]

“No, what happened!”

Han Myeong-ho cried out without knowing.

So he emphasized the confidentiality of the government, and the information spread to the media in just 10 minutes.

Han Myeong-ho shouted with resentment, anger, regret and disappointment.

“Brother! Please say something!”

* * *

“Uh... Well... That... Sorry! I'll call you back later!”

Kim Min-hyuk hung up the phone.

Then, he pulled out the battery of his cell phone.

“Well done.”

Kim Min-hyuk looked at me with a strange look, but I ignored it.

What am I supposed to do?

“How is the situation?”

“It’s crazy. It’s not just an uproar. It’s almost like a war.”

I had guessed so.

With his head bowed, he looked at Hochi, who looked dead.

“You made a mistake this time?”

Hochi nodded.

I could understand.

Hochi understood humans.

He understood most of the emotion and behavior that humans possessed.

However, there were often exceptions.

The biggest among them was survival instinct.

Hochi had no idea what a desire to survive was like in the first place.

Hochi was not to blame.

I made it that way.

However, it was true that Hochi was impatient, not aware of the difference between humans and himself.

In fact, it was of no harm for me to let Hochi experience small failures.

“For now, we are protecting all our believers.”

Whenever something happened to the believers, they called in the challengers training in Yong-yong’s Tutorial to protect the believers one by one...

The challengers protected the believers with all their might.

This was due to the fact that the performance in the trip as well as the satisfaction of the believer and the rating given by the believer directly related to the rise of the level.

And everybody was eager because they were given a break according to the score once a week.

Faith was no problem.

Rather, it was soaring.

The believers, who seemed to not even feel the fear of death, were going out on the streets and preaching.

There were also many people who earned faith by selling ramen and canned food.

It was a wise choice.

It was more advantageous to secure food to hold public value than ramen or canned food.

As it turned out, the whole country was offering everything it had to earn public value.

Even the President and the National Assembly did the same.

‘I declare that the amendment favoring the Lee Ho-jae Faith has now been passed.’

The National Assembly was trying to make Lee Ho-jae Faith the state religion by revising the constitution.

And through such actions, he tried to collect a little more public value.

All the police officers who went out to quell the unrest were wearing the symbol of Lee Ho-jae Faith around their bodies.

There were overwhelming amounts of people praising Lee Ho-jae Faith with microphones in every square crowded with people, and when the live broadcast started, some of the performers, whether it was an anchor, an announcer, a singer, or an actor, suddenly shouted Lee Ho-jae cheer.

When considering the gains and losses of the church, the turmoil that was taking place was obviously a gain.

It was regrettable that Lee Ho-jae Faith had not yet spread to foreign countries and was limited to Korea.

However, the external damage was too great.

Too many people were dead and injured.

My believers are being protected, but I can't help people who have no relationship with us.

The relationship between God and believer must be in an unfair trade relationship.

It cannot exist in the first place.

“By the way, the damage is a bit serious. More than expected.”

Korea is very good.

In foreign countries, there were frequent conflicts of warlords, coups, etc., rather than civil violence.

“Because I’ve already gone through something similar once.”

When the monsters and tutorials first appeared.

Both Kim Min-hyuk and I were the first challengers, so I heard about those days.

I wondered what happened at that time and what kind of atmosphere the world had.

“What are you going to do in the future?”

“Let’s start the public debate.”

Of course.

It was like a war between the media and information.

It was a game that was ultimately won when all the information on despair and the end of times was pushed out and instead replaced by Lee Ho-jae Faith’s theory of hope.

“Then you’d better go out. It’s hard to get people to believe it right away, but it’s going to work if you do an interview saying that you can step out and stop the asteroid.”

“Well. Do I really need to do that?”

It was clearly wrong that people were hurt by the unrest, but Hochi’s idea of raising interest and dependence on Lee Ho-jae Faith through people’s sense of crisis was wonderful.

It was not yet the right time to completely eliminate the asteroid apocalypse.

It was time to use it to expand.

“The biggest problem is that there is no time for issues related to Lee Ho-jae Faith. Even if I don’t know it in Korea, it is difficult to achieve tangible results by promoting it to foreign countries.”

Kim Min-hyuk replied.

Of course, it would be through the media.

“You can throw a stronger issue.”

“What issue is bigger than the end of times?”

Kim Minhyuk asked.

There was.

“There is survival. We could look at the two together, but separately, people will care more about survival than the end itself.”

“Is there a way?”

“Let’s do an event.”

“Event?”

“Hmm. An event to commemorate the imminent end.”

* * *

Han Myeong-ho was looking at Yahoo, squatting on the stairs.

Every news outlet relayed just how desperate the situation was.

He immediately felt skeptical.

Han Myeong-ho was also a wizard and scientist at the same time, and

he received detailed information about the asteroid from the US government.

In his opinion, they could not overcome this by combining the techniques of modern civilization with the power of the Awakened.

The only way to survive was to enter an underground bunker and survive.

He himself, is of course, an important resource, so he will be able to live well in a bunker prepared by the US government.

However, most people will not enter the bunker and will explode at the same time as an asteroid impact on Earth's surface.

It has been a problem since then.

A collision with an asteroid will completely reverse the Earth's environment.

To the extent that humans can hardly live.

In that situation, he wondered if the bunker would remain safe, and he was worried that even if it was safe, he would have to live in the bunker for the rest of his life.

“Sigh.”

After all that he went through.

All the fierce and eventful past days he had to clear the Tutorial and fight the monsters felt pointless.

In the end, it was all in vain.

Han Myeong-ho checked all the news and tried to get up from his seat, but found a strange word mixed in the search query rankings.

Apocalypse, Asteroid X, Asteroid Crash Timer, New York Times,

Wholesale Mart, etc. In the window where search terms were lined up, Korean words suddenly rose to number one.

Trending Now.

1. Lee Ho-jae Faith

1. The New York Times

1. Apocalypse timer

.

.

And it was the moment when he saw that unexpected search term.

[Recognized the existence of Lee Ho-jae Faith.]

[Registered as a temporary member of Lee Ho-jae Faith]

[A limited number of rewards can be obtained.]

[You can obtain a limited amount of official value.]

[The production of faith is completely limited.]

[In order to produce faith, it is necessary to be recognized as an official member of Lee Ho-jae Faith, or reflect on Lee Ho-jae's existence deeply and sincerely.]

[30pt are obtained as a new registration privilege.]

[30pt will be obtained as a bonus at the end of the day.]

[There is no referral. You get 0pt.]

[When you recommend Lee Ho-jae Faith to someone, both the

recommender and the recommended can get 15pt.]

[The list of recommended rewards is listed preferentially.]

[As the end is imminent, we recommend food reward.]

[Rice 3kg-1pt]

[Cheese pork cutlet-2pt]

[Potato 4kg-1pt]

[2 cans of tomatoes (0.8kg)-1pt]

[There is also a survival kit on the list of miscellaneous goods that can survive an asteroid impact.]

[You don't have a bunker in your basement? Do not worry.]

[Capsule type survival small pot-30000pt]

[Do you remember the small, round spaceship in Dragon Ball X? Yes. This is.]

[A miracle survival capsule that can survive for ten thousand years if there is enough food!]

[You don't have food? You can click 'here' to see detailed instructions on how to produce faith.]

[An opportunity not to be missed! Start right now!]

“This... What...”

* * *

“Did you see it? The greatness of this body?”

Ha.

Why am I so great?

Through the religious window, public value and faith were soaring like crazy, and the number of believers was soaring around the world.

It was an achievement only with the ease of membership registration process, free point event, and a little friendly explanation.

Now, if Lee Ho-jae Faith is recognized and cooperates with foreign governments, it will spread faster.

Major foreign media outlets have already confirmed the existence of Lee Ho-jae Faith and began to talk about the rewards of Lee Ho-jae Faith and how it will help them survive in the future.

Everything was a matter of time.

“...Isn’t this a scam? It’s too much of a cheat.”

It’s all thanks to me.

Chapter 345

Earth (1)

“It’s serious.”

“What?”

The deficit.

I am not doing business by digging myself into a hole.

In order to receive faith from the believers, I had to bear a similar expenditure.

But in the current situation, my expenditures were far exceeding my income.

But it was necessary.

In Korea, it’s a bit better.

Foreign believers rarely produce faith.

They don’t even know much about the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

However, in the face of a meteorite collision, Lee Ho-jae Faith was able to help.

Anytime, anywhere, you can get fresh food with only a score.

And it helps even when you are seriously injured or in danger.

Before the end, the Lee Ho-jae Faith became a very valuable commodity.

Of course, as soon as people encountered the Lee Ho-jae Faith, they tried to collect points.

They didn't ignore system messages while worrying about fraud.

Now, whether it was a sturdy string or a rotten string, they had to grab it.

It was good to increase the number of believers and to spread the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

It was also okay to show the rewards to the congregation as an event.

The problem was that my strength and supplies were leaking out.

Another problem was that the supply and demand of faith could not keep up with the expenditure now that most of the believers are earning points based on public value rather than faith.

“In the future, it will all come back as faith. I think it's an investment.”

Kim Min-hyuk said.

I thought so too.

In fact, the deficit was not enough to have a big impact on my strength.

But... It is a little dangerous.

Basically, I wouldn't like any more disadvantages that come from others.

Of course, I am confident that it will be profitable in the future, but if things go wrong, it will be quite annoying.

“Turn it off.....”

I checked the phone.

From riots to light crimes such as theft and assault.

The Internet news section, which was reminiscent of a post-apocalyptic worldview, was filled with stories about the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

People who had been turning away from the Lee Ho-jae Faith in the meantime, were urgently looking for relevant information.

My believers did not miss the opportunity to earn merit and spread information widely.

The same was true of foreign internet forums.

So, starting with what the hell is the Lee Ho-jae Faith?

Information on how to get the most important points and how to earn rewards.

At first, the translations of Korean believers passed, and at some point, foreigners who became new believers began to produce their own promotional materials.

-the Lee Ho-jae Faith Compensation List

-How to survive the apocalypse through the Lee Ho-jae Faith

All those who have confirmed the Lee Ho-jae Faith will see the Lee Ho-jae Faith system window.

If you accidentally turn it off and have not been able to check it, you can check it again from the link below.

The Lee Ho-jae Faith supplies a variety of things through 'faith'.

The main ones are food and survival capsules.

If you collect achievements and purchase survival capsules, you can be guaranteed survival even in meteorites.

Food can be obtained in capsules with a constant gathering of faith every month.

And...

-Real purchase video of Lee Ho-jae Faith survival capsule

-[Subtitle] How to gain faith in the Lee Ho-jae Faith

☐Thank you for the kind video. No matter how much I searched, I could only find explanations in Korean, but thanks to that, I understood.

☐So, you have to join as a believer to gain faith, right? Should I find a flight ticket to Korea even now?

☐Because there are Lee Ho-jae Faith branches all over the world right now, there's no need to do that. Of course it depends a little on where you live now.

-[Subtitle] How to obtain the Lee Ho-jae Faith official value

-The most effective ways to earn public value

-[Q&A] I am teaching English in Korea, and I became a member of the Lee Ho-jae Faith last week. If you have any questions, I'll explain.

There was a news article about the Lee Ho-jae Faith on the main portal site.

Related content was also spread to the webpages of game enthusiasts and small communities.

Videos explaining how to use the Lee Ho-jae Faith's system were also uploaded on video sites such as Youtube.

The speed of the spread was a bit weird.

It was almost like some kind of virus.

Evangelism was conducted at a rapid pace in Korea, but not this much.

There were so many desperate people.

Before the meteorite hits Earth, people who were eager to get as many points as possible used various methods that I never thought of to promote the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

And I earned points as well.

“You, can you read English? Isn’t it only possible to speak with your skill?”

Asked Kim Min-hyuk.

Of course I can read it.

As I am a god, how could I not read foreign languages?

And even before I went into the Tutorial, I spoke English.

Kim Min-hyuk asked as I nodded my head.

“By the way... These people are going to buy those capsules for survival now.”

Kim Min-hyuk said, pointing to the numerous promotional posts that appeared on his cell phone.

It was.

It was to get points, and to get food and survival capsules with those points.

Survival capsules preceded food.

Food could be obtained somehow, but a survival capsule that was safe even if a meteorite fell could not be obtained without the reward of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

“But aren’t you going to stop the meteorite?”

“Mhm.”

“Then this... Isn’t that a real scam? It’s a survival capsule you don’t need.”

“Well... yes.”

That doesn’t mean you can’t sell the capsules.

That capsule and food are the biggest factors that are now attracting people to the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

At first, after urgently changing the points to food, they confirmed that they can really get rewards through the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

After finding out it was true, they became more involved in the religion for the capsule.

Well... If I had to explain it, it was like a scam to trick people by showing samples and examples of multi-level scammers first, and then showing multi-level vision and future income.

Well, I couldn’t even say no.

Anyway, it was true that this method was effective.

You should paddle when the water comes in.

The believers who bought the survival capsule might be a little dissatisfied.

We can do a refund event later.

And those who buy survival capsules can earn significant public value just by showing or notifying others.

There will be no damage.

I left my phone for a while and looked around the globe.

It was still in an uproar.

There were people running sweatily on the soles of their feet to get the Lee Ho-jae Faith's score, but there were too many people in an urgent situation that couldn't even care about it.

There are two reasons for most of the unrest in the news of a meteorite impact.

To ensure survival.

Or because they can't guarantee survival.

In order to somehow survive the meteorite collision, people stole by breaking the windows of supermarkets to secure even a little bit of food.

They went to safe houses of people they didn't know, tried to get inside.

While protesting the government to make a way to survive, they couldn't stand the anxiety and fear and tried to bring down the police or the other leaders.

They attack others first, fearing that the power to protect themselves will disappear or be stolen.

Some gave up on their hope for survival and recklessly destroyed what they saw around them for a moment of liberation and self-destructive pleasure.

Attacking others, taking in the sense of superiority of that moment, degrading themselves and overcoming the fear of death.

I looked at Kim Min-hyuk.

This guy was reading the latest news without hesitation, then he put his laptop and mobile phone on the table and turned the windows off and on.

He was nervous.

His legs were trembling.

Considering that he was extremely timid.

I could see how much Kim Min-hyuk is shaking right now.

It wasn't the fear of the meteorite colliding.

Kim Min-hyuk believed that I was going to get rid of the meteorite.

He's a guy who doesn't know anything about my strength.

Rather, it was the fundamental anxiety and excitement of the person watching the whole world overturned by an event.

Somehow I felt a sense of wit.

When I did something grand, these people were the ones I saw often in the Tutorial stage before.

Due to the nature of the Tutorial Hell difficulty, I have often seen the end of the world and the people living in it.

Perhaps that's why this was nothing new or surprising.

People who usually cower behind their backs in fear usually have a similar reaction.

[Breaking News] Emergency Summit held. The venue is Korea.

Breaking news came up.

It wasn't on the Internet, it was news that came via text message on the phone.

Similar to the event of an earthquake, the cell phone vibrated for a long time to notify the news as if it were a disaster warning.

When I turned on the news, an elderly man was making a presentation with a firm expression.

The summit was held in Korea, and he said that he will do his best to resolve this crisis as wisely and peacefully as possible.

Hochi stood behind him.

Why is he there again?

He seems to be working hard to make up for his mistakes.

“But who is that uncle?”

“...He is the President.”

Oh, I remember.

I know he's been getting along with Hochi recently.

“Through this meeting, we will work with the leaders of each country to resolve negative perceptions of the Lee Ho-jae Faith so that more people can survive the crisis through the Lee Ho-jae Faith.....”

* * *

So a day passed.

“Brother... Should we... Really do something like this...?”

Asked the younger brother.

The older brother, who was holding the baseball bat next to his younger brother, answered.

“...I can’t help it. The nearby supermarkets have already been robbed. I can’t go any further because the gas station is out of oil. If we’re going to live... I have to do it for our family.”

His older brother had a wife and two young daughters.

The younger brother, who lived in his older brother’s house, knew how much his brother loved his family.

So he couldn’t stop him.

“Near here... The only place where you can get more food is in other people’s homes.”

It was a very remote place.

Thanks to this, he was not caught up in the raging protesters or bikers. However, it was difficult to get food, and eventually they decided to invade others’ homes on their own.

The two held the baseball bat tight and leaned against the wall.

Just go over the fence, break the window, and break into the house like that.

The people living in this house were old couples.

They will not be able to defeat the strong brothers.

But.

“Brother.....”

The younger brother kept crying and hesitating.

Even though he knew that this was the only way he could survive, even though he knew he had to do it not only for himself, but also for his family members.

Still, he couldn't make this tough decision.

"Brother, can we just get food with points.....?"

"...You idiot. That's not enough."

The brothers also knew about the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

All of the family members received the Lee Ho-jae Faith's event privileges, and they even registered as recommendations for each other to get as many points as possible.

And all those points were converted to food.

But it was still lacking.

There was a disaster shelter in the basement, but there was barely enough food to eat for a few dozens of days.

The younger brother wasn't comfortable with this.

He had lived a life where he had never harmed anyone.

This kind of thing was neither familiar nor pleasant.

But the brothers could not back down.

"Let's go."

The older brother said again, and his younger brother could not refuse.

It was then when the two put their hands on the wall.

[Warning!]

[If you commit a criminal act, your official value may be deducted.]

[If your official value becomes negative, you cannot obtain new rewards until all negative points are paid.]

[If the public value falls below a certain level, you may be subject to penalties and sanctions.]

“...Brother.”

“...Uh.”

The brothers had to pause for a moment with their hands on the wall.

They were embarrassed, but they were also a little creeped out.

A message that appeared immediately after committing a crime.

Someone was watching them.

[It is recommended to purchase additional food with more public value and faith.]

[How to get public value is well explained on the needle portal site. Check it out, you punks. Don't you know Google, Yahoo or Wiki?]

[The faith comes in steadily every month like saving money, so if you stack it once, you will be able to secure food regularly for a long time.]

“...Let's go home first.”

The brothers hurriedly fell off the wall and started running to their homes.

And a message appeared to them again.

[You have made the right choice.]

[Acquired 20pt as a reward.]

[Don't tell others that you got points for trying to steal.]

Chapter 346

Earth (2)

[Crime rates are declining. Is the Lee Ho-jae Faith really the answer?]

After the meteorite was announced, crime rates across the country began to drop sharply.

The day after the meteorite was announced, the Lee Ho-jae Faith announced the sale of survival capsules and food that could survive the meteorite crash, and accordingly, crimes such as theft and residential intrusion, which were spreading like flames, quickly disappeared.

It's not just a story of Korea.

In most of the areas where the Lee Ho-jae Faith had spread, the crime rate had plummeted.....

-Isn't that natural? In the midst of this, the only ones who break through the door of a convenience store are real criminals. Just sitting still, writing a comment, and praying, you can solve the problem of what to eat. So let's trust the Lee Ho-jae Faith. Cold-hearted and charismatic, Lee Ho-jae is awesome.

-If I knew it would be like this, I would have joined the Lee Ho-jae Faith in advance and earned some public value... Fuck. I wrote comments all day and I've only earned 3000 points.

-I have already secured a survival capsule because my mother was an early believer in the Lee Ho-jae Faith. Haha

-Wow, congratulations. But what's your address?

-Why are you asking for my address?

A few more days passed.

The time until the predicted meteor crash was decreasing.

But Earth was quickly regaining its tranquility.

This was usually the case in areas where the Lee Ho-jae Faith was spread.

The crimes committed to gain food in a time of crisis were completely resolved.

Rather than breaking into an already empty convenience store or factory warehouse, or breaking into someone else's house to get food, it was much better to get the Lee Ho-jae Faith's rewards.

The quantity was higher, it was much safer, and the freshness of the food was guaranteed at the time of purchase.

Above all, it wasn't that difficult to get a reward.

[New sign-up event!]

[As soon as you join as a regular member, you can get an additional 150pt.]

[Please visit the nearest government office or the Lee Ho-jae Faith branch!]

Honestly, it was a beneficial event.

Those who confirmed that the rewards of this system were genuine became members of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

If there was no Lee Ho-jae Faith in their area, they even opened a branch themselves.

If one put a sign saying the Lee Ho-jae Faith XX branch in front of one's gate and sketched the mark of the Lee Ho-jae Faith, it was also a

kind of branch and temple.

Once they became a member of the Lee Ho-jae Faith, they could not commit crime.

If a crime was committed, the content of the crime would be shown in the religious window.

And it could be easily checked by others.

It was the same as walking around with the stigma of a crime stamped on their forehead.

In fact, police now started checking people's religious windows instead of ID cards.

In some areas, in order to lower the crime rate (and to gain public value for local leaders), all citizens were forced to join the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

People who became enthusiastic about public value actively reported criminals when they found them, and even caught them and handed them over to the police.

In this situation, the criminals had no choice but to repent for forgiveness or hide in a place out of sight.

It became an environment where people could not commit crimes because they were scared of human eyes.

However, there were some places where criminals were not afraid of being seen.

Usually, this was the case in areas where gangs expelled public power and created lawless zones when the unrest had just occurred, areas occupied by criminal or terrorist groups, and areas where the regime was reversed by coups by the military or awakened.

In Egypt, a group of awakened people who occupied the region forced local residents to join the Lee Ho-jae Faith and confiscated the food

obtained as compensation.

Then, they tried to get their own survival capsules using the public value of the local people.

Of course, there was no way for public value to accumulate.

So instead of rewards, the challengers of the Tutorial were dispatched.

* * *

Muhammed, who had illegally occupied the province of Luxor in Egypt, was struck by an unexpected raid.

An unidentified enemy who unexpectedly struck government offices instantly annihilated his colleagues.

They couldn't even resist.

Muhammed was a bold Awakened who cleared the Tutorial's hard difficulty and accumulated various majors on Earth.

However, even in his eyes, the attacker's skills were extraordinary.

His own colleagues were wiped out before they could even resist properly.

Muhammed gave up his resistance and escaped, trying to talk his way out.

Then he noticed that the attacker's face was familiar.

"Khalik! You're Khalik!?"

He found a challenger of hard difficulty like himself, Khalik.

"You saw me in competition! We used to talk about it in the community!"

A man called Khalik replied after tilting his head for a moment.

“Ah... I did. Are you Muhammed?”

“Right! Yes, I am Muhammed.”

Muhammed answered back even though he felt suspicious.

That Khalik was stuck in the Tutorial.

How is he on Earth?

And for what reason was Khalik attacking him?

Above all else, how did he become so strong?

Rather than immediately asking questions, Muhammed began talking to divert Khalik's attention and gain favor.

“You said that your family is in Rousseau, right?”

“No.”

“Huh...? I'm sure you...”

“My family is being protected elsewhere.”

Khalik, who responded frankly, frowned.

It was because of the message that appeared before his eyes.

[Warning! GM has confirmed your negligent attitude.]

[Spending time meaninglessly during a mission may be subject to discipline]

[GM demands that the mission be completed immediately.]

“Ha... I wanted to rest a little more.”

“What...?”

Khalik swung his sword at Muhammed, who expressed doubt.

After killing him neatly, Khalik threw his sword into his inventory and checked the settlement message.

[Special Quest – Defeat the hordes of awakened criminals who occupy Luxor.]

[The special dispatch mission has been successfully accomplished.]

[Reward 1732pt.]

[The dispatch mission ends.]

[Return to the Tutorial. Be prepared for the move.]

Khalik felt gloomy.

He will surely start a mission as soon as he returns to the Tutorial.

“...The mission is over, can I take a break?”

[GM denies your request. You still need more training.]

“Ha.....”

Khalik was summoned to the Tutorial with a sigh.

* * *

“It’s empty.”

Said Seregia.

I agree.

Everyone got busy, so I was left alone at the temple.

Hochi and Kim Min-hyuk were really busy.

In particular, Hochi wanted to make up for his mistake, attending the summit meeting to inform the Lee Ho-jae Faith and preaching in remote areas where the Lee Ho-jae Faith could not be spread.

Hochi knew the timing. He introduced new features to the believers.

It was a joint purchase.

[The joint purchase function will be activated from today onwards.]

[With the consent of multiple people, joint purchase of rewards is possible.]

[Joint purchase event begins!]

[When purchasing for more than 100 people, the price of the item will be discounted by 10%.]

[[When purchasing for more than 10,000 people, the price of the item will be discounted by 20%.]

[When purchasing for more than 1,000,000 people, the price of the item will be discounted by 30%.]

It is now possible to collect all of the family's scores and purchase survival capsules one by one.

Of course, it was not a function for selling capsules.

**[Superior Miracle-Outer Space Confrontation:
10,000,000,000,000pt]**

[You can protect the planet from threats from space.]

[For example, a meteorite.]

[Co-purchase is in progress.]

[You can participate in joint purchase after consent.]

**[Current Purchase Achievement-Outer Space Confrontation:
(814,332/10,000,000,000,000)]**

It was for this.

Honestly, there was a lot of skepticism.

Obviously, a conspiracy theory will emerge that the meteorite was manipulated to crash on Earth for the expansion of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

It was questionable whether the score of 10 trillion would be gathered.

Would people spontaneously try to score those astronomical figures?

It was unlikely.

First, I decided to leave it to Hochi, so I didn't stop him.

“Why aren't you doing anything by yourself? Why are you the only one lazing around?”

It was shocking.

I can't believe Seregia asked me why I'm so lazy.

“Because I have nothing to do.”

“Isn't there a quest for the Hundred Gods Temple?”

“No.”

“Yes?”

There really wasn't.

A few days ago, the quest window of the Hundred Gods Temple went blank.

[God of Light-(Completed)]

[God of Light-(NEW!)]

[God of Light-(NEW!)]

[God of Remorse-Dialogue with the God of Duel (Completed)]

[God of Origin-Dialogue with the God of Duel (Completed)]

**[God of Commitment-Dialogue with the God of Duel
(Completed)]**

[God of Hope-Truce (Completed)]

[God of Death-Purification of Thanatos (in progress)]

[God of Heaven-?]

[God of Adventure-?]

[God of Pain-?]

[God of Nature-?]

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If it wasn't an already completed quest, it was all question marks.

Kirikiri said that the question mark means that they have not yet decided on a quest.

All of the quests that weren't question marks were either already completed or in progress, so there was nothing I could do.

There was a quest from the God of Light, but I decided to ignore that.

"That's weird."

"Right?"

Although there wasn't a question mark before.

Not all remaining gods have question marks.

Something is coming.

I had to think so.

Since it was on the verge of an event, I decided to finish the quest and watch the result.

To be able to reset the quest according to the result.

"Is that really just a meteorite?"

"Maybe not. If it isn't, you can use it to decorate a different story."

In any case, I had to remain still on Earth in order to be prepared for an emergency.

At least until I know what's going on.

“How about the rabbit?”

Seregia asked about Kirikiri.

“I do not know.”

After the quest window was flooded with question marks, she couldn't be contacted.

I then realized that previously I was too dependent on Kirikiri.

Most of the information I knew came from Kirikiri.

“Have you thought about the possibility of turning around?”

“What are you talking about?”

“When the Hundred Gods Temple quests are all completed, they promised to transfer the Tutorial to you. If you do not complete the quests, it cannot be transferred. They may deliberately not present a quest in order to not give the Tutorial.”

Things like that were possible too.

In fact, it is very likely.

It isn't only one god who doesn't want to pass the Tutorial to me.

There must be at least four or five.

And such gods can use the very simple method of not giving me a quest.

I was expecting it from before.

The God of Hope did that.

There has been a story that they have been taking advantage of the

system loopholes, and even within the Tutorial.

Even if I recall the words they said to me in the past, the God of Hope was a god that would think negatively of the Tutorial transfer.

Although the God of Hope attacked first, the fight began.

If not, someday I would have attacked the God of Hope first.

From the beginning, I tried to clear the quest as much as possible, but I was thinking of obtaining permission even for the gods who gave impossible quests with effort.

“What if all the remaining gods reject the system?”

Asked Seregia.

There was nothing to worry about.

The answer was set a long time ago.

“We have to follow the original plan.”

Before making a deal with Kirikiri to transfer the Tutorial in exchange for the quests.

As I promised when I was trapped on the 60th floor.

“I have to beat them all down.”

Chapter 347

Earth (3)

The new function of the miracle co-purchase gave people another means of survival.

Instead of surviving the meteorite crash, it's blocking the meteorite.

The media talked about joint purchases all day long.

It was a fairy tale story that everyone could join forces to prevent the end of the world.

A discount was applied to the total score for purchasing the highest quality miracle, Outer Space Confrontation.

It also calculated the number of points that must be paid per person by dividing by the number of members.

“It's definitely not a few points.”

The news anchor across the screen said.

“Although viewers who are watching TV may be able to check it, my faith score is 29pt every month.”

The anchor was also a member of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Now, most of the people in the profession who appeared on TV believed in the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

It was because of the religious window that could be checked over the screen through Hochi's updates.

The believers weren't happy to see actors belonging to other religions than the Lee Ho-jae Faith appear on TV.

The broadcasting station sent out a performer from the Lee Ho-jae Faith that viewers liked.

Now, rather than how attractive and capable celebrities are, it has become a world that considers how faithful they are.

"It's a very small score compared to the 10 trillion points needed to stop a meteorite."

The anchor talked about his merit value.

He had a fairly high merit value because he was able to express his opinions in front of the public.

However, compared to the 10 trillion points, it was too small, like the Faith.

"Experts have affirmed that we cannot collect 10 trillion points with public value. There is a limit to the number of points that can be obtained with money and social status, so it is not finite, but raising faith is the answer to securing 10 trillion points."

It was the opinion of experts, but at the same time,

"There is enough time left for the meteorite to hit the Earth. Obviously, 10 trillion points is a lot, but we will build our faith higher. It is time to evangelize to those who are still turning away from the Lee Ho-jae Faith."

The anchor said, staring straight ahead.

"We must work together to protect ourselves, our families, and even all of us and our world. That's it from 9 o'clock news..."

The anchor's comment was too inflammatory.

But the viewers cheered.

[Co-purchase is in progress.]

[You can participate in joint purchase after consent.]

**[Current Purchase Achievement-Outer Space Confrontation:
(22,314,332/10,000,000,000,000)]**

In fact, since broadcasting companies started talking about joint purchases day after day, there had been tangible results.

Many people poured out their faith and achievements in joint purchases.

Because people would save each other's scores, the opinion that no one would participate in the joint purchase was bleak.

If a meteorite collided because they did not reach 10 trillion points, people would lose everything.

Their lives and the world they lived in.

They were thrilled by the solution that appeared before the crisis.

They felt a sense of unity and belonging from the fact that so many people were sharing their will.

And through it, people were able to find a sense of stability from anxiety and fear.

The movement to collect gold on religious plates had spread all over the world, and people worked hard to evangelize and gather public value while desperately studying ways to increase their faith.

Faith was not something that could be gathered through any methodology. But through the process of immersion, faith naturally deepened.

The people who had already purchased survival capsules started to make a sound.

It was buried in the voices of many who could not find a survival capsule.

Even for those with survival capsules, since the meteorite had not fallen yet, no one made a big commotion about it.

* * *

“Can you really collect 10 trillion points?”

Asked Kim Min-hyuk.

I was skeptical.

No matter how much there is a discount for joint purchases, 10 trillion points is not a small number.

“Well.”

“How about lowering the price? As an event.”

I didn’t know if they would give me more points, but I couldn’t lower the price here.

The miracle of the highest grade is very different from the miracle of the lower grade.

All of the top miracles on my list of religious windows are divine powers.

Another special thing is this power.

It is the power of a god who can really do ‘all things’ against an ungodly person if there is enough divine power.

Naturally, the divine power is not infinite.

Unless it is a holy place of his own, a God can only perform miracles with limited power.

Even the divine power is not recovered just by resting like magic power.

Unlike ordinary miracles, power is connected to the foundation of divinity.

The consumption of divine power is extremely small, and utilization is much more free.

Seregia defined power as a miracle of using only faith in oneself.

Of course, not all gods became gods with just their own faith, but there will be no gods whose faith toward themselves does not even exist.

Power played a similar role to divinity to explain the identity of God.

Therefore, most gods had only a small number of powers.

The reason I have a variety of powers enough to fill the list of religious windows is because in the past, Hochi had cheated the gods of the Pantheon and received numerous powers.

While I interpreted those powers, I made them mine by remodeling and modifying them.

Because of the nature of my divinity, the powers of other gods never conflicted with my essence, so I was able to handle all of them fully.

However, having many powers does not mean that the value of each power is lowered.....

“Anyway, power is good because it costs less. It’s a grand explanation.”

Hochi, who was listening to the explanation, took a different

approach.

Hochi tends to treat power too insignificantly.

It was natural because he had so easily obtained many powers and was neglecting it because he did not know how to use them properly.

“...I can’t lower the price of a super powerful miracle.”

“What if they can’t collect 10 trillion points in the end?”

“I’ll just stop it, well. They haven’t collected enough points, but I am impressed by the sincerity and I will write a miracle for free! You can publish it like this. The collected scores are just distributed again.”

Their benefit was also my benefit.

Of course, I am not unilaterally losing money.

My good will to the believers and stopping the meteorite will help to establish a vertical relationship between God and them.

If they witness the splendid effect of me destroying the meteorite and even returning their points, people’s faith will skyrocket.

Of course it would be a loss though.

“Is that okay?”

“It’s all right.”

The meteorite must be stopped anyway.

Unless I’m giving up on Earth.

Obviously, the loss was a loss, but it wasn’t something I couldn’t afford.

“You can think of it as an investment for the future.”

* * *

People were gathered in front of the temple.

Since it was a renovated temple that was originally a World Cup stadium, there was a large vacant lot and parking lot in front of the temple.

People filled the spot, and because that wasn't enough, they took over the surrounding roadways.

The police were working hard to block the roads to keep cars out of the way, while controlling the countless people gathering in front of the temple.

Not long ago, people gathered in front of the temple and spent time singing songs and shouting slogans.

What started out with dozens of people first appeared in the news, and it grew to about a thousand.

And when it was revealed that the people's faith was increasing as the time spent in front of the temple increased day by day, the number of people gathered in front of the temple began to exceed 10,000 units.

In fact, having been in front of the temple for a long time did not have the effect of increasing faith.

It was just because they had endured the discomfort and looked at the temple, prayed for a miracle for a long time, and because my presence in their hearts grew that much, it naturally increased.

Anyway, people said they found a way to increase their faith, and they began to gather in front of the temple.

It wasn't just Korea.

In foreign countries, pilgrims came to Korea saying that they had to go to the Holy Land and pray in person rather than the temple of a foreign branch.

So, an unprecedented crowd gathered.

From the temple, I could see crowds of people on the road and on the roof of the building.

No matter where I look, I can't see the asphalt on the road.

“Ahaha! That's cute!”

Yong-yong said, looking through the window of the temple.

Is that cute?

I had a strange feeling because the people looked like a swarm of ants.

Maybe Yong-yong found interest in that.

“Not much time is left.”

[Co-purchase is in progress.]

[You can participate in joint purchase after consent.]

**[Current Purchase Achievement-Outer Space Confrontation:
(459,237,143,832/10,000,000,000,000)]**

Kim Min-hyuk said.

There is not much time left before the meteorite hits Earth's surface.

People didn't know yet.

Governments of each country have manipulated the time remaining until the meteorite impact to prevent confusion as much as possible.

People believed that there were still a few days left for the meteorite to crash.

“We have to start.”

I used my power to make white magic linger around the temple.

People started to cheer at the sudden change.

The loud shouts were transmitted to the temple.

“You know what it is and you like it.”

“What?”

“It’s just a light.”

It is literally white light.

It is a performance light that is clearly visible even in broad daylight by mixing magical power.

[Warning! The meteorite is approaching Earth.]

[Co-purchase is in progress.]

[You can participate in joint purchase after consent.]

**[Current Purchase Achievement-Outer Space Confrontation:
(459,237,143,832/10,000,000,000)]**

[Superior miracle-There is not enough accumulated points to use the outer space battle system.]

[Superior miracle-4592 billion pt has been accumulated for joint purchase of the outer space confrontation.]

[Superior Miracle-The joint purchase of the outer space matchup

has been canceled.]

People in front of the temple began to tremble when they saw the message.

I like this.

Since there are believers in front of me, it was easy to see the reaction.

[Scores consumed for joint purchase will be returned.]

[Although it is a religion that is not yet mature, many believers have shown dedication for themselves and for all.]

[1% of the points spent for the top-level miracle joint purchase are paid as additional points.]

In addition to returning the spent points as they were, I put in 1% interest.

It was a huge loss to the point that it was painful.

It was necessary.

When another crisis came one day, the believers shouldn't have let go of their hands, thinking that I would save it on my own.

The believers had to actively participate and devote themselves to compensation.

[In the face of a global crisis, a single, top-notch miracle is used at no cost.]

[Prepare to be amazed]

Along with the roar, the white magic that circulated around the temple soared into the sky.

As the cloudy air of Seoul and the dark clouds above the sky were

pushed away, a pillar of light stretched out beyond it.

A bright white pillar of light that penetrated the atmosphere from the surface.

It was large and bright enough to be seen outside of Seoul as well as in foreign countries depending on their locations.

No scene would look more sacred than this.

“Oh, cool, cool.”

Said Hochi from the side.

The pillar of light reached the end of the atmosphere, the outer atmosphere, and formed a huge circular barrier.

Now, when the meteorite hits that barrier, it only needs to burst splendidly with a wonderful effect.

The appearance of the barrier cannot be seen with the naked eye...

“Huh? What’s that.”

“What?”

There was something strange about the meteorite.

I’m sure...

“It was just a stone block before.”

Suddenly, a powerful divine power began to be felt in the meteorite.

“Dad.”

Yong-yong also felt the strength and called me by holding my sleeve.

If that was God's plan and they intended to attack me and the Earth, then I should get my hands on it right now.

So that the impact on Earth wouldn't be as bad.

However, I had to hesitate for a moment because of an unexpected voice.

[Hi buddy! Long time no see.]

The voice that penetrated my head was that of a very familiar god.

It was the God of Hope.

Chapter 348

God of Hope (5)

[Hi buddy!]

No matter how much I thought about it, that was the God of Hope.

[Hahaha, what are you so surprised about?]

It was surprising.

In many ways.

Secondly, it was a mystery how he was able to get here while going under my radar.

Why did the God of Hope come here?

“Did you come here because you want to be wiped out?”

While running away from me, he was desperate to see the Holy Land and the believers I robbed.

You may have run away with the feeling that you have nothing to lose.

No, it can't be.

This is the human point of view.

If you are the God of Hope, you will appreciate the fact that you survived in the midst of that, and that fact will give you the strength to withstand the future.

[I'm sorry about that. I'm here to make a deal.]

A deal.

I wondered what the God of Hope could give me.

Even during this conversation, the meteorite was approaching Earth.

To reduce the damage even a little, I had to attack now.

[Haha, let's finish our play first.]

With the words of the God of Hope, the meteorite dramatically slowed down.

It stopped as if parked in front of the barrier.

A heavy roar rang out everywhere.

A huge and intense light spread out near the barriers and meteorites.

However, it was light enough to not blind the human eyes.

It was such a light that anyone would have thought that the barrier and meteorite collided.

The meteorite stopped in front of the barrier, and the noise and light was artificially created by the God of Hope.

People who were silent about the meteorite's approach began to murmur.

[The meteorite approaching Earth was blocked by the top-level miracle- Outer Space Confrontation.]

People began to cheer with confidence at the system message that appeared in front of them.

Just before, a shout as much as the roar from the sky echoed from the surface.

* * *

[That was very innovative. How can you use the system window like that?]

The God of Hope whispered.

[But why don't you give me a loan? If you get a little interest, you will be able to produce great results for you and for the believers.]

It wasn't fair.

A miracle loan without collateral will ignite human desires.

And bound by the shackles of that desire, I'll live my whole life struggling.

The human society of the present Earth is highly dependent on the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

However, it was not enough to destroy even the core of that basic society.

They worked for Lee Ho-jae Faith's score, worked hard, and obtained what they wanted in return, but in the end, it was an extension of the marketist society.

However, if anyone could borrow miracles at no cost, and if coercion and interest were added to repay them, only life to earn religious points would remain.

Labor for repayment, not for purchase, becomes exploitation.

[I learned something really good. I want to apply it to my believers right now.]

"Are there any believers left?"

[Sure.]

The God of Hope said, licking his lips.

He wasn't like the flying bug you usually saw.

He was in the form of a human girl.

Although he was good looking and had pretty eyes, he looked like an ordinary child who could be seen anywhere else in the neighborhood.

I was invited by the God of Hope to enter the meteorite.

And in that space was the God of Hope, two chairs, and a table in between.

It was a space where only those existed.

[Sit down.]

The God of Hope said, pointing to the chair in front of him.

I sat in one of the chairs and asked,

“What's with that?”

[My original look?]

“That's awful.”

There is no way the God of Hope originally looked like that.

And even if his original appearance remained, it couldn't be that way.

The God of Hope is a god who moves according to the idea of 'hope' that he has set and makes it his identity.

I know most gods do.

Because of that, it is impossible to confine self-consciousness to such a weak and ordinary body.

“It must be a look to show me.”

[I did some research on you. I referred to your dragon son. I mean, dragons are a great race.]

The God of Hope smiled.

“If you uselessly raise my family, the ceasefire agreement that protected you will disappear.”

Rude remarks about the family can be perceived as aggressive remarks that violate the agreement.

According to my arbitrary interpretation.

[Why are you so angry? Thanks to me, you could also earn faith.]

“Well, you also gathered your faith, right?”

If the meteorite was not a natural disaster, but a device by the God of Hope.

The God of Hope would also have gained faith from the people of Earth.

People who recognized the meteorite felt despair and fear as they recalled the meteorite that was flying to Earth.

And hope too.

Whenever that hope gathered through the central point of Lee Ho-jae Faith and headed for a meteorite, the God of Hope would have rejoiced and accepted the power.

You probably earned more faith than me.

Unlike simply worshipping me as their savior, people would have conjured up the clear notion of despair as they saw a meteorite.

“If it’s this way, you can rake your faith anywhere.”

Dropping a meteorite into any world, or causing any disaster even if it is not a meteorite.

You don’t need the name of God of Hope.

Just as I pretended to be the God of Hope, the God of Hope only borrows a shell called a meteorite.

Faith in meteorites goes to the God of Hope.

[It’s the classic method. If you don’t intend to spread your name and just want to gather faith in the short term, there is no other way. Haha, don’t look so sorry. The faith I gained from Earth wasn’t much.]

The God of Hope said with a real smile.

That was true.

The power the God of Hope had gathered on Earth was of little significance.

Like I don’t care much about the faith I’ve gathered on Earth.

Compared to the power of the God of Hope, the faith of the Earth was too small.

In other words, it was also said that the God of Hope was that huge.

The Earth’s faith is meaningless.

“I heard that you’re struggling and losing your strength.”

Kirikiri had spoken as if the God of Hope’s strength had been extremely weakened by the blow he suffered from me.

But the God of Hope right in front of me didn't look like that at all.

He just received my power with his body and didn't show much.

It was just the power I could sense right away.

[Who? Oh, Kirikiri? It looks like the rabbit is on the verge of getting weaker and not breathing. haha.]

The God of Hope laughed and cried.

It was really annoying to see him laughing in that body as if he were a real child.

[Before, I offered you a deal. I came for that deal.]

"According to the conditions at that time?"

[Yes. Without any change, according to the conditions at that time.]

The God of Hope had offered me a deal.

The condition of the God of Hope was simple cooperation.

My condition was how to get out of the system's constraints.

The God of Hope was an unusual god.

In a way, he was unusual in that he often showed freedom from the system.

Kirikiri also said something that hinted at that point.

I thought the strange position that the God of Hope occupied in the Hundred Gods Temple was also related to it.

He was neither affiliated with the Hundred Gods Temple nor tied to the system.

But I really wanted to know the information if there was a way to get around the system constraints.

The reason why the Gods of the Pantheon sent apostles to the 61st floor was to know how I made the 60th and 61st floors independent from the system.

Then I thought of what Kirikiri or the God of Slowness said.

The gods were overly bound by system constraints.

And most of the gods were hoping to be free from those constraints.

[I would like you to ask a few questions before making the deal. And in turn, I'll also answer your questions as much as I can.]

The God of Hope said with a smile.

I replied after thinking for a while.

“Good.”

* * *

“No, my question comes first.”

It was natural.

It was the God of Hope that I was disappointed in.

[If you make any concessions, where does it go?]

The God of Hope asked with a pointed voice.

I ignored it without giving an answer.

Answering that question was also my answer and providing information.

[Haha, it looks like it is.]

“If you keep talking that way, there will be no deal.”

[All right, all right. Don't be angry and ask a question.]

The God of Hope kept smiling.

It was a smile that looked really pure like a girl of that age, just like the girl on the spirit of the God of Hope.

“Tell me about the God of Slowness.”

Now that it's become like this, I have to ask the questions that Kirikiri didn't answer or skipped.

The most questionable of all was the God of Slowness.

The subtle reaction that other gods showed when referring to the God of Slowness caught my mind.

[The God of Slowness. I think this will be a boring history lecture, will you be okay with that?]

Asked the God of Hope.

“Sure.”

Any lectures with substantial content were welcome.

In fact, the longer the content, the better.

[But I'll explain it briefly. If I explain too much, it's going to be my loss.]

Said the God of Hope.

[There are so many words that describe the God of Slowness, so it's hard to tell them all. This is the most intuitive modifier you can find. The

greatest god, and the second most powerful.]

“Who is the first powerful god?”

[Beep! That’s outside the question.]

The God of Hope refused to explain, making an X with his hand.

[It was in the early days when the God of Slowness first appeared. It was also called Genesis. When new gods began to emerge from all over the world, when those gods recognized each other’s existence and expanded the scope of the world, the God of Slowness appeared before them. No, it is true to say that they have finally found the God of Slowness.]

It was a pretty sincere explanation.

More than I thought.

[As it is now, it was a really big shock back then. The God of Slowness was difficult to reach even with the perception of the gods. The gods honored the God of Slowness as the god of the gods, and the God of Slowness was revered and tried to achieve the unity of the grand universe.]

“...What unity?”

[Well... Should I explain this first? Ordinary people can’t interfere with other people. Because they are the same as non-gods. However, it is possible for a god to interfere with non-gods through divine power.]

It was the basic concept of godhood.

[Similarly, the godhood cannot interfere with the same godhood. But what if there were higher levels of godhood? Then those beings could intervene even with the godhood and implement what they wanted.]

I pondered for a moment at the words of the God of Hope.

Even God cannot resist interference.

Hell will unfold wherever any god rises to that position.

[The God of Slowness tried to achieve it. The unification of the universe.]

I thought about the current God of Slowness.

If the universe were unified by the God of Slowness, then there would be neither life nor death and time would just flow infinitely.

[The God of Slowness and some of the gods who were trying to ascend to that position collided. As a result, the ambitions of the great high-ranking fighters were destroyed, and the Hundred Gods' Temple and Pantheon were born.]

For a moment, I reflected on the story told by the God of Hope.

It was information that seemed to have nothing to do with me and it was a story that seemed to have happened a long time ago.

“And is this information relevant?”

[Of course it is. There are not many gods in the universe who know this story. At that time, most of them disappeared.]

“What kind of gods have remained from then to now?”

[Ask that as the next question. Now it's my turn.]

The God of Hope refused.

[I have sincerely answered your questions. I will also do the same with the next question. So I want you to answer honestly.]

“Is this an important question?”

I couldn't predict what the God of Hope would ask.

I couldn't even know why the God of Hope was trying to get something out of the information only I knew.

[Of course. I have to make sure that the line I'm holding is strong or not.]

It was a statement whose meaning could not be determined.

The God of Hope, staring at me for a moment, suddenly asked me.

[You, did you touch causality?]

It was definitely an unexpected question.

I hesitated for a moment, but I replied soon.

“...yes.”

[I thought so. You disgusting swindler.]

Chapter 349

God of Hope (6)

[Ahh! Save me, save me!]

Damn it, really.

Ignoring the words of the God of Hope, I swung the chair again.

Even ordinary furniture, if infused with divine power, can have higher strength than many weapons.

This chair was uncomfortable to hold, but there was no problem with using it to swing and attack.

Bang!

There was a shock wave that was hard to believe was caused by swinging a chair.

It was natural because I was swinging it with that much power.

[Ah, it hurts!]

It doesn't hurt.

I put down the chair I was swinging excitedly on the floor and sat down.

Damn, one of its legs creaked.

[You are too much! Can't you see my poor appearance!]

The God of Hope shouted.

Little by little, his tone changed.

He's testing out several tones.

Like his appearance.

The God of Hope sat down on his chair, organizing the scattered bob hair.

It was the appearance of a person experiencing discomfort in their legs while climbing a high place with only arm strength and having some difficulty to move the body.

Bluffing... No, it was acting.

[I might really disappear.]

“Yes, if you keep making fun of me, I'll destroy you here.”

A disgusting scammer.

Even if I just listened, I would always hear something unpleasant from the God of Hope.

It was twice as unpleasant.

[Did you hit me enough?]

I nodded.

Then the God of Hope nodded.

The God of Hope said in a lighthearted manner, as if he had been beaten.

[You are also human. In some ways, it is because the point of view is unclear.]

I got up again and lifted the chair.

[Oh! Why are you doing that again?! This is an objective fact!]

Sounds like an objective fact.

Tsk, I clicked my tongue and sat down again.

[If I had a figure that could be identified as an ‘enemy’, I would have lost a couple of limbs.]

I would have plucked his head.

Of course, the God of Hope does not die when his head is pulled out.

Just as a warning.

I don’t like the God of Hope, but as he said, it was also an objective fact.

[Only such irrational aspects are human.]

“Say it’s the emotional side.”

The God of Hope thought deeply about something alone, as if he couldn’t even hear me.

He is a god who is very interested in principles.

I don’t know what it has to do with hope, but that’s what the God of Hope shows.

It was my turn to ask again.

“How did you know I touched causality?”

[How did I know? Haha, you really didn’t know that?]

I didn't know, so I asked.

I have several guesses.

It is possible that the gods noticed when they attacked the barriers on the 60th and 61st floors.

In particular, since the God of Remorse destroyed most of the barriers, he may have seen what is hidden under the barriers.

He may have seen and speculated in the aftermath of the explosion in Antarctica.

However, it is never impossible to turn time under restrictive conditions.

It is the essence of magic to trick the laws and twist the phenomenon, and the higher concept is a miracle performed under the will of God.

If you want to deceive the law of the passage of time, you can deceive it any number of times.

So even if I look at my time regression, I cannot guarantee that my abilities are in the essence of causality.

[Didn't you win?]

“What?”

[You have beaten your alter ego that had my strength.]

I did.

In Japan.

“But?”

[But. It was a battle you couldn't win. It had tens, hundreds of times more power, and the battle aspect was a simple tug of war that poured out all the

power at once. It was even a perfect alter ego with the same potential as you.]

“Same thing, difference in experience.”

[How do you know that the alter ego has no experience? I bet it had more experience than you, not less. The only difference was the presence or absence of divinity, and at the last minute it accepted my power and evened out the difference. It was a fight that it could not lose.]

But the winner was me.

[At first, I thought I was wrong. I thought your strength was so powerful that I could not even recognize it. So I abandoned the holy land and ran away.]

He was the God of Hope who spoke quietly and calmly, but his voice began to contain anger.

[But it wasn't even that. So I thought, it must be connected with your divinity.]

I was curious about the feeling of the God of Hope.

With a simple illusion, he escaped from an opponent worth fighting, and as a result, he lost his whole holy place and believers.

If the God of Hope had fought against me in the Holy Land, it would have been difficult for me to guarantee victory in full force.

Most of the power was exhausted, but in the Holy Land, miracles can be carried out without the use of power.

It was not for no reason that Seregia had advised us to return to Earth and recover with full care.

[You are a consequential god. Gaining strength through results and proving yourself. If you bring the result of a victory that has not yet occurred, even a battle that seems impossible to win can lead to victory. By completing the process through results.]

Hmm.

[So I guess. You have brought the results of the future to the present.]

It was a pretty accurate reasoning.

One question.

“The foundation is a bit poor, isn’t it?”

[In fact, I was just poking it. Thank you for being honest.]

Damn it.

* * *

[After all, you’re a swindler]

“Well, let’s say so.”

[Well, you’re shameless]

I’m originally shameless.

[If you abuse it, you will one day be squeezed into a twist of causality and die. Be careful, I’m in trouble if you die now.]

Thank you too.

If you can complete the result entirely through the causality that has been dragged out, it will not happen.

If it failed to do so, it would be a problem, but in that case it would be destroyed by the disappearance of divine nature anyway.

“But why are you in trouble when I die?”

Is it because he couldn’t retrieve the believers in my subspace?

Looking at it, the God of Hope said something about the rope he was going to catch.

[This part needs an explanation.]

“Explanation?”

[It's time for the lecture again. Are you okay?]

I decided to listen first.

I was reluctant to know that I was associated with the God of Hope, but I didn't want to refuse the information that he would let me know.

[First of all, you have to understand that our world is very far away.]

“Our world?”

[The realm of the Hundred Gods Temple.]

It was an unexpected story.

[It is not a local story. The Hundred Gods Temple has long since been pushed out of the world's mainstream. To be precise, it is isolated. Anyway, the mainstream of the world now is the Pantheon and the vassals under it.]

There was one thing to check and move on.

“Why were the Hundred Gods pushed back?”

I didn't understand.

Most of the gods of the Hundred Gods were powerful.

The only gods I've seen face to face were the God of Slowness, the God of Hope, and the God of Sacrifice.

Each one was a difficult opponent.

[Why are we pushed back? Isn't it natural that they get isolated without being able to expand, grow, or exchange due to system constraints.]

“Are there any restrictions in the Hundred Gods Temple?”

[Of course there are. But it's different from the Hundred Gods. If the restrictions of the Pantheon are legal restrictions that prevent them from crossing each other, the restrictions of the Hundred Gods are to detain and confine prisoners.]

Having heard this, it was understood that the Hundred Gods were struggling to get out of the system.

In particular, Kirikiri's behavior, hoping to get out of the constraints but maintain the system itself.

Now, it seems that she is trying to ease the restrictions of the Hundred Gods Temple.

“Why are the constraints different?”

[Because of the characteristics of the gods of the Hundred Gods. Most of the gods in the Hundred Gods participated in or opposed the unification of the universe led by the God of Slowness. The system was originally created to prevent such gods, so there is bound to be a difference in restrictions.]

Among the numerous gods, my speculation that the Hundred Gods Temple had collected the troubled children was somewhat correct.

It was different that most of the gods were involved in an incident in the distant past, but it wasn't fundamentally wrong.

[Anyway, the gods of the Pantheon and the vassals beneath them have been in territorial disputes in all universes and dimensions. We rarely face each other head on.]

“Why?”

[...Can't you just listen to the explanation? The reason is that there are enemies everywhere. If you use too much power, you can lose everything to

a third enemy.]

The God of Hope explained eagerly.

When he talked about the invasion of the Holy Land, he stared at me and said, pressing one word by one.

I ignored it.

[Such disputes are also entering a standstill. There is still a lot of conflict, but it is almost gone compared to the past. This is because a certain composition of power has been established.]

It was interesting.

But it wasn't a story that touched me very much.

[In such a situation, you were exposed to the Pantheon. Does the situation make sense?]

I'm not going.

[You were not related to, and even deviated from the rules of the Pantheon system. The gods, who were relatively weak in power, were thinking that you, or they by gaining your strength, could get a chance for a new leap forward. The mighty gods also intervened under the guise of preventing confusion, and they were thinking of taking over you.]

Hmm.

First of all, the idea that they could have me as they wish was unpleasant.

Putting that point apart.

Is it a disturbance to the extent that a low-cost weapon without an owner appeared in the Murim River?

[You have even annihilated the apostles of the Pantheon who visited you.

On the 61st floor. You wouldn't say you don't remember.]

Of course I remembered.

The apostles who joined Lee Yeon-hee and entered the 61st floor.

The 61st floor was my holy place.

It was not the body of the gods, but an apostle connected through a contract, so it was easy to devour.

[The violent treatment was an excuse. You and the Pantheon have definitely formed a hostile relationship. Contrary to the expectations of the Pantheon, you have become a complete deity, and your level is increasing rapidly, but rather, the gods of the Pantheon have joined forces to separate you and make you easier to devour.]

I need to revise my thoughts.

The river will be stained with blood.

“So what does it have to do with you?”

[In fact, I also have a bad relationship with the Pantheon.]

I thought so.

The God of Hope is a god who will not get along with everyone in the world.

He smirked and laughed.

[...Not like that! We were in a trade relationship.]

“Trade relationship?”

[There is a system in the Pantheon, and it is essentially the same as that of the Hundred Gods. And I have a way to avoid the limitations of the system a bit.]

Again this is the point.

[Supply and Demand. There are many gods who want to expand their power with an expedient way to avoid restrictions, and that expedient can only be supplied to this universe by me.]

If so, you must have been aiming for a profit.

[The position of a monopolist was used to arouse desperation from the gods, fueling desire and controlling supply. Most of the faith I get comes from them. Wouldn't it be good to get along?]

The God of Hope pointed to me and continued talking.

[The problem is that thanks to someone, my holy land was blown away, my strength was reduced, and supplying them was difficult. I was on the verge of being attacked by the tributes, who gave me faith.]

That's a fun situation.

Since the target of faith is a God, when their power is weak, they are sometimes attacked instead.

I did not hide my feelings and showed them to the God of Hope.

Clap clap clap.

“Great, perfect ending. That's why you have to live nicely as usual.”

He said with a loud applause.

When I heard that the work of the God of Hope was ruined because of me, he really accused me.

The God of Hope said to me again and again while swaying with my sarcasm.

[...Anyway, you are the only one to cooperate with the gods of the pantheon.]

Chapter 350

God of Hope (7)

[So what's your answer?]

“If the price is sufficient.”

I answered the God of Hope.

If the price was sufficient, I had no reason to refuse to cooperate with the God of Hope.

It's only the physiological reluctance to hold hands with the God of Hope.

In this case, I cannot refuse.

It was in itself dangerous to turn a blind eye to a means that would certainly benefit me because of unfounded embarrassment.

It means that I have neglected to prepare for a crisis in the future, and in the future it could be an excuse to justify my defeat.

You shouldn't have thoughts such as 'Ah, I lost because I wasn't good enough' or because I didn't work that much at that time'.

As long as the God of Hope was showing himself and was giving adequate compensation, I could not reject him recklessly.

It's a thought I sometimes get after becoming a god.

I feel that the identity I have decided is not binding myself, making me feel like I'm making parts of the world.

There was a time when I thought that the subject, God, was above the concept of the divinity, and that it dominated the concept.

But in reality, even God is dominated by his own divinity.

All gods are.

There aren't many gods with extreme penalties like me, but there will be no God without any penalties.

If you are careful about penalties and limit your actions, all of the gods' actions and thoughts will soon become obsessed with one identity.

I did not become the god of that identity because I was immersed in an identity.

Identity is what forces God to look like that.

Therefore, the more intuitive the god is, the stronger and greater he is bound to be.

The fact that I remained a god even with a clear divinity border proved itself.

Slowness, light, commitment, balance, nature, hope.

These are the divinities of the major gods of the Hundred Gods Temple.

The weight of the word itself was different from the Ruler gods.

I didn't even know how restricted such gods would be.

And what kind of choices have they made to exist for such a long time under these restrictions?

If I have the opportunity, I'll want to ask them directly about those experiences.

“Prepayment.”

Cooperation versus information, the offer could not be rejected.

However, the offer could be beneficial.

I had to use it.

[Prepayment?]

“Yes, throw out all the information I need.”

[...Then, what if you break your promise?]

“I will keep my promise.”

The God of Hope looked at me as if it were absurd.

[The words themselves give me disbelief. Did you know that there is no limit to telling lies?]

Oh, I got caught.

After becoming a god, it was easy to deceive because everyone guessed I couldn't lie.

The God of Hope was also a god who could partially lie, so he did not fall for it.

[Well, good. Not only information but also cooperation will benefit you, but it won't do me any harm. I will take it as collateral.]

It was a pretty heavy collateral.

It was not known whether the God of Hope knew this but still said it.

[Do you know the God of Order?]

“I know, the outsider god.”

Looking back on my experience in the tutorial, I did remember seeing messages about the God of Order a few times.

Three or four times.

Even that was when almost all gods showed interest.

By himself, he gave no noticeable responses.

He is not interested in me.

He was a god I didn't care much about.

In the first place, I didn't even want to make friends with the gods who had a strong divinity of order.

[No!]

The God of Hope sprang up and refuted with a fit of passion.

[Go ahead and cancel those words!]

“No, I don't want to?”

I don't know what it is, but I refused.

The God of Hope was resentful for a moment and muttered something, then gave up and said.

[The God of Order is the most powerful god at this time.]

“In the Hundred Gods Temple?”

[All over the universe.]

It was unexpected.

He's a god that I've never thought deeply about.

[What kind of entity do you think the God of Order is?]

Well.

I do not know.

[Think about it.]

Um.

Can't you just let me know?

Even when I first met the God of Hope in the past, the God of Hope asked me the reverse question and made me infer the answer.

At that time, I thought it was to make a desired conversation within a limited amount of information.

But now, I wondered if it was a characteristic of the God of Hope.

[Ah come on!]

The God of Hope struck me.

I got up quietly and grabbed the armrests of the chair.

The God of Hope shouted because he was beaten with the chair earlier.

[Why, why do you have to solve everything that you can figure out with only a little bit of thinking, by using violence!?!]

"You just need to tell me. Why would I waste my energy? What is the God of Order?"

It was like that before.

As long as the information is important, the God of Hope had to answer my words.

I had asked the God of Hope's question without much anxiety.

[...The God of Order now has the greatest power in the universe and exerts the greatest influence.]

After speaking, the God of Hope noticed me for a moment.

It seems that he wants me to guess the answer after hearing it, but I have no intention of acting as the God of Hope had wanted.

I waited for the God of Hope to give the answer.

[...System. Isn't it obvious?]

System.

It was an unexpected answer, but it wasn't surprising.

It was an answer that could be guessed if I had thought as the God of Hope told me to.

Even the earth, which does not have a mature self, and can't even be defined as a single creature or individual, has received the faith of people for a long time and made its own voice.

Furthermore, there were some Rulers who were forced to extract the roots and faiths gathered on Earth.

The gods of the Hundred Gods Temple and Pantheon are under the system.

Divinity accumulates whenever the gods recognize the existence of a system that restrains them.

No matter how intangible the system was, it would still have been enough to become a god.

The faith produced by mortals and the faith produced by beings who set foot in the divine nature are on completely different levels.

Moreover, if the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon that gathered all the mighty gods of the world are indirect believers, it was natural that the system would become the most powerful god in the universe.

[I am also an apostle of the God of Order.]

“Ah, I see.”

From the short words of the God of Hope, I can see how the system’s limitations were avoided.

In the first place, being an apostle itself was intended to allow gods to exert limited influence outside of their realm, avoiding the limitations of the system.

Something seemed contradictory, but it didn’t seem impossible in theory.

He is an apostle of the God of Order, which is the system itself, and of the God of Order, who makes expedients by using the gaps in that system.

There was something to consider before laughing at this though.

There was one thing that caught me.

[Quest Window]

[God of Order-???)

Description: The God of Order has nothing to do with you yet.

This is the God of Order item displayed in the quest window created by Kirikiri.

The God of Order has nothing for me.

I asked this to the God of Hope.

[Of course. Tutorials are also part of the system. The other gods may not know, but the God of Order will not agree with the transfer of the Tutorial.]

Damn it.

Things went wrong again.

* * *

The God of Order is a god with self and reason.

No matter how little he showed himself through messages, he wasn't absent.

If the God of Order is the existence of the system and the Tutorial itself, there is something to point out.

When we cleared the 59th floor, where we first achieved the source of the power.

There was a time when the power of the source collected in the stage was deprived by a certain entity.

That's probably the God of Order.

Damn, I have to get that power back someday.

Even when I cleared the 100th floor, I could feel a certain god watching me.

After all the Tutorial stages were over, the only god who would

directly watch me as I was preparing to go to Earth was the God of Order no matter how much I thought about it.

If the God of Order can act and judge like other gods, it is impossible that it would transfer the Tutorial voluntarily.

The God of Order will not give me a part of himself.

Never.

I didn't think I could get all the divine consent through Kirikiri's quest window.

She thought there must be a god against it.

And in the case of such gods, I was thinking of obtaining the consent of the Tutorial transfer through force demonstrations, not quests.

But the case of the God of Order was a little different.

The Tutorial transfer itself violates the identity of the God of Order, and it will not be possible to obtain consent through appropriate force demonstrations.

There is no other way but to take it by force.

Against the most powerful god in this universe.

Damn it.

It was something that I should not have only heard about now.

It was information that I should have known about and prepared for a long time ago.

"The back of my head is tingling."

Let's think about what Kirikiri's purpose was.

She wanted to weaken the system.

She wanted to take advantage of the gaps in the system and impose sanctions on the God of Hope that would harm him.

The weakening of the system itself, the God of Order, and the sanctions of the apostle, the God of Hope.

We can organize it like this.

Kirikiri also cooperated with me until sanctioning the God of Hope.

What about after that?

Will she cooperate in conflict with the God of Order?

Kirikiri argued that she should obviously weaken the constraints of the system, while saying she still needed the system.

Perhaps the transfer of the Tutorial is a check against the God of Order.

Maybe there is a way to hand over the Tutorial to me without conflicting with the God of Order.

She hasn't told me yet, but when the time comes, she can give information about the God of Order and suggest new ways.

Kirikiri has always been like that.

She didn't give out any information that was not needed right away.

The problem was that the list in the quest window recently changed to question marks, and that Kirikiri was not responding to my contact.

[Adventure and Slowness made everyone stand by for a temporary truce and expelled me, but the God of Order will be a little different.]

The God of Hope added words as if he were reading my heart out.

[No matter how much you have touched causality, that alone cannot deal with both Slowness and Adventure. Those who swim forever and those who block their destiny, themselves symbolize a part of causality.]

Then again, the God of Hope, who changed his tone, began to whisper.

It was a God of Hope, sitting deep in the back of a chair, but the voice sounded like a whisper in my ear.

The thin eyes, as if they were almost closed, made me feel ominous just by looking at them.

[The two gods are gods that collide even though they cooperate. In the meantime, only a few have survived. The few are all imprisoned before the Hundred Gods Temple.]

It was like a snake.

It was a little messy.

As soon as I smelled that confusion, I saw the sudden change in the God of Hope, and my agitated mind calmed down.

[They said you turned down an offer to join the Hundred Gods Temple?]

The God of Hope said with a giggle.

It was a disgusting laugh.

It was an evil, mean, and nasty laugh.

The God of Hope did not hide that point and showed it.

I felt instinctively rejected by that appearance.

I had never felt negative emotions so directly after attaining full godhood.

It was like when I was human, when I felt disgust or fear that my reason could not handle.

When a frog sees a snake, it's the kind of primitive feeling that an animal might feel when it faces its natural enemy.

Various negative emotions blended together to create a mixture of pressure and fear.

It was interesting.

I was able to guess how the god of hope played with the gods of the Pantheon.

[I will ask again. Now cooperate with me.....]

“Hey.”

[...Huh?]

“Don’t you look tired?”

Chapter 351

God of Hope (8)

[Kaak!]

The God of Hope vomited something.

It was reddish.

It looked like blood.

“Amazing.”

He’s throwing up blood like a real human.

No matter how human he looks, it’s essentially still a substitute.

He couldn’t vomit blood after being beaten.

The God of Hope was still in human form.

The limbs are broken.

The skin is burnt.

The hair is burnt out.

He had a human form, but it did not look like a human.

Rather, it seemed like something in the process of becoming a human.

It seemed more disgusting to have the intention to maintain that form.

[Isn't this too much!]

The God of Hope cried out.

I was at loss for words.

“So who wants to do it in vain?”

[So did I not apologize?! I have promised to make amends already.]

As soon as the God of Hope made sure that I would not be affected by the trick, he immediately surrendered.

Of course, I attacked the God of Hope and he surrendered.

Practical gains were also important, but emotional relief was more important than that.

[It can't be like this.....]

There's no way it can't be.

The skill of the God of Hope was certainly amazing.

He used the gap in the mind to encourage some emotions and used them as material to create a sense of pressure.

A feeling of pressure created by my own emotions, not by the power of the God of Hope.

It was a kind of pressure that could not be easily shaken even by a god.

Rather, it was done more easily because I was a god.

Because a god is bound to be trapped by himself all the time.

However, my case was a bit special.

I am very sensitive to sensations such as pressure.

I immediately focus and get excited at the other person who exudes pressure like a dog facing its prey, especially if I feel great pressure.

“Ehhyo.”

I set up the fallen chair and sat down.

That’s good.

As the excitement cooled down, the mood became despondent.

[...If you’re done hitting me, would you do something about this sword?]

The God of Hope said, pointing to Seregia, which was stuck in his heart.

I thought about it again.

Had I hit the God of Hope enough?

I decided that it was enough.

“Seregia, good job. You can go back and rest.”

I didn’t even have to pull her out.

Seregia, on her own, was pulled out of the heart of the God of Hope.

And she flew in the form of a sword, tore the space, and returned to Earth.

[...What on earth did you do to that sword?]

The God of Hope, looking at the place where Seregia tore apart space and disappeared, asked in a desperate voice.

What did I do?

Yeah, of course, I did a lot of things.

I had tried so many things.

[Have you ever been stabbed by that sword? If not, you will be stabbed sooner or later. It must be full of hatred and vengeance, and it must be looking for an opportunity to stab you.]

Said the God of Hope.

I just laughed.

There is no such thing.

I could affirm.

On the 60th floor, I had tried so many things with Seregia.

Countless experiments that had tried to go further, to get stronger.

They were bizarre and cruel experiments that I tried in order to challenge the limits of my imagination, and now it was disgusting to look back on them.

I was always suffering from shortages there.

The samples were too few.

Only myself and Seregia had no objection to experimenting.

In the end, about half of the experiments were conducted on Seregia.

Most of them were meaningless experiments, but sometimes they had significant results.

What I mainly studied at the time was divine power.

It was because the clash with the gods seemed inevitable for my goal of getting a Tutorial.

How can I get the power of God?

How can I amplify it further?

On the contrary, how can I counter the divine power?

I always thought about it and found a solution.

The divine power was, in the end, a power that was supplied from the outside through connection.

That connection was key.

It was the identity and divinity of the god that connected the god who received strength and the believer who gave strength.

I had heard the explanation of the incarnation from Kirikiri.

The incarnations used by the gods in their activities were by no means all of them.

There couldn't be a concept such as 'the gods' true body is damaged when their incarnation is hurt' for gods that symbolizes an idea or image.

God was immortal and perpetuated as long as there was his divinity and the believers who supported him.

In the course of making a body, I experimented with assimilating Seregia with a replica.

When I tried to assimilate Seregia, who had already been in the ranks of the gods at that time, with a replica, I discovered a surprising phenomenon.

Seregia and some of the assimilated replicas were no longer powered

by the God of Heaven.

It was an amazing phenomenon.

I defined the phenomenon as divine pollution.

The identity of one deity is altered just by attaching another deity to it.

Eventually, the incarnations, gods, and apostles of the god whose identity has been altered due to contamination cannot be supplied with power from the original divinity.

It was a temporary phenomenon.

However, it was also a surprising phenomenon that, even temporarily, could completely prevent the supply of divine power between incarnations or apostles and their original deity.

Although it cannot completely annihilate the existence of a god, it was excellent at subduing the incarnations of the other gods.

The supply of divine power can be prevented by injecting Seregia into the incarnation of the opponent's deity.

It is possible to invade the realm of other gods by tearing the barriers created by the divine power like paper sheets.

I could have destroyed an attack with divine power.

It was something we could do because it was Seregia.

Seregia herself acted as a catalyst for pollution.

It was possible because she was maintaining her character as a god.

If Seregia was a god who achieved the deity through faith gained from other believers.

Immediately after attempting to assimilate with another god, both the god and Seregia would have been neutralized.

However, Seregia, who does not possess the faith of others in the first place, is not neutralized by the contamination of the divine.

Her connection with others does not exist.

It was something I couldn't even try.

Even if I risk being neutralized and try to assimilate with other gods, there is a high possibility that I and the other god will be destroyed instead of being neutralized.

Right now, for example, look at the God of Hope wriggling like a worm.

To be arbitrarily assimilated like that, his divinity collapses in on itself.

Divinity cannot mix harmoniously with other divinities.

No matter how harmonious the concept of divinity, it is impossible.

I could be sure.

Quite meaningful experimental results existed.

In any case, the presence of Seregia is a great force in the battle against the gods.

I use all kinds of miracles.

In the end, since the essence of gods can not mix, the significance of Seregia in the battle between the gods in a simple firepower battle was enormous.

I felt like I was the only one holding a weapon in the middle of the battlefield.

It can block the opponent's attack or break through their defense.

A powerful weapon that through just swinging it at them, would leave them breathless.

It was one of the reasons for my confidence in victory.

The reason was the God of Hope, murmuring in front of me.

[It was an elaborate avatar.....]

The God of Hope took out a hand mirror from somewhere and looked at himself.

His hair was all burnt up, but his hair regrew when he touched his bare head. The features that had melted down were reborn when he touched his crushed and stuck face.

The appearance of restoring the incarnate body that had become rags seemed pitiful.

It was a battle that occurred because of the manipulation of the God of Hope.

However, thanks to that, meaningful experimental results were obtained.

First of all, even to the God of Hope, Seregia's powers worked without any doubts.

The God of Hope also recognized Seregia as a weapon of extraordinary power.

It was very valuable information.

* * *

“Okay, let's work together.”

There was enough information.

The value of the God of Hope was sufficient.

Cooperation itself didn't look bad either.

In the meantime, there was a possibility that the God of Hope would aim for the back of my head.

That was also something I had to bear and overcome.

For fear of the consequences of failure, the means of cooperation could not be ignored.

Instead.

[Then I'll go back now.]

"Where?"

[Huh?]

The God of Hope asked again.

"There's no holy ground anyway. Why don't you stay here?"

[...That's a bit difficult. I wouldn't be able to live forever in a space made like an asteroid.]

It was a lame excuse.

It didn't matter.

Anyway, I had no intention of letting the God of Hope continue on this asteroid.

"I have prepared a place for you to stay."

[What.....?]

I took out what I had prepared in the subspace.

[What is that ugly barrier?]

Yong-yong was a special collector.

Again, if you don't want to get hit in the back, this method is the best.

I should hit him first.

“What is it? This is where you will be staying for the time being.”

[That's impossible!]

Where is the impossibility in this?

The God of Hope was not in a position to reject my words.

The terms of the transaction were cooperation and exchange of information.

But I had already received enough information.

It's cooperation, or whatever you can get out of this.

Besides, if there is no condition for future cooperation, I can attack the God of Hope again at any time.

In the petty name of rejecting my offer.

[How can confining a partner be called cooperation!]

It could be.

If you are a partner who is likely to cause a fall out by hitting the back of my head, it was the right decision for each other's cooperation.

[Forced!]

“Yes, it’s forced, correct. So, do you want to go in nicely or go in roughly?”

[I’ll go in nicely!]

It was a quick judgment, a good judgment.

The God of Hope went into the collection bin on his own.

The space readjusted the size by itself.

Soon, the collection bin was reduced to the size of a table tennis ball.

As the collection bin narrowed, the God of Hope, which had maintained the form of a human girl, finally returned to the form of a flying insect.

It was like a firefly, a flying bug that gave off a small light from its body, but it looked really good when it was trapped in a small collection bin.

[Will you release me someday? You will right?]

“Well, I’m not sure either. Someday, if I feel good, I can release you, so wait with hope.”

[.....]

I got this good faith battery.

[...I have one more thing to tell you.]

“What.”

Is there any way to escape?

The God of Hope paused for a while and said.

[Some time ago, the Hundred Gods Temple defined you as a god, one not affiliated with them.]

It was information I knew.

I heard it from Kirikiri.

After hearing the information, I was somewhat embarrassed because I lost contact with Kirikiri.

I was anxious about whether the Tutorial transfer and the quest would happen.

If so, I really had to fight the Hundred Gods Temple gods and get consent.

[That means the name of the Hundred Gods Temple no longer protects you. For the time being, you will have to pay more attention to the Pantheon than the Hundred Gods Temple. The time left until the clash is not long.]

The God of Hope said calmly.

He was thinking that a dispute would come from the Pantheon.

The problem was why the God of Hope told me this at this point.

The God of Hope will not get along with the gods of the Pantheon.

They will also covet the power and information of the God of Hope.

Now, the God of Hope is telling me to pay attention to the Pantheon.

He was worried that I would pass him over to the Pantheon.

In other words, it also meant that when I and the Pantheon collided, my win rate was not high.

“Hey, but why tell me that now. You should have told me earlier.”

[Ah... I was going to tell you soon!]

Bullshit.

You were planning to show up and try again when I faced a crisis.

After a few encounters, the behavior patterns of the God of Hope were clearly visible.

I thought I shouldn't release him anymore.

* * *

[Hey, come down slowly! Slowly!]

As soon as I exited the space of the God of Hope that had been formed inside the asteroid, the telepathy from Hochi rang in my head.

As Hochi said, I slowly descended.

Very slow, slowly.

Slowly descending from the asteroid to the surface, looking around, I noticed several changes.

First, it was the number of people who gathered near the temple in Seoul.

I remember that there was a crowd of over ten million people

But the number of humans I could see right now was a number that couldn't be called only ten million.

It was tens of millions.

A crowd that could exceed even the current population of South Korea

gathered in Seoul.

Humans were filling downtown Seoul centering on the temple.

The situation of the religious window was also very different.

Newly constructed temples were exceeding the existing wanted list, and the number of renewed members was to the extent that made me wonder if this was correct.

It was a level of change that couldn't happen in just a few hours when I had a conversation with the God of Hope.

[The inside of the asteroid was a space with a slightly twisted time axis.]

Said the God of Hope.

Why did you only say that now.....

[It was a policy prepared in case our conversation leaked to other gods. It didn't twist much. At best, it would be about three days here.]

I slowly descended toward the temple balcony.

As if it was ready, there was a broadcast helicopter floating nearby and taking pictures of me descending.

The humans who gathered on the street and found me were screaming without hesitation.

It was such a thoughtless roar that I couldn't even understand what they were saying.

And I could feel a great deal of faith being absorbed into me.

It was certainly a fair amount.

It was a level of faith that was different from what had been obtained from Earth before.

During the three days wasted because of the God of Hope, I couldn't know what had happened to Earth.

When I got off the balcony, Hochi, Kim Min-hyuk, and the others came out to meet me.

After being conscious of the helicopter filming us from a distance, Hochi and Kim Min-hyuk put their hands together and prayed.

“Homen.”

“Homen~”

...Are these things crazy in pairs?

* * *

“Please explain to me.”

I told Hochi as I entered the temple building so that we could not be seen from outside.

I don't understand this situation right now.

Over three days, the size of the denomination expanded by hundreds of times beyond dozens of times.

What about Homen? People are thrilled and crying and praying.

Of course, the approach of the meteorite and the manifestation of the miracle that prevented it was a good event to raise faith.

But I didn't think it would show this level of gain.

Even though I was absent for 3 days.

“I've been studying some indigenous religions here.”

Hochi said.

Did you study? You? I managed to endure what I wanted to ask.

“All of these religions were completed by death.”

“Death?”

I don't know what you're talking about.

I was not very familiar with Earth's religions.

I wasn't majoring in theology and I wasn't interested.

I wasn't even a religious person.

“Yes, death.”

“...So?”

Something felt chilly.

I had a feeling that this guy might have had an absurd accident.

“So I told people you were dead. In exchange for using excessive force while blocking meteorites.”

“...I am still alive and well.”

“No, you were dead and then resurrected.”

Oh my god.

Have you ever seen this crazy idiot?

Chapter 352

Earth (4)

“Oh! Hey, that hurts!”

“I’ll slap you till it hurts, you bastard.”

I said, striking Hochi in the back.

Even though I beat him, I was still disappointed.

I have to hit harder.

I have to make it more painful.

It was a shame that I couldn’t do more than this.

“Hey, you’re evil! Hey, it really hurts!”

Hochi screaming in pain was consolation.

Hochi is good at lying.

I don’t know what kind of character he is, but he has been like that for a long time.

He hates training and experimentation, so he avoided me with excuses like this.

He also did the same when he scammed powers from all the gods on the 61st floor.

He always did.

It was not a deliberate, insidious lie designed to trick someone, but rather a lie of a young child who wanted to escape the situation at hand.

So I never pointed them out loudly.

There were many times when I was fooled.

However, this lie couldn't be dismissed as a mere lie.

The lie that I ended up 'dead' by using excessive force to stop a meteorite could collide head-on with my divinity.

My divinity itself is shaken if my death is made true by the believers.

By nature, my divinity can be completely destroyed by a very small shake.

Unless most of the faith I'm gaining comes from the 61st floor believers.

If I had been greatly influenced by the followers of Earth, I would certainly have been weakened.

In fact, I was still wondering why I was fine.

No matter how limited the story is to the members of Earth, it is a situation that can cause some damage.

"If it weren't for you, I would have pulled something out."

Kim Min-hyuk, who had been a little farther away, was seen flinching.

He seems to have been fully cooperating with Hochi because he wasn't stopping him from doing anything strange.

If it weren't for Hochi, it would have been alright.

I can't let this naughty boy who has caused me harm go.

It was not my will, but my divine will.

Just because Hochi was my family doesn't mean that I could overlook his faults.

It was because of Hochi's characteristics.

"Hey, isn't this too much!? There is Yong-yong here too!"

"This time uncle was wrong."

Yong-yong neatly gave up.

Hochi looked at Yong-yong with a shocked face, but Yong-yong gently turned his head and looked away.

It serves you right.

How dare you feel shunned when you get turned away by your nephew?

* * *

"I looked it up."

"What the hell did you find out, you turned me into an undead?"

"Oh, you're not an undead. Rather, you're a spirit."

This kid mixed the increasingly difficult words and made nonsense.

I guess he's adapted to Earth too quickly.

"The completion of all religions is death."

"Why did you come to such a conclusion?"

I believe that the essential purpose of religion is for a better life.

“No. At least it wasn’t the purpose of Earth’s religions. What matters is whether you’re born again in the next life or in a nice place after death; that’s the greatest strength of religion here.”

There are other points.

Clearly.

“Think about it. What would people think if the religious window was still visible after you died?”

“Oh, I can see this even though Lee Ho-jae died. So, this is not from Lee Ho-jae’s ability, but from the Tutorial. He wasn’t God. They will think like this.”

“No. They think you exist after death.”

Does that make sense, you f*ck?

I can’t stop swearing.

“It shows you overcoming the fear of death that people most want to shake off. Obviously, the human body died, but your strength remained. You were even resurrected.”

I didn’t resurrect.

“Now, all you have to do is create a doctrine, show people it, and then disappear again. People will believe in the existence of the afterlife when they see you once and then come back, and they will become believers to overcome death.”

[Oh my god, you’re smart.]

The God of Hope, who had been trapped in the collection bin, whispered.

[I better thank you!]

“Shut up, before I pull your wing.”

A short warning blocked the mouth of the God of Hope.

I was not going to inform the party that I had captured the God of Hope.

He is the God of Hope that penetrates even if there is a small gap.

It would be better for everyone in the party to not even recognize the existence of the God of Hope.

“Think about it. In Earth’s religions, have religious leaders never died? And the death event has never been simple. The revival of religion always took place only after the death of the leader.”

“It’s just those people’s end of life.....”

“Hey! You can’t say that! What if the believers hear it? You have to be careful about your words as well.”

Hochi shouted.

Damn you... I managed to pull down the sound that had risen to the end of my throat.

Ugh.

What, what can I do?

Now I can’t kick him back to the 60th floor.

[If you’re going to kick him out, how about giving it to me?]

The God of Hope added more nonsense.

Later, when the party can’t see me, I’ll have to take him out and grab a wing.

“Okay. Well, as you said, my faith has risen dramatically.”

There were certain achievements made, so I decided to skip it without further criticism.

For some reason, there was no damage to my divinity.

Perhaps, as Hochi said, it may be because of the advantage of being known to overcome death rather than being known to be dead.

My believers on Earth, especially those who are fanatical, would believe this.

No matter what, I can't be defeated or die.

I'm already dead.

And then I came back from that death.

It was interesting.

Can this be connected to my divinity?

The afterlife does not exist.

Death can be avoided by overcoming the limitations of the human body and breaking out of that frame.

However, even the deities who reached the peak could not escape the final death if their divinity collapsed and deviated from the perception of their believers.

In this situation, how does the fact that believers think that their god will come back even if he dies, work?

Let's find out more later.

It was worth researching.

I checked the religious window again.

Certainly, the faith received has increased tremendously.

Until before, it was mostly churches that recouped their merit expenses.

Merit value was not directly related to faith because it was a score based on achievements for religion.

Because of this, when calculating the resources and power consumed for compensation, the Lee Ho-jae Faith was always seeing a deficit.

But now, even taking into account the rewards consumed across the planet, they were seeing a surplus.

I was earning faith.

The biggest advantage I got this time wasn't simply that I was seeing a surplus.

People started to believe in me.

Not the religious system and the rewards of that system pulled by a strong challenger in the Tutorial.

They were devoting their faith to Lee Ho-jae.

Because I heard about the God of Order from the God of Hope, I learned that the system was born from faith.

It felt pretty encouraging.

Maybe when the Lee Ho-jae Faith grows up, the Lee Ho-jae system can also gain credibility.

Perhaps the mantis, who plays the role of the mascot of Lee Ho-jae Faith's Hongcheon main school, will gradually become the deity.

“One more positive thing is that conflicts with existing religions have disappeared.”

Hochi said again.

It was an idea that I couldn't understand without explanation.

“It happened because I can attach it to the doctrines of other religions. Someone's reincarnation, somebody's second coming, the third prophet who came down to Earth.....”

Somehow, if explained in detail, they were words that seemed like a big deal.

“After the Hundred Gods and the Tutorial appeared, the position of religions was shaken, and I was trying to make a change in my own way. It was easy to absorb them. Rather, it made them choose the Lee Ho-jae Faith as the end point of all the paths while maintaining all the frameworks of the existing religions.”

Oh my, I don't even know anymore.

“Not only the dispute within Lee Ho-jae Faith, but also the disputes between other religions will disappear. At least among the religions who have chosen to be in solidarity with the Lee Ho-jae Faith.”

“What religions are those?”

“I have absorbed most of Earth's major religions.”

It was a ridiculous speed.

The upright religious community should reform their doctrine and choose to absorb it as the subordinate force of other religions.

They even took the risk of going under one roof with other religions, even those that they swore and quarreled with, calling them pagans.

Even that in just a few days.

Is it possible?

“Of course I did a little trick.”

Yes, I suppose so.

There were countless ways you could do it if you wanted to.

This side can manipulate any number of divine phenomena.

Existing religious circles can simply ignore such a phenomenon.

As long as the believers are not agitated by that fact.

“Not bad, huh?”

Hochi said with a smile.

Obviously, Hochi did well.

Since coming to Earth and starting to do this and that, Hochi has always outperformed my expectations.

It was the same this time.

Even though the expectations had risen quite a bit, it produced surprising results that were unexpected for me.

The problem was that my social death was the opposite.

“You were too lazy to be in front of people anyway.”

“...Yes, well.”

* * *

“I brought sweets, Homen.”

Three days have passed since the meteorite was destroyed and I returned to Earth.

But I couldn't get used to that bloody greeting.

"Whose idea was that?"

"Well, since everyone started doing it, no one would say they were first."

They use the word "Homen" at any time.

They use it when they say hello, they use it when they pray.

If you feel good, use it, and if you feel bad, use it.

They were using it meaninglessly as if saying something in a dialect.

"Isn't this completely blasphemy?"

"How is that blasphemy?"

"If I'm offended, it's blasphemy."

Hochi didn't answer.

The whole party was gathered in front of the TV.

Today is the day I go back as a mystery.

What kind of nonsense is this?

It is the day when the god Lee Ho-jae, who died from stopping a meteorite, resurrects and returns after three days, tells his disciples the doctrine to follow, and then returns to the heavenly world.

"Homen."

Hochi said, opening a bag of cookies.

Do you have to say that before getting a snack?

“Homen.”

Seregia, who had approached, took a snack from Hochi’s hand and said the prayer, then ate the cookie.

“Homen. Haha.”

Yong-yong, who was sitting on my lap, shouted Homen, smiled a little, and picked up a snack.

...Ugh.

On TV, an anchor shedding tears was speaking enthusiastically.

It was overwhelmingly emotional.

The screen returned to downtown Seoul in front of the temple in an anchor’s solo scene.

As if the anchor we saw just before was weak, there were several humans who were crying all over with their whole bodies.

It was clearly distressing.

“Hey, all of those people are filling your faith. You should be thankful.”

Well, that’s true.

But I couldn’t sympathize with how close they were or how sad they were.

As we waited for a while, a bright light began to shoot high from the ceiling of the temple where we were now gathering and eating snacks.

As part of it, I used the same visual effect that I used when the meteorite appeared.

People began to cry more and more at the sight.

The sound of them saying, Homen, Homen, rang up to the inside of the temple.

Riding on a bright pillar of light, a fake image that resembled me began to fly above the sky.

The brightness of the light pole was properly adjusted so that it could be captured on the camera screen.

It was solemn and gracious.

Nevertheless, because I had to maintain the original shape of my face, it was an illusion that I had elaborately created by inviting plastic surgeons to the hospital.

“That, it would have been better if you just did it yourself.”

“I would have died from embarrassment if I did.”

Really.

I may have died of shame on my way up to heaven.

Neither I nor my divinity could have survived that embarrassment.

Chapter 353

Pantheon (1)

Somehow, I became a deceased person.

There was no inconvenience in being one.

Well, I don't have to go out and do any jobs.

I don't have to go shopping at the supermarket.

There is nothing uncomfortable in my life even though I was killed socially.

The church's operation is managed well by Hochi.

Other small things are handled by Kim Min-hyuk.

When armed intervention was required, the challengers who were training in the Tutorial were sent to take care of it.

Then, I had nothing to do.

All I was doing was lying around the couch with Seregia and watching the humans.

The human I'm looking at right now is an ordinary student.

In a way, it was a common event. Even though the test was just around the corner, he was watching cartoons instead of studying.

I remember when he opened a comic book, he promised to study for 10 minutes.

But that student didn't let go of the comic book even after a while.

After waiting a little longer, the student covered up as he had finished reading the comic book and pushed it to one side of the desk.

And he pulled out another comic book from the bookshelf.

It was the next volume.

I decided after watching for a while.

I'll send a message.

[Lee Ho-jae is watching you.]

I don't like this very much.

To let them know through a message that I am watching the believers.

It was because I remembered the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple.

The images of the gods I had in my mortal days were largely derived from the messages of the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple...

To be honest, the messages of the gods only caused irritation.

While others were struggling, they were sitting down while watching, cheering, or even complaining.

The presence of the gods I felt from the messages only annoyed me.

So I tried to avoid contacting the believers through messages as much as possible.

I thought it would be enough to only do so to prevent the church from making wrong choices or to warn them of a critical situation.

However, in the situation when I had died socially, I was only able to

contact the believers in this way.

The student who received my message became fussed.

He was praying, and he was just looking around.

He also seemed to think about something by opening his religious window.

No matter how much I looked at him, it didn't seem like he was going to study.

[I hope you will keep your promise.]

The student who received the second message pondered again.

Soon, he sat at his desk and started studying.

Well, I can't concentrate.

How will that student accept my message?

Obviously, it just wasn't pleasant.

No matter how much of a believer you are.

However, you study a little harder because of my message.

So the result is a better school, a better job, and help in life.

Whenever that student realizes that, it will benefit me too.

On the contrary, it may be misunderstood because of the feeling of skepticism towards me and the inconvenience of someone watching you.

Let's see.

Certainly, I was like a beginner god.

As a god of mortals who live with different purposes.

* * *

[Did you know that the God of Adventure was a mortal?]

I didn't know.

In the first place, we had no idea that some gods were of mortal origin and some were not of mortal origin.

[There are not as many gods that were former mortals as I thought. At least in the Hundred Gods Temple. Most of the gods of the Hundred Gods are those from the time when the God of Slowness and the God of Adventure collided. At that time, there were many beings who were gods from the beginning, like the God of Slowness.]

It was an interesting story.

Surely.

[The biggest reason why the gods were mass produced and the world became a god is the existence of the source. Do you know what the characteristics of the source are?]

There are several characteristics of the source.

Among them, there are specific characteristics suitable for the flow of this conversation.

“Even an unbeatable being can accept the power of others. Like faith.”

It usually occurs when the grand hero of a certain nation or race accepts people's aspirations in a crisis.

This power, which is not much different from faith, is called the source when accepted by beings without godhood.

In this case, the individual who accepts the source is eaten by the absence of divinity and thus loses their reason and becomes a monster of the source.

Those monsters regain their reason over time, become rulers, and finally gods.

Or there is a source that civilized people dedicate to their world, which they have built up for a long time.

The emotions of hundreds of millions of civilized people that they feel towards their world for thousands of years are no different from faith.

It was this kind of source from which the rulers stole and pulled out using extractors on the planet.

Perhaps the system itself is the same as the God of Order, which gained godhood by gathering the faith offered by the gods.

[Isn't it surprising that a mortal has prevented the unification of the universe led by the God of Slowness?]

It wasn't surprising.

It was heard before that the God of Slowness attempted to unify the universe, and that the Hundred Gods Temple was created as a result of the conflict at the time.

And from that fact, I could fully understand that the God of Slowness' plan was blocked.

The question is how the God of Adventure, who was once a mortal, was able to stop the God of Slowness.

Likewise, it could be inferred.

I have two powers presented by the God of Adventure.

I knew very well how those powers worked and what results they

could produce.

Rather, I asked again about the relationship between the God of Order and the God of Adventure.

[There was no problem until the God of Order became powerful. But when the God of Order began to gain ambition, a problem arose.]

Ambition.

So I was curious about their ambition.

[The God of Order slowly expanded the authority of the system. They thickened the constraints, making it increasingly difficult to escape them.]

The system is the power of the God of Order, and the God of Order is the system.

It seemed obvious at first glance that a person with godhood would carry out their divinity and increase their influence.

[Well, that was the reason.]

However, is it a problem that the level of the God of Adventure is exceeding the level of constraints that he originally hoped for in the system?

In addition to that, there were also beings like the God of Hope who volunteered to be an apostle of the God of Order in order to abuse the position.

Again, the God of Hope was the biggest problem.

“Who is the God of Light?”

[It is better to ignore him.]

This was a consistent answer.

The God of Hope replied that it is better to simply ignore the God of Light.

Everyone who knows the God of Light gave the same answer.

After that, the God of Hope continued to answer my questions.

The information was valuable. Then, it became a bit burdensome because it was uninteresting.

I have realized one thing.

I have been very dependent on information from Kirikiri.

Most of the information I know is her information or my guesses based on that information.

I didn't know anything about what she didn't tell me or what she hid.

Conversely, now I was reliant on too much information from the God of Hope.

There were no other sources of information to determine the authenticity of the information.

The only information I had came from the mouth of the God of Hope.

How far away is the truth?

The God of Hope is a god who is good at twisting truth and making lies.

What is the ultimate desire of the God of Hope?

What has the God of Hope been preparing to achieve his goals?

It was a question that could not be resolved.

[What are you thinking?]

“The idea of just destroying you.”

[I am faithfully answering your demands. As long as cooperation continues, I will continue.]

The problem is where the cooperation ends.

I had the same worries every day.

Should I just destroy him?

But I made the same judgment every day.

He was a very valuable resource.

[It won't be long now.]

The God of Hope whispered.

I already knew what it meant.

Now it's time.

The Hundred Gods Temple informed me that they had no intention of protecting me.

In the eyes of the other gods, I would be a more delicious prey than anything else.

As the God of Hope warned, the gods of the Pantheon would come.

* * *

“Where is Yong-yong?”

“Waiting in his room.”

That's right.

Since Yong-yong is so sensitive to privacy, it was difficult to know where he was unless he said it himself.

“Why don't you stay too?”

Hochi is not a combat resource.

He wasn't lacking in abilities, but apart from that, his fighting power was poor.

Rather than bring this guy into battle, I'm better off bringing Lee Jun-seok or the challengers from the Tutorial.

Of course, they were all useless.

The role they have to play is obviously big.

I was hoping for them to develop further.

But they won't play a big role in this battle.

Regardless of how it proceeds, it is almost impossible for non-gods to influence the battle between gods.

“I'll just be here.”

“Why?”

“You never know. There may be damage to the church, so you should be prepared in advance.”

Honestly, it was amazing.

Hochi's change.

The change in attitude and ability was also amazing.

It was even more surprising that he had a strong sense of responsibility for his believers and his church work.

“Yes, do it.”

I don’t know how the meeting with the gods of the Pantheon will proceed.

It could be solved by dialogue, but it seemed more likely that a battle would occur.

They may want to retaliate for what happened on the 61st floor.

Due to the nature of godhood, I would not go beyond it without any price.

And when the battle occurred.

I couldn’t guarantee that there would be no harm or effect to Earth and to humans.

Still.

It will be my job to minimize that.

Through an assured victory.

[Here it is.]

The God of Hope whispered.

I could tell without whispering.

I could feel many different deities approaching my powers surrounding Earth.

Kwoo-woong-

A long sound rang.

I thought it was the sound that occurred in the process of the gods moving to Earth, and I prepared for the battle to begin immediately.

But it was a mistake.

The sound, which began ringing all over Earth, was not caused by the movement of the gods.

The space was opening up.

In the sky of Earth, in the middle of the city, in the middle of the road, in the rugged mountains, in the depths of the sea, space opened and connected with the beyond.

It was like the gate used by the rulers.

Creating a gap in space, and pouring out troops through the gap.

If there is one difference, it was the sacred place of other gods that existed beyond the opening of that space.

[It's a classic and standard way. It is a method used when attacking the realm of another god that has not been completely sanctified.]

The God of Hope explained.

[It is to connect with one's holy land by force.]

And the enemy's troops began to pour out from the holy land.

Literally poured out.

Through the window of the temple, I saw a gate open over Seoul.

The open space above the building looked like a faucet hole.

Enemies were pouring down through the hole.

The problem was the troops.

They were mortal.

They weren't even superhuman.

They even looked like they didn't have the ability to fly.

They looked no different than a well-trained human soldier.

[And they are putting the members of the holy land in the enemy territory.]

Those mortals were falling from the gates created higher than the building.

Like water.

[Ahhhhhh!]

[Ahh! @\$#@!]

Each of them shouted and fell, and they soon crashed into the road on the ground.

It became blood stained, and the people died immediately.

People on the roadside were frightened and ran away.

It was inevitable.

Seeing the scene of thousands and tens of thousands of creatures falling and dying from the sky, who could keep calm?

Tens of thousands soon became hundreds of thousands, then millions.

Even at this moment, there were endless mortals pouring down from

the gate.

They were meaningless deaths.

Too much.

[It is not meaningless. What if I poured about 1 billion corpses over there? The volume itself is an interference. It's not just there. Troops are being sent across the planet. Can you stop it with the power of humans here?]

It's impossible.

There may be troops and Awakened from each country.

But they couldn't handle the attacks that poured out indefinitely.

Moreover, among the troops being transmitted, there was a sparse mixture of superhumans at a level that Earth's Awakened could not handle.

But I am different.

No matter how many there are, when and where they appear, I can instantly bring death to them all.

[The purpose of this attack is simply to eat away at your power.]

However, such behavior comes at a cost.

Unless Earth is my holy place.

While the gods of Pantheon pour out their believers and consume my power.

They are buried in their holy land and are watching the situation.

The only way to prevent this situation is to attack the holy land and defeat the gods.

[A lot came. There are over a thousand gods. It's obvious that you won't be able to win unless you dealt with them all in their holy lands.]

Indefinite use of divine power, and in addition to that, combat in a holy place that is thoroughly prepared for attacks is extremely disadvantageous.

[Or maybe we could keep this planet to the end.]

The God of Hope smiled a little.

[No matter how easy it is to kill a worm, it still takes energy, but what if that number exceeds a trillion units? Your power will eventually be exhausted.]

The God of Hope who whispered, declared.

[It's a fight you can't win.]

Chapter 354

Pantheon (2)

My senses seemed paralyzed.

There was too much death.

Summoned from the sky, summoned from the sea floor.

There were a lot of mortals dying like that.

Even though the summoning position was good, they died.

In the midst of being summoned as if poured out, they were pushed by each other and crushed to death.

There were those who were lucky enough to survive the riots.

Some were faithful to their original mission of invading Earth, but most of those who survived were looking for somewhere to hide, or fleeing without hesitation.

Pantheon.

I heard that there are no gods that can reach ten thousand literally.

(T/N: Pantheon can also be translated as Ten Thousand Gods Temple.)

There are certainly thousands of gods belonging to it.

If such gods have sacrificed some of their many worlds.

And even if the population of those living in those worlds is only half of earth's.

It is easy to mobilize trillions of lives.

Perhaps human beings were created to be used in this way.

Those spaces connected to Earth are sacred places for the gods of the Pantheon.

But those mortals that are pouring out now will not be the most faithful and capable believers of the Pantheon.

Useless surplus resources.

Having been termed such, they are poured out as if they were okay with death, or rather, as if they were told to die at this time.

[What will you do? This planet is not your holy land.]

It was as the God of Hope said.

Earth was not my holy land.

This is the case even now, when the Lee Ho-jae Faith emerged as the world's largest religion.

A holy land is not easily created.

The world is assimilated with God.

Those who live in that world believe that the will of God is the law of the world, and their values must be established.

When I absorbed the believers of the Holy Land of the God of Hope.

I was not impersonating the God of Hope for nothing.

Their situation was the same, but they are members of the world who believe that hope, the light of salvation, is the absolute good of the world apart from escaping their situation.

Earth's humans didn't do that.

[What are you going to do?]

It wasn't the God of Hope.

It was Seregia's question.

She always followed my choice.

But that doesn't mean she always agreed with my choice.

Rather, she had more opposing opinions than agreeing ones.

[Let's abandon Earth. If you go back to the 60th floor and solidify your defense, and defeat each god one by one, you will be able to even the odds.]

She was right.

[Abandon Earth. And come with me. I will make you a winner.]

Said the God of Hope.

It was wrong.

Winner is not something someone else makes.

Two suggestions.

Both the right and the wrong suggestions recommend giving up the planet.

[Sorry.]

After a long time, the voice of Earth was heard.

It wasn't an offer.

It wasn't a favor either.

It was close to a calm confession.

[Sorry.]

Stop apologizing.

You bother me.

I clicked my tongue.

Hochi was looking at me.

“Are you going?”

As soon as I heard that voice, I knew it.

Hochi was thinking of staying here.

“Yes, I have to go.”

[It is a wise judgment.]

The God of Hope whispered.

Somehow it felt as if there was a little ridicule in it.

“In the meantime, I need you to protect this place until I come back.”

Hochi quietly nodded his head.

[You are crazy.]

Said the God of Hope.

[You want to go to the gods of Pantheon? They live in their holy land with perfect defenses. Don't talk nonsense. You may be a little victorious. Maybe

you can kill some gods. But that will be your limit.]

The God of Hope explained in resentment.

It was surprising.

The God of Hope was sincerely mad at my decision.

What is the reason for his anger?

[In the meantime, this planet will become a sea of fire. As you lose your power in the outside world, the defenses of your holy land will become weak. Even that holy land would be open to invasion. In the end there will be nothing left.]

Is this a warning or a curse?

[Don't be reckless, go back to the four holy places you made on the 60th floor of the Tutorial. No god escapes his holy land and fights in another god's holy land alone.]

I will.

Because in his own holy land, the deity is literally omnipotent.

[Have I done you wrong? The result is your absolute good.]

The God of Hope spoke full of energy.

It was just as he said.

The result was everything for me.

Obviously, it would be right to give up the planet.

I knew it too.

In this situation where I was confronted with the gods of the

Pantheon, Earth and Earth's believers were forced into an even more unfavorable condition.

It was right to give up if the burden would give me a chance to lose.

[Are you okay? I know that not only the results, but also the best choice for the result is important.]

I have little attachment to Earth.

It was the same for the people of Earth.

It is not that I have opened my eyes to the sense of responsibility as a new god.

There is a famous saying that with great power comes great responsibility, but I disagree.

Abandoning the notions of good and evil and morality, I became a god by making my divinity the highest value of my values.

A believer was just the main source of income that provided me with faith.

And in order to win, I have to know how to give up my precious resources.

[Sorry.]

But I couldn't just abandon it.

I didn't want to spill it as a stepping stone for victory or as a means.

[Sorry.]

I could understand why Earth repeats only apologies.

I was feeling the same way.

The outcome of victory was more important than anything else.

But what the results looked like was also important to me.

“I can handle it.”

I can handle it.

Great power makes it possible to take on great responsibilities.

[Is that so.]

Seregia replied quietly.

The God of Hope shut his mouth.

I felt a wriggling movement in the barrier where the God of Hope was locked up.

Are you thinking of escaping now?

“Old man, grandmother.”

[I was waiting.]

[Have I not told you, King. Someday that indecisiveness will be poison.]

Unlike the grandmother, who responded calmly to her call, the old man spoke out.

It was a firm and stern voice that seemed like a sentence.

As usual.

[But that's our king.]

[I'm ready. Call it.]

I heard two answers.

“Yong-yong.”

[Huh.]

“Send the kids down this way.”

There should be no accidents during the summoning process, but I sent Yong-yong to be sure.

Even if the divine spirit intervenes during the summoning, Yong-yong will perform the summon stably.

“When the summons are over, protect the planet.”

[How?]

Yong-yong asked how, not whether to do it or not.

“Minimize human damage as much as possible.”

Yong-yong was silent for a moment.

I didn’t talk about the treatment of my enemies.

The only thing I asked Yong-yong to do was control the situation.

[Then it will be more damaging, Dad.]

I guess so.

Those mortals who are being summoned to Earth indefinitely will inflict more than a certain amount of damage on the earthlings.

If I wanted effective defense, it was much better to just destroy them.

Even right now, with effort, I can turn tens or millions of mortals into

a handful of dust.

The Pantheon chose this method in the first place because they hope that my power will be exhausted in that way.

But I couldn't see them as enemies.

There was a feeling of desperation.

Aueo Island.

It is still an unforgettable place name.

An island in heaven where people who wish for peace and harmony came and became one with each other while drinking the emotion sharing facilitator called Paramal.

The ending I encountered there was terrible.

The images of those who were mobilized in unwanted battles by someone's control and were dying in despair, suffering and dying still remain clearly in my memory.

Those mortals pouring out onto the earth were hardly seen as enemies.

They weren't the enemy.

There will be nothing I gain by killing them.

My divinity didn't respond to opposing them.

They weren't the targets of confrontation, they were just victims who were being sacrificed by others.

"Hochi, you too, help Yong-yong."

I asked Hochi.

He is a younger brother who is lacking in many ways, but unless he faces divinity, there will be no limit to his ability.

There could be no shortage in protecting and evacuating the people.

“I should. That’s what I’m going to do.”

Hochi replied coolly.

“I won’t be able to withstand it for a long time.”

“I suppose so.”

Apart from the question of how good Hochi and Yong-yong are.

Their strength is limited.

No matter how transcendent it is, there will come a time when their power will be exhausted.

“I’ll come back before that.”

[Crazy guy.]

The God of Hope cursed.

Rather than being offended, it was fun.

A pillar of light was coming down from the sky.

It wasn’t just one.

A total of five hundred pillars of light.

It was exactly the same as the number of believers on the 61st floor.

The light that disturbed the eyes disappeared, and the appearances of the giants hiding in the pillars of light were revealed.

Lava and ice giants.

They were enemies who blocked the challengers on the 61st floor of the Hell difficulty Tutorial.

The challengers of the Hell difficulty, who have already passed the threshold of a superhuman, are powerful beings who can barely be dealt with using parties of at least 50 people, and even then they had to sacrifice themselves to weaken them.

They are desperate because they have died once a long time ago, and have become an accessory to the tutorials since then, endlessly dying and reviving.

They are the ones who choose to abandon the gods and trade with me in order to escape from that self-loathing.

Each one was cursing their fate, bound by the gods.

They were ready to do anything for liberation and freedom.

Their leader, the old man and grandmother, gave me the status of 'king'.

They devoted themselves to further my growth.

They pushed and devoted themselves according to my reckless plan.

I also paid them for their choice.

The giants used their power as soon as they were summoned.

Likewise, huge wings of light sprouted from the backs of giants.

Talaria's Wings.

The power that the God of Adventure gave me.

There were various powers, but the most powerful of them was to give

all allies a powerful combat power amplification effect proportional to their ability.

Even if only one person owned it, it was a power that gave all of their colleagues immense power.

Hundreds of people use it at the same time, and when the effect is applied and stacks, it literally becomes a cheat of a power.

I interpreted Talaria's wing and duplicated it in my own way.

And I shared it with all the giants.

In addition to the Talaria's wings, I gave away numerous powers that I made.

And unlike Hochi, the giants used all of their powers to the limit of their potential.

As the giants stood side by side with the building, appearing one by one, the downtown of Seoul seen from the temple seemed more cluttered.

There was no fuss.

The earthlings who were hiding in the building to watch the situation, and those summoned by the gods of the Pantheon all stopped moving and watched the giants.

Keeping silent and barely breathing.

It was a force that could paralyze all reason and judgment of the mortals it encountered.

No, it won't be just mortals.

[What is this.....]

The voice of the God of Hope seemed embarrassed.

The gods of the Pantheon who will be watching Earth will feel so too.

I was confident early on.

I'm going to get the Tutorial from the Hundred Gods.

In the process, I would endure any conflict with the gods.

And I will not hide myself.

It wasn't arrogance.

I was sure.

That we will finally be able to win.

And that was the basis of confidence in that victory.

Those giants were my most powerful force and my colleagues.

They were my priests who would prove my will and spread the doctrine of divinity to the world.

[Please say a word.]

The old man said.

I tried to refute what he was saying, but I decided to just say a word.

Unlike for me, it will be a moment that really means a lot to them.

"I had promised that I would make you real. I will make you, the ones who are already dead and gone, appear in order to destroy the will of the gods that trapped you into that eternal world. I will make you into what you want."

The start wasn't much.

There was no other answer, so it was a promise.

For the giants, and for me.

But in the end, it came to this point.

“It’s time for us to prove that my words weren’t just nonsense.”

[This is a great speech, which is nothing like the usual king.]

[Do it as usual. The kids are getting confused.]

The old man and grandmother said.

“...It’s time to smash the heads of the gods.”

Only then did the giants begin to scream and burn their fighting spirit.

...Damn them.

It is obviously disadvantageous to attack and fight in the sanctuary of another god.

But it’s not without any advantages.

All the gods will try to be in their own sanctuary.

There is only one god living in each holy land.

You just need to break each of them one by one.

It was a time attack.

The question is whether or not a decision can be made before Earth is captured and the holy lands on the 60th and 61st floors are invaded.

There was a chance of winning.

I don't know exactly how many gods of the Pantheon participated this time.

This was the united deity of over five hundred.

"We only need to destroy roughly 10 gods' heads per person. Anyone who dies before destroying 10 will be damned by me."

It was ridiculous, but the giants chuckled.

These guys like this.

"Come on, let's break the heads of the gods."

Chapter 355

Pantheon (3)

I thought that there would be only one divine being in each holy land.

It wasn't really like that.

Although the gods of the Pantheon did not live and cooperate in the holy lands of other gods.

Other subordinate gods belonging to the gods of the Pantheon were gathered.

[...Didn't I say it? The Pantheon is a major force that occupies most of the universe and dimensions known to date. It will be difficult if you think about their holy land and if they put all their strength there.]

It is.

About ten gods were gathered in the holy land of the god we first arrived at.

Among them, one of the gods who seemed to be the owner of the holy land seemed quite powerful.

The remaining nine gods were just as threatening.

The God of Gochang I met when pursuing the God of Hope.

And the God of Horror from the Ruler I ate in Antarctica.

That was it.

Although I certainly encountered more gods than I had thought.

The power difference remained the same.

We were overwhelmingly superior.

[Stay away.]

The main deity here declared.

The enormous body of the deity, leaning on the holy ground, looked like a mountain range.

Huge pressure poured over me and the giants who were flying with Talaria's wings spread out.

I endured it without falling.

There is a difference.

We have to use our strength to endure this pressure, but the god of the Holy Land can pressure us without any consumption.

There is only one answer.

Quick decision.

I prepared a technique that I felt familiar and comfortable.

A red sphere was formed in the front.

It was only a small object, but no one would look down on it.

If they could recognize the power in there.

It wasn't only one.

The giants, who I gave all my skills to, also formed red spheres.

Soon, hundreds of spheres were engraved in the air.

After all preparations were completed, the sphere's power was released.

“Zit pop.”

I didn't know that I would continue to use the technique with this ridiculous name even after I became a god.

Along with the roaring sound of heaven and earth, the giants, the gods of the other side, and the holy land were all engulfed in flames.

Zit pop's violent power exploding from close range was strong enough to turn everything into nothing, but none of the giants I brought fell to that power.

[The quest window is updated.]

[You have completed the quest of the God of Light.]

[The quest window is updated.]

[The God of Light proposes a new quest.]

[The quest window is updated.]

[You have completed the quest of the God of Light.]

[The quest window is updated.]

[Quest of the God of Light.....]

The message appeared dizzy with the update of the quest.

I ignored it.

It was clear that Busan was trembling because the God of Light was excited anyway.

Zit pop's firepower covered the whole world.

It is a technique that I used frequently before reaching the 60th floor and even right before I gained divinity.

Of course, even after being trapped on the 60th floor, I continued to improve it again and again.

Although it was a powerful technique that could damage the gods with only the physical force and firepower of the explosion.

There was one more advantage.

The true value of this technique is revealed when using divine power, not magic, as a material.

The firepower generated through zit pop does not disappear immediately after the explosion, but encroaches on the space.

You can gain many advantages simply by spreading firepower filled with divine power to the whole world.

Especially in other gods' holy lands.

No matter how sacred it is, it cannot be used directly against other gods.

The fundamental difference between divine and magical power lies in the dominance that can be applied directly to others.

The power to make a fire inside the enemy's body, instead of making a fireball and sending it out.

That was the ability of divine power.

However, it is not possible to exert such dominance against the same deity.

The same was true for gods' power.

The flames of the zit pop, which spread widely in this holy place, hindered the other gods' exercising dominance.

The only way to counter this technique is to prevent the spread of firepower that is thrown out through the zit pop.

However, it will not be easy to suppress hundreds of explosions of zit pop with simple physical force.

Impossible.

I said it because it was a technique I created.

I was pretty confident.

When it comes to physical power alone, there will be no other technique like this.

Giants flooded toward the gods of the Pantheon who were flustered in the flames of zit pop.

There was a god who had a huge figure like a mountain range, but he didn't even look very big because so many giants were sticking to him.

It felt like a group of elementary school students sticking to the body of an adult male.

But those giants couldn't be seen as children.

Sticking to it, wounding the body of the gods, and persistently hindering the exercise of power.

Normally, the gods are weak in a battle of the flesh.

I didn't face many gods, but I was able to affirm this.

There is no way that a godlike being who can play with others freely through dominance can conceive such an ugly and barbaric fight.

It was said that there were sometimes territorial disputes between the gods of the Pantheon, but there were no direct conflicts between the gods.

It's got to be so.

Because the risk is too great.

It is as primitive as if the heads of the warring nations gathered together to decide the victory or defeat of a war by boxing each other.

However, we have honed that primitive method.

Thinking of what was already stolen rather than what we lost.

It was possible because we prioritized the defeat of our enemy and the victory against them, over safety and security.

The god of the Pantheon fell to the giants who had been preparing nonstop only for this moment to kill the gods.

The limbs were broken to pieces.

After being picked up, the head was crushed.

The chest was revealed, and the organs that were filling it were scattered on the floor.

The incarnation that died in a brutal manner disappeared into the air without even leaving a handful of dust as the power of the Holy Land faded.

Listening to the shouts of the giants, I called in the flames that were filling the Holy Land.

It interfered with my vision.

The fire that was filling the world gathered in my hand.

It was only then that I could see clearly the image of the Holy Land that had been smashed in an instant.

[...It's a really cursed skill.]

Said the God of Hope.

It seemed to overlap with the appearance of his own holy land on fire.

There were two surprising things.

The first is that the god here that was a part of the Pantheon died too easily.

The existence of a god is not limited to a single incarnation.

I didn't know that if I killed a single incarnate, it would disappear as it is.

[Isn't it a holy place? Think about what that means. If the incarnation was killed by force in the Holy Land, and the divine nature remains intact, that would be a miracle.]

It made sense.

There may be a reason why the God of Hope escaped the conflict in the Holy Land and escaped.

If I could completely destroy the god by just killing the incarnation in the holy land, it would be easier than I thought.

“Or it will get rather tricky.”

Like the God of Hope, all other gods abandoned the holy land and ran away.

It will take a long time to chase after them.

And we are running out of time now.

The enemies had to be put to an end before Earth and the holy lands of the 60th and 61st floors were completely destroyed.

[No way. What kind of god would leave their holy land and run away.]

“You are.”

[I am special, but the case of ordinary gods is different. For the god to abandon their Holy Land, they must be prepared for extinction.]

It's always like that.

When the power of God becomes one's strength, it becomes a new weakness when looked at from another point of view.

The end result is always redemption.

One interesting fact is that the main god here from the Pantheon was extinguished while trying to resist, but all the lower gods fled.

Oh, not everyone.

Two lower gods were dead in the corner.

Little by little, the figures were disappearing, but the cause could be guessed from the remaining parts.

They were hit hard by zit pop and were horribly killed by the giants.

“What about those?”

This is not a holy land for those lower gods.

Their incarnations died in the holy land of another god, so the gods perished

[But, they're garbage. It is a waste to call them gods because their incarnation is dead, and they perished.]

The God of Hope spit out venomous words.

It seems to me that they were unfit to be called gods.

They would be more of a Ruler than a god.

They were tied to the body, and when that body died, they died together.

“Grandmother.”

[Whoo, I can’t believe I have to endure that boiling heat all the time.]

As I called the grandmother, she came up with a grunt.

For grandmother or other ice giants with the properties of ice, it would be more difficult to endure the firepower of the zit pop.

However, there was nothing like an explosion in the expansion of power.

The characteristics of grandmother and ice giants were resistances to freezing rather than expansion.

[Do you have anything you want me to do?]

If 500 people do everything together, the risk will be lower.

But we didn’t have enough time.

I had to split up my team to get things done.

“Follow those who have run away from here.”

The low-ranking gods who abandoned the main god here and ran away using a quick judgment of the situation.

I had no intention of letting them go.

[How should we treat them?]

“The guys who were hostile to us, pull out all their heads.”

There is no negotiation or compromise anymore.

We must show the world the price for their hostility.

Grandmother said she knew, and gathered some of the giants.

Each of the lower gods made a portal and escaped somewhere.

I had to pursue them before the coordinates of the portal disappeared.

I confirmed that grandmother and several giants were moving through the portal.

After waiting a little longer, the power of the dead god from the Pantheon was completely lifted.

Now this place was not a holy place for any god.

It could be called blank.

I attempted to communicate with Earth.

It was possible to connect directly to Hochi without any interference.

[Some of the holes that were pouring into the earth have just disappeared.]

Hochi spoke as soon as communication arrived.

A few.

Was the god of this holy land connecting several gates?

Or, have other gods who have peeked at the end of this holy land

removed their hands.

I didn't know.

[The quest window is updated.]

[The quest window is updated.]

[Quest window.....]

The messages appeared loudly because of the quest window.

As I thought it was because of the God of Light, so I opened the quest window annoyingly.

[Quest Window]

[God of Light – Zit Pop! (Complete)]

[God of Light – Zit Pop! (Complete)]

[God of Light – Zit Pop! (Complete)]

[God of Light – Zit Pop! (Complete)]

[God of Light – Zit Pop! (Complete)]

.

.

[God of Light – Zit Pop! (New!)]

All those who knew about the God of Light agreed on the same advice.

Just ignore it.

I decided to follow that advice.

Let's just skip this.

[God of Destruction – ??? (Complete)]

Explanation: ???

[God of Forest – ??? (Complete)]

[God of Pain – ??? (Complete)]

[God of Deception – ??? (Complete)]

[God of Chaos – ??? (Complete)]

The items in the quest window were filled with '???'.

However, some of the gods' quests were marked as complete.

Even if I clicked to see the detailed explanation, the window only displayed '???'.

[It's a mess.]

Said the God of Hope.

“What. Explain.”

[It means there was an uproar in the Hundred Gods Temple.]

God of Hope belonged to the Hundred Gods Temple.

All the gods belonging to the origin war should have one incarnation in the space called the 'Hundred Gods Temple'.

There seems to be something happening there.

[This is because your power exceeds everyone's expectations.]

“Give me more details.”

[The moderate gods are taking their hands off, saying they don't want to be related to you anymore.]

Is it?

There was nothing bad right now.

As the God of Hope said before, it was a time when we had to pay attention to the Pantheon rather than the Hundred Gods Temple.

By the way.

Those are moderate gods?

Moderate gods are in a state of deity.....

It wasn't something I could care about right now.

First, let's finish what I need to do.

Now it was time to invade the holy land of the next Pantheon god.

There were still plenty of enemies to kill.

I couldn't fail by wasting time.

Originally, it was necessary to trace back the coordinates of the sacred places connected to Earth.

“Hey, do you know where they are, the holy lands of the gods of the Pantheon? Give me the coordinates.”

[...I know.]

Fortunately, there was a good navigator.

Chapter 356

Pantheon (4)

[Quest will be updated.]

[Quest will be updated.]

After settling one of the holy lands, the quest window was updated again.

The further I went, the more gods I killed, the more frequent it became.

The Hundred Gods Temple is saying they don't want to be associated with me.

"I'm getting used to doing this as well."

I said after settling the ruins.

As time went by, the time it took to complete each one decreased.

There was no god running away from their holy land.

The number of gods who came to help other people's holy land declined.

Even those gods fled faster.

In a way, it was natural.

It would be better for the god to not help others' holy lands and to prioritize their own safety.

It was a situation where they couldn't focus on faithfulness and loyalty.

The lower gods who had gathered in the sacred place of each god of the Pantheon ran away at the start of the battles.

As if they were just waiting for the opportunity to do so.

Thanks to this, work was getting easier.

[All gates connected to Earth are closed.]

Hochi told us of the situation on Earth.

The chicken race seems to be over at this point.

It was a relief that the damage to Earth didn't get bigger.

Of course, even if all the gates for the air raid were closed, the disorder would remain the same.

I asked Hochi to take care of it and ended the communication.

There may be two reasons for the gates being closed.

The gates were cut off when the gods who connected the gates to Earth were destroyed by us.

If that's not the case, did they pull their feet out of the raid?

If it's the former case, it does not matter.

However, in the latter case, I was thinking of catching them by tracking the gate that was connected to it.

I don't want to set a precedent that I had been hostile and gone overboard.

Now that I have pulled out the sword, I will inform everyone who is watching this event or who will hear it later.

Once they bet against me, they will have to see the end.

I intend to make it so that they don't think of me being hostile in the first place, so that there is nothing to be hostile to.

[Are you going to attack all the gods in the Pantheon? If you do, the story will be different again.]

Said the God of Hope.

[It is quiet now that your retaliation is limited to the gods who have invaded Earth. If it targets all the gods of the Pantheon, they will unite again.]

That was good advice.

There were not many gods who attempted to invade Earth directly.

It wasn't a small number, but considering the scale of the Pantheon, it wasn't too many.

The invasion of Earth was clearly a Pantheon scale event.

There was no direct intervention, but there would be far more intertwined gods.

I feel like I want to take care of them all, but I can't.

The next place I visited was a place I had visited before.

When pursuing the God of Hope in the past, I had traveled around the realms of the gods from various rulers.

Then, I met a god from the rulers called the God of Gochang.

The God of Gochang once told the God of Hope that there would be

no holy land left, and that further pursuit would be meaningless.

Some miscellaneous information was a bonus.

He was a peculiar god who had no hesitation in telling me the information I wanted, unlike a certain god who was stuck with his ego and stubbornness.

So I remembered it well.

“Wow, it’s been a long time.”

[...Please save me.]

Look at this

If you’re a god, you can’t easily say that.

They shout words like the God of Hope or surrender, but usually it was hard to even mention.

But the God of Gochang did.

Far from being defeated, he did it before the battle even started.

“I only know what’s long and short, but why don’t you try a fight?”

[Around you and the giants? No. Please save me.]

The God of Gochang mentioned the giants behind me.

There were twenty or so giants behind me.

Five hundred departed together, but as we continued to share our troops, it became like this.

Anyway, as long as I was there, I didn’t need a lot of them.

[I have no intention of fighting.]

The God of Gochang who I just met before I was killing the unknown god of the Pantheon.

The God of Gochang, who was in the sanctuary of the god of the Pantheon, ran away at the beginning of the battle, so I came after him.

“Okay, why are you struggling to become my enemy again?”

[I was called in by my master, the old god.]

So, by being there himself, he has become my enemy.

Because he was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

[But the old god is dead! So now I am free!]

With that tone, I remembered the house elf who shouted ‘Dobby is free now!’.

Maybe it’s an inappropriate comparison.

“So?”

[I will give you some helpful information. Please save me.]

It was the correct judgment.

The God of Gochang was once captured by me, but he was released in exchange for information.

Remembering that, it was natural that he once again offered to trade information.

But.

“Will you be okay? It would be a traitorous act.”

The fact that he was called a god of the Pantheon meant that he belonged to the Pantheon.

He might be a lower god.

[Because I am now free!]

As expected, I remembered the house elf.

There was no justification or reason to refuse.

[Did you have any more questions?]

Asked the God of Hope.

He was asking because he has been answering questions for me so far.

“No, I don’t really want to know more.”

[If so, what is the reason? Is there any reason to save that god?]

It wasn’t like that either.

I will again ask the God of Gochang for the information the God of Hope told me.

To collate information.

“Maybe there is distorted information.”

How to distort the information and what to gain through it was the choice of the God of Hope.

But the price will also be up to the God of Hope.

[...I don’t know everything perfectly. There may be some errors due to mistakes.....]

It was a lame excuse.

In order to contrast the stories I had heard from the God of Hope, I grabbed the God of Gochang and started asking questions.

In the midst of asking questions, the God of Gochang suddenly looked upset.

“What?”

[That... The gods of the Pantheon contacted me.....]

Saying that you are now free.

It seems that there wasn't only one god that was entangled.

[The gods of the Pantheon are asking me to arrange a conversation.]

“With me?”

[Yes.]

The Pantheon wants to have a conversation with me.

Do they want to discuss how to end this incident?

There was nothing bad.

I also needed it.

“Good.”

* * *

The god of the Pantheon, who came to the realm of the God of Gochang, was a god with an ambiguous divine name called the God of Flexibility.

As soon as I faced him, I was bound to be surprised.

[Hey, does that count?]

[Of course.]

It was surprising.

Of course, it was natural for the gods of the Pantheon to play a part.

All of the gods who were choked by me and the giants were like that.

There was a marked difference from the subordinate gods, such as the God of Gochang.

However, there was a marked difference even compared to the other gods of the Pantheon who had their necks pulled out by me so far.

[The God of Flexibility has one of the best forces in the Pantheon. Considering that the entire universe is under the influence of the Pantheon, it is in fact one of the beings that can be called a master of this world.]

Is it that important?

Looking at this point, you could clearly see the difference between the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon.

Whatever the divine nature, no matter how powerful it was, the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple could not escape the treatment as confined sinners.

[Would you like to fight?]

I would not.

If there is no reason.

[I know your struggles.]

Said the God of Hope.

It was because it was the God of Hope who remembered my appearance in the Tutorial.

I had no intention of fighting.

Of course, in the Tutorial, I tried to fight somehow when I saw a person stronger than me, but it was because of the longing for growth and greater power.

I did not enjoy fighting without reason.

I was neither a God of Battle nor a God of Challenge.

If the result was meaningless, I wouldn't do it.

[Is the consultation finished?]

The God of Flexibility, who was watching me quietly, spoke.

After seeing me in silence for a moment, he seems to have noticed that I was talking to the God of Hope separately.

[I believe the God of Hope has surely provided you with helpful counseling, but I advise you not to rely on those words. He is a god who seems to represent the ugliness of the world. The closer you get, the more you will get used to the filth.]

It was indeed an accurate review of his character.

No, should I say that it was not a review of his character, but an evaluation of his divine nature?

[What is the mouth of that pig, who gained power because of me.....]

The God of Hope spit out harsh words.

Of course, it was only to me, so the God of Flexibility couldn't hear it.

It wasn't a curse for the emotional exhaustion.

It was a word that was told to me.

Words that seemed to look down on even the God of Flexibility where you could feel the mighty power, and words that imply that he has contributed to the accumulation of that power.

It was very consistent.

“Continue with the story. So what's your suggestion?”

The God of Flexibility said that he had come to me for a suggestion, representing the opinions of the gods of the Pantheon.

[It is an agreement. I acknowledge you and your realm, and I will pay you a secondary price. In return, stop the indiscriminate air raids. Is there a price you want?]

The price.

Of course, all the gods who invaded Earth will have to pay the price.

It might be a problem because there are no other measures other than getting their neck in return.

“I can't do it.”

[Well, I suppose so.]

The God of Flexibility conceded.

He didn't dare try to persuade me with a different offer or force me back to the offer.

[If so, I should check one thing.]

The God of Flexibility said so and declared.

[The invasion of your realm was not the will of all the gods of the Pantheon, and other gods of the Pantheon were not related to the series of events. And the events between you and the related gods that will happen in the future are only a matter of you and those gods, and are not related to the Pantheon.]

Drawing a line.

Between the gods who directly invaded Earth and the entire Pantheon.

As long as the God of Flexibility said that, I had to acknowledge the line.

There was no need for proof of the declaration.

Because it was a god's word.

It was a big concession.

Although the gods who invaded Earth were not all of the Pantheon.

It was by no means a small number.

I cut them all off.

There was nothing bad.

Although it was impossible to ask all of the members of the Pantheon for the price of the invasion of Earth.

On the contrary, the gods who directly intervened in the invasion could be defeated without any hesitation.

As feared by the God of Hope, all the gods of the Pantheon intervened, and there was no possibility of an all-out war.

I accepted the God of Flexibility's agreement and the concession of the Pantheon.

This work was also showing an end.

The God of Flexibility limited the range of enemies.

Thousands of the gods of the Pantheon had to be beaten to end it, but it stopped at only a few dozens.

Should I say that it was good or was it futile?

Anyway, I got everything I intended.

[...It's a way of thinking that's not sane.]

Leaving the realm of the God of Gochang, I came to a planet that looked plain and peaceful.

I could easily notice the appearance.

This planet is not a single realm or a holy land of any god.

In places where the influence of a deity is strong, the everyday appearance does not appear so prominently.

Rather, it seems at first glance that it is engulfed in madness and absurdity.

I visited the holy lands of various gods, but I was able to consistently find them.

The place I came to was the coordinates where the subordinate gods summoned by the gods of the Pantheon, like the God of Gochang, fled.

If so, it means that the subordinate deity has fled to a place other than his own realm.

[Nothing to be surprised by. There are places where the religions of these different gods are in more balance than on any kind of sanctified planet. If

you are a subordinate god, you may not possess any holy lands.]

It made sense.

[Most of the members of the Hundred Gods Temple are like this. There are not many holy places. Because of restrictions.]

I remembered the worlds I had gone through in the past when I was in the Tutorial.

Certainly, most of them had a polytheistic worldview.

[There are places where the religions of the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon are mixed. Like this place.]

“What?”

[Maybe he knows and ran away here.]

After hearing the words of the God of Hope, I could notice it.

The power of a god approaching me quickly.

It wasn't a godhood.

Of course it wouldn't be.

The Hundred Gods Temple usually cannot move directly due to restrictions.

And what is there is an apostle.

The apostle of a god I had known a long time ago was flying to me.

And I could face it soon.

“It has been a long time.”

[Yes. Indeed.]

It was a voice I had not heard in a long time.

The God of the Sky and his apostle.

It was the voice of the egotistical sword Aubutz.

Chapter 357

God of the Sky (1)

“Ahbooboo.”

It was an unexpected meeting.

I thought we could meet again someday, but I didn't know it would be today.

[Yes, warrior. Go ahead.]

There were a lot of things I wanted to say.

But when I looked at him, I couldn't say anything.

It was not because our relationship was shallow, but rather because it had a great meaning.

His original name was Aubutz.

An apostle of the God of the Sky.

When an emperor of a former human empire was drunk with arrogance, the God of the Sky sent him down to punish the emperor.

As a result, four generations of imperial emperors were killed and sealed under the imperial castle.

Until the empire summoned the warriors of the other world to defeat the demon king summoned by the demons.

It was a holy sword to combat the demon king, the goal of the tutorial stage, and at the same time, it was a sword to test the challenger's

mentality and willpower.

And it was a reward I received as a reward for clearing the 26th floor stage, and he was also a companion who traveled with me up to the 60th floor.

Although I did not actively use Ahbooboo as a weapon.

He was a friend who could always share opinions and exchanges. He has been of great significance to me.

Ahbooboo's appearance was the same.

What I mean is.

It was exactly what I first saw on the 26th floor.

An excessively thin and long sword that clearly shows that it is a ceremonial sword.

Jewels with colorful decorations.

His handles are pure white, without a single blemish from the passage of time.

He was in his original form.

Although his appearance had changed as a result of the experiments conducted on the 60th floor, there was no trace of them at all.

So my question was right.

Is that Ahbooboo the Ahbooboo I know?

Most of the characters appearing on the stages were those who have already died in the past.

However, there are exceptions.

Like the godmother on the 19th floor.

The godmother is the past persona of God of Sacrifice, a god of the Hundred Gods Temple.

The godmother, in her past form, is trapped in the tutorial stage, but the original God of Sacrifice still exists outside the Tutorial.

If so, the apostle of the God of the Sky, Aubutz, may still remain somewhere.

Is that the Ahbooboo who was with me in the Tutorial?

Or maybe it's Aubutz, the apostle of the God of the Sky outside the Tutorial.

[You came all the way here to see me. Did you miss me? You missed me, didn't you? Right? Kyung~?]

Of course, if you listen to that insane aegyo, he's the Ahbooboo I know.

Still, I couldn't help but raise my doubts.

It was because Ahbooboo felt different from before.

Of course, it would be obvious as time has passed.

[What?]

"Shut up, please."

[Haha.]

I couldn't maintain a serious atmosphere.

Even if I heard that strange aegyo constantly, I couldn't get used to it.

That unique low-pitched voice made his aegyo even more disgusting.

I felt annoyance and longing at the same time.

It was a strangely unpleasant experience.

[Thank you for coming to see me, but I'm in trouble now. I'm on duty.]

“As an apostle of the God of Heaven?”

[Yes, I am.]

The gods who belonged to the Hundred Gods Temple are bound by restrictions and cannot be free from responsibility.

Due to his nature, it was a particularly fatal restriction for the God of the Sky, who would have a vast amount of believers.

The apostles were the method of the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple to overcome such limitations.

The apostles who act on behalf of their will and abilities take care of their territory and believers.

This was also the ultimate goal for the Hundred Gods Temple: to train their challengers through tutorials.

When I was clearing the Tutorial stages, the God of the Sky made his son and his wife his apostles.

And he tried to interact directly with me through them.

Actually, we had a relationship that wasn't too bad.

Until the God of Heaven recovered Ahbooboo.

[It's been a long time since I've seen the giant friends over there.]

Ahbooboo said to the giants behind me.

However, the giants were confused.

“They can’t remember you.”

The time when the God of the Sky recovered Ahbooboo was in the early 60th floor.

It was before I found a way to stop the giants’ memories from resetting each time the tutorial stage was repeated.

[Ah, that’s right. I was there. We all did it.]

Everyone did.

Everyone I met there.

Suddenly a question came up.

How did Ahbooboo feel when he climbed the stage with me and encountered them?

He sees those who remind him of his situation, who had been trapped without even realizing it a while ago.

I can not know.

I have never asked.

In Iddy’s case, she was desperate.

Although she tried not to express it.

She eventually couldn’t hide it completely.

Because she is no different from a buoy floating in the sea.

No, she probably is not as meaningful as a buoy.

That's probably why.

That's why she was obsessed with the narrow, dark tunnels on the 12th floor.

She said that she was so sad when the tunnels disappeared due to a fire.

She made her own meaning.

Giving up the remaining summoning opportunities.

In return, by presenting me an impossible goal.

What about Ahbooboo?

Could he have found his own meaning?

Ahbooboo was a sword that wasn't corrupted.

He was the opposite of Seregia.

She always tried to wield herself as a sword.

She prefers to fly and fight on her own, rather than fight in my hand.

She was feeling bored and discomforted in her sword life.

She spoke like a person and acted like a person.

"Is the work worth doing?"

[Yes, look. Is it beautiful?]

Ahbooboo asked.

Under my feet, and under the clouds, a wide continent could be seen.

As we were high up, I could see the cities sparsely.

It was not a civilization as advanced as Earth, but it looked quite busy.

And the overall quality of life and the level of satisfaction also seemed to be quite high.

It was not that there were no unfortunate people and poor people at all, but they were living without despair in their circumstances.

It was a healthy society.

[It's a really cool place.]

I was able to understand the warm affection contained in the voice of Ahbooboo.

It was a voice that contained pride, a sense of accomplishment, and all kinds of positive emotions.

[Many worlds are managed, but there are few places better than this. It's probably so throughout the entire universe.]

“What is the share of the believer?”

I was also in the position of running a church, so I was most curious about that.

[11% of the population belongs to the Church of the Sky.]

That's not a lot.

11% of the planet's total population.

Obviously not a small number, but it was unreasonable to call it a planetary religion.

Of course, even so, the God of the Sky will not give up.

[In that sense, I don't want any uproar happening here.]

Ahbooboo said as if requesting me.

“Do you know why I came here?”

No, of course you do.

The clash between the Pantheon and me was a universal event that all the gods of this world would be watching.

If you are a god that is directly or indirectly related to me, you will be keen on your senses and gather information.

On the contrary, if you are a god who has nothing to do with it, you're probably chewing popcorn.

Ahbooboo and the God of the Sky are very closely related to me.

Of course they would have been watching my steps.

They may also know that I am pursuing the lower-level gods who joined the gods of the Pantheon.

At least, they know for sure that I am in the process of colliding with the Pantheon.

Ahbooboo thinks that if I attack a god hiding on this planet, it will damage the surroundings, so he asked me to step down from here.

It wasn't that I didn't understand his position.

But.

“If I can't do that.”

[If that's the case, well, I can't help it. I have no choice but to do what I have to do.]

Then the conclusion would be simple.

The sky began to move.

The temple that was hidden from the empty sky was revealed.

An aerial temple of the God of the Sky floats outside the atmosphere.

Its appearance looked more like an artificial satellite than a general temple.

So what was the actual use?

“It's a little disappointing that we had to fight as soon as we met again.”

[Really. Couldn't warrior just give up?]

Unfortunately, surrender was impossible.

The same will be true of the God of the Sky and Ahbooboo.

He is unlike the gods that can pour out his own believers like expendable supplies as needed.

The God of the Sky is different.

The divinity of the God of the Sky is uniquely related with his relationships with others.

He may seem more authoritative and overbearing than anyone else, but on the contrary, he is more dependent on his followers than any other god.

Even in his own sanctuary.

Although he only occupies 11% of the planet.

He is a god who cannot go beyond the situation where his own believers are threatened by other gods.

The temple of the God of the Sky over there began to shine brightly.

[Be careful. The God of the Sky is a very powerful god.]

The quiet God of Hope whispered.

[When the God of Slowness attempted to unify the universe, the God of the Sky.....]

The words of the God of Hope who was trying to explain something were cut off.

I couldn't feel the God of Hope.

The next moment, I was standing on my feet on the ground, not in the sky.

*

“Seregia?”

I tried calling Seregia, but there was no response.

The fact that she was disconnected from me proved the seriousness of the situation.

“Did Miss Seregia also come with you?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, let me say hello.”

I thought that too, but Seregia refused to greet him.

Even by my standards, Seregia has a very cold personality.

“It’s a little disappointing.”

Yeah.

It would have been nice if she had a short greeting.

I don’t know why she hates him so much.

“It’s amazing, this one.”

The world was turned upside down.

As we were flying in the sky before, we now stood in a desolate wasteland.

“Right?”

Ahbooboo asked again.

When I looked up to the side where I heard the voice, there was Ahbooboo who looked nothing like what I had seen before.

Ahbooboo looked like a human, not an egotistical sword.

With a thick lined face.

A tall height.

Somehow I felt bad because he was uselessly handsome.

He appeared like a mid boss in a cartoon, but he looked like a character who finally became a companion of the main character.

I have traveled around the world and encountered all kinds of beings, but his unrealistically handsome appearance is rare.

It was unfamiliar.

“Are you confused? I’m Ahbooboo. Kyung~?”

Ahbooboo frowned in one eye.

Face-to-face and hearing that aegyo, the destructive power doubled.

I felt like I wanted to hit him as quickly as possible and very passionately.

“How do you feel? As a mortal, returning to a human body?”

It was weird.

The body of a mortal, not a god.

I thought it made sense in the past.

It feels like a part of the body that has been degenerated and disappeared has been created.

I couldn’t feel my divine power or even my divinity.

Even the power of the God of the Sky was not felt.

The most basic fact that can be inferred is that there is no divine power in this wasteland.

“It’s the technique we were experimenting with. Right?”

“Yes.”

We tried several things to find a way to restrain divine power to counter the gods.

As a result, it was possible to complete Seregia’s ability to block divine power.

But that was the limit.

“How is this possible?”

“It was completed by the God of the Sky. When you look down from high above, everything looks alike. Distance also means loss of personality.”

It was an interesting point of view.

But this was an unfinished technique.

It was certainly surprising that my power had been blown away, but likewise the power of the God of the Sky has disappeared.

The biggest reason we studied the blocking of divine power on the 60th floor was my existence.

In those days, I was confident that if my divine power had vanished, I would not lose against any being.

That’s why it was the technique I studied.

If the God of the Sky wanted to use this technique, he should have hid other devices that would overpower the opponent in the midst of suppressing divine power.

“Why don’t you have me instead?”

Ahbooboo said.

I did not understand the meaning for a while.

“Huh?”

“Warrior, if you don’t have divine power, I can’t lose to you.”

“What?”

“I am a swordsman who overcame the limitations of mortals without any miracles. Isn’t it natural?”

Ahbooboo said, pulling a sword from his waist.

I finally understood the action.

What Ahbooboo was saying.

“It’s been a long time since we met, and it’s so sad to have to fight. Don’t worry too much. I will do it in moderation and return you to your home planet.

“No, isn’t this crazy?”

Chapter 358

God of the Sky (2)

“Hahahaha!”

I couldn’t stop laughing.

Looking at me like that, Ahbooboo asked while sulking.

“Are you mad?”

“As mad as a hatter, you ask?”

I laughed again.

Ahbooboo now spoke with a completely sarcastic voice.

“No matter how confident you are, isn’t that too much of an attitude? You underestimate me too much.”

I’m sorry he felt that way.

At first, I laughed because it was ridiculous, but soon it became very pleasant.

It’s a confrontation with Ahbooboo in a state where divine power was sealed.

It was a thrill and tension that I had never felt after becoming a god.

There will be few opportunities to feel these feelings in the future.

Even if I face a god that is much stronger than me.

So, even if my odds of victory are really less than this fight, I won't be able to feel this childish and trivial stimulation.

It felt like playing a fun sport for inspiration.

Okay.

I had been chasing this inspiration and burning myself.

In the end, I thought it didn't matter if I ended up dead.

I was addicted to the stimulation that much.

Like someone addicted to alcohol, drugs, and gambling.

I was crazy about the hormones secreted during tension.

So, after retirement, I wasn't interested in anything, and I was desperate.

Coming into the Tutorial.

Even when I realized the reality of that place.

I was afraid of the crisis of death, so I suffered from pain, while rejoicing.

About the stimulus that I found again after a long time.

I only knew I would die like that while living the life of an addict.

But I was able to find meaning in the end.

Now I can maintain my goals and life without stimulation.

When I became a god and escaped my body's confines, I was not affected by hormones at all.

Only then could I be freed from the pleasures that had bound me for almost half of my life.

I could understand why my sister withdrew from me.

Why my father told me to quit being a pro gamer with its low probability of success.

My behavior when I was wrapped up in the name of passion would have been nothing more than madness in my family's eyes.

I got away from such stimulus.

That didn't mean I started thinking negatively about the stimulus.

As always, the stimulus that I encountered again thanks to Ahbooboo was the best.

This stimulus was my foundation and source.

"Somehow you look like how you used to be. Is it because you became human?"

"Yes?"

My body trembled with joy.

It was an uncontrolled pleasure.

It was powerful but volatile.

It is a feeling of satisfaction that never lasts long.

It will take effort to keep this up for long.

"Gather together."

A bunch of sand gathered in front of my open palm.

The sand turned into a long spear.

To start the battle, you must have a weapon first.

If sand is given a little moisture and magical power, it becomes a deadly weapon in itself.

“Would you be able to fight me with such a crude weapon? May I lend you a dagger?”

Ahbooboo asked, pulling out a small dagger that he was wearing behind his waist.

It's a dagger.

It was really useful in the beginning.

When the Tutorial started, I had picked a dagger and a shield.

The reason was very disturbing.

At that time, I passed the sword and the spear, concerned about my weak muscles, the difficulty of using them, and their range.

I reasoned that my odds weren't high when facing an enemy faster, stronger, and more seasoned than me, if I used those difficult weapons.

Instead, I chose a dagger and a shield.

But in fact, even if I chose a dagger and shield, the odds were still not high against an enemy that was far stronger than me.

This is what I thought at the time.

Depending on the shield to somehow narrow the distance to the opponent.

Then, dig into the enemy's vital spot with the dagger at close range.

In the process, there would be damage to me as well, but it was a mindset that if I was losing a battle, I'd die with my opponent anyway.

“Bastard.”

When I recalled it, it was so ridiculous.

It was an idea that the owner of a convenience store, who only drank alcohol in the corner of the room, could think of.

It was a really pure dorkiness that made me laugh from the perspective of others.

“...If you keep doing that, I will feel a little offended, warrior.”

Ahbooboo grunted.

He thought I was cursing him.

That's all I need to think about.

“Shall we start then?”

“...Yes. Well, don't worry. I'll finish it quickly.”

* * *

“Keuk!”

Ahbooboo rushed back, spurting a bucket of blood.

“Heuk heuk, keugh.”

Blood and gastric juice were mixed.

I watched Ahbooboo vomit for a moment.

I didn't want to attack him right now.

It wasn't manners, he was just a little dirty.

After a while, Ahbooboo who had calmed down a little, wiped his mouth roughly and asked.

"...Wasn't that poison a skill?"

Of course, it is a skill.

I got it as a reward for clearing the 12th floor.

I grew up through labor within the Tutorial.

By administering it to myself, I developed extreme poison tolerance.

As a result, a grotesque biochemical weapon was completed that would even look ridiculous by the standards of radioactive contamination.

This ability belongs to the Tutorial.

This is space prepared by the God of Sky to destroy everything related to divine power.

The Tutorial was eventually made by the God of Order, the system, and the other gods of the Hundred Gods Temple who were involved in the design.

"It was, but not anymore."

How long has it been?

It was enough time to analyze the poisoning skills and make them completely mine.

Actually, what could be difficult about it?

It was all about poisoning the magical power.

Compared to dissecting power, which also symbolizes the identity of God, it could be said to be a very basic skill.

“Ahhh!”

Ahbooboo hurriedly covered his arms and screamed.

The poison was making his skin crack like the ground of a wasteland.

“This is so absurd!”

“So what.”

Sorry, but I am very fond of irrational fights.

If I have the upper hand.

Ahbooboo wondered what was so unfair.

I was honestly surprised at the sight.

He was vomiting blood and his skin was burning, but considering the power of my poison, it was very minor damage.

It would be common for humans to turn into a handful of poison as soon as they come into contact with my poison.

“He’s definitely not an average human being.”

“Not an average human being? Haha, that’s a funny word.”

Ahbooboo said cheerfully.

But you won’t be able to endure the poison forever.

The ideal of the human body.

“What are you doing, will you stand still and die?”

“Then I’ll go again. As you wish.”

Ahbooboo said so and lifted the sword again.

Seeing it, I lifted my magical power.

He seems to be aiming the sword from a distance, but the story is different if the opponent is Ahbooboo.

As soon as the tip of Ahbooboo’s sword pointed at me, an invisible blow came.

I could recognize it at a glance.

A space-warp.

It is Ahbooboo’s main technique.

It was not a skill at the level of catching floating clouds like a natural sword or a sword of the mind.

It was just a technique to shoot aura compressed to the limit with a sword as a medium.

The technique of mind slash was just a trick using auras that were invisible to the naked eye.

The problem was its power.

As the technique that became the birthplace of the zit pop I use, its power and cutting power were unmatched.

Kwang!

My pre-deployed magic and the blow collided.

The blow broke my defenses, and it hit me exactly on my forehead.

The impact sent my head sharply back.

Fortunately, my head was not split by the attack, but my vision was shaken.

The sand raised by the blow filled the area.

I missed Ahbooboo's appearance.

There was no need to spread my aura and find Ahbooboo's location.

The action taken by Ahbooboo who was intoxicated was obvious.

The sand in front of me cracked and Ahbooboo popped out.

As long as I was waiting, I was able to blow away the sand dunes immediately.

Without delay, Ahbooboo shook his sword and cut off the sand spears.

And apart from the swinging of the sword, the attack was fired again.

I couldn't get close.

I moved my body quickly and avoided it.

It was a little embarrassing.

The strike was far beyond the power I assumed.

Ahbooboo, who came close, tried to stab deep.

I turned around and avoided it again.

The attack was shot again from the sword passing by me.

It was the extreme of the sword.

It was like a new sword springing out of the sword.

I kept blocking and avoiding them, but the attacks continued without a break.

Bang!

I was struck again by the blow.

Again, my body did not split by the blow, but in return I had to lie on the wasteland for a long time.

“Wow, that’s very strong.”

It’s my greatest strength.

That I am good quality.

“Woohoo, how is it, you can’t win in close combat, right?”

It was definitely difficult.

This dimension was different in the first place.

Ahbooboo used the space more three-dimensionally than I did, and endlessly intermingled attacks between attacks.

When I use one turn, my opponent is using three or four turns.

I had to admit it.

Ahbooboo had an upper hand over me.

However, the sword wasn’t everything.

If it is difficult to win with detailed techniques, you can just hit the opponent with destructive power.

“Light.”

Light was created in the air.

The light changed into the shape of a sword.

Light allows sight to see the world.

However, excessive light rather makes it impossible to see any aspect of the world.

In a world dyed completely white, I swung the sword of light.

“Lightsword.”

I didn’t even care about Ahbooboo’s location.

Wherever you are in the world, you will burn away.

* * *

“I didn’t expect this.”

The light faded.

It was a surprising result.

It was not the result I would have ever expected.

I expected that the light would burn Ahbooboo together with the world and would form a black hole, that the space would collapse and return to where it was.

However, rather than burning the world, the light was sealed and disappearing.

“You must be ignorant too. What if I really died?”

One of the many Ahbooboo in front of me said.

Thousands of Ahbooboo stood on the wasteland burning by the heat.

No, tens of thousands... There were more than that.

No matter how much I count, there is no end to them.

It was an unrealistic sight.

“...Who is real.”

“All of us are real. All of us are fake too.”

Countless numbers of Ahbooboo said the same thing at the same time.

Even the cadence and pitch matched perfectly.

There wasn't even a slight disharmony that appeared when several people spoke at the same time.

“How is this possible?”

I couldn't help but ask.

How could beings who had not reached godhood maintain multiple selves?

It's something I couldn't do either.

On the 60th floor, I made Hochi, but Hochi was born and grew as a completely separate entity from me.

“We're the collection of Aubutz that existed in the tutorial stage and were recovered by the God of the Sky.”

“...What?”

I didn't understand that for a moment.

Recovered Ahbooboo in the Tutorial and collected him here?

That couldn't be the answer.

There are many Ahbooboo in the Tutorial, although they may be similar.

He wasn't one thing.

Like Iddy, the boss mob on the 5th floor, was different from the Iddy with me.

"It's simple. It is possible by combining once and then dividing again."

"...Combined and then divided?"

In the Tutorial, all Ahbooboo who had different egos and experienced different times became one?

And then split back into multiple pieces?

"Oh, warrior, you don't have to be so shocked because of me."

Ahbooboo said, as if it were nothing special.

But it was a big deal.

Someone's ego was like that of clay, and it was not something that could be shared.

"Shall we finish this? Do not worry. As I said before, I will return you to your home planet without any damage."

Ahbooboo said so.

And he raised his power.

It is the power of countless Ahbooboo.

Surely its power will be transcendent.

I could be sure.

Ahbooboo would be the most powerful in all universes.

Among the beings who could not ascend to godhood.

I didn't have that.

Take your breath slowly.

I asked the world.

“Stop.”

The flames that were swaying while burning the wasteland stopped like a scene in a photo.

The sand that had risen in a gust was captured in the air.

Ahbooboo who tried to overcome me by raising his strength was also trapped in a paused time and stopped.

It was definitely great.

This space.

It blew away my divine power.

This space that degraded a deity to a non-deity.

But there was one flaw.

“If you have lost your divinity and have been downgraded to a non-godly spirit, you will still be able to regain your godhood from the

beginning.”

The basis of my godhood was, after all, my belief in myself.

That I will win.

As long as I have that belief and the subject of myself, I can again achieve godhood and attain divinity anytime, anywhere.

It didn't take too long.

The time spent talking with Ahbooboo and babbling.

Just that time was enough.

Chapter 359

God of the Sky (3)

It was not a bad experience.

To lose one's godhood.

I could have looked back on the past.

“Well, it wasn't bad.”

I muttered alone, but many of the stiffened Abubus couldn't even say a word.

This couldn't be compared to freezing others by using magic.

The time in this virtual world itself had stopped.

I was able to relax and prepare for the next move.

It was okay to put aside the worries that Abubu might get out of the restrictions.

“This is good, isn't it?”

Let's take some time and do some research.

I was curious about how the God of the Sky completed this space.

Even if it wasn't right now, I could save this space and use it later.

The space where time is still was useful in many ways.

It is never easy to stop the time of one world like this.

Never.

Even if I think about the case of Earth right now, it was so.

There were numerous humans and other living things there.

Stopping time in a place where numerous beings live was possible only by engaging with each of the beings.

Moreover, when Earth's time stops, only Earth shifts from the time axis of the universe.

I would have to deal with that twist, but it would be a ridiculous penalty to destroy a few planets.

However, in this case, it was a bit special.

First of all, the main point was that it was a virtual world with limited space.

There was only me and Abubu.

Of course, Abubu's numbers were enormous, but as Abubu himself said, those many Abubus are all one entity.

There is a final reason.

There are no other gods in this world.

It was only me.

Therefore, I was able to engage in the world and express my will to my heart's content.

The cost of consumption was still there, but it wasn't as limiting.

In other worlds, for example, Abubu's realm, which was a multi-religious society, the scenario is different.

There are temples of various gods, and some apostles manage the realm.

Some gods that do not belong to the Hundred Gods Temple may be directly involved in the territory.

In this case, apart from the consumption value, it was impossible to beat the laws of the whole world.

There is a unique realm of another god.

Suddenly, the God of Slowness came to mind.

This image of everything stopped reminded me of the time when I used the power of time confinement of the God of Slowness in the past.

Kirikiri had said that the deity of the God of Slowness was more of an error.

In fact, the God of Slowness was not a god that simply referred to speed.

Time imprisonment slows down time to the limit, making it possible to experience a world where time has stopped.

However, on the contrary, warping was the power to move a distance faster than others through the accelerated time.

What the God of Slowness represents is just the passage of time.

That was all.

I am well aware of what it means to unify the universe, which the God of Hope carries around in his mouth.

If the God of Slowness is the god above the gods.

If he had become a higher level god, he would surely have imposed

his divinity on the entire universe.

It wasn't because of the nature of the God of Slowness.

Of course, if you are a god that is the natural thing to do.

And the world that the God of Slowness would have established would have only flowed infinitely.

No life, no death.

There may be turbulence in the flowing process, but it won't get stuck.

Like a river that flows forever.

I got little goosebumps.

I looked at the frozen world and the Abubus again.

Do they want a world like this?

Could this world be someone's utopia?

I could understand, but I didn't understand at the same time.

I also fell in love with this still world.

It was just that I was delighted that I had the opportunity to use my time efficiently.

But the God of Slowness didn't have it.

For other purposes.

I remembered the advice Kirikiri gave me a long time ago.

The God of Slowness is not a god that humans can trust.

The advice came once again.

[Can you hear me?]

It was Seregia.

It seems that she was reconnected when the godhood was restored.

I heard the voice of the God of Hope.

“Uh, I can hear you.”

After answering without thinking, a question arose.

How can we communicate?

The time in this space has stopped.

Seregia, which exists outside of space, must have spoken in flowing time.

Wow-

The world was collapsing.

The space was literally collapsing with a heavy vibration.

The reason was obvious.

It seemed that the cause and effect of the world were being distorted as a new deity appeared in a world where no god exists.

In fact, it was natural if I thought about it.

If only I had been able to keep my godhood in this space.

The God of the Sky must have found a way to somehow pass on his power to Abubu.

The vain expectation of having a space where time had stopped disappeared.

In any case, the initial purpose was roughly achieved.

It was over if Abubu was put down neatly and safely escaped without getting caught up in this collapsing world.

[Mayday, Mayday.]

Huh?

Sounds like a signal I've been hearing a lot from somewhere.

I remembered it.

It was Seregia.

[Mayday, Mayday.]

Ah, no!

No, it works, but wait a bit before coming in!

Kuaoang!

Smashing the sky of the collapsing world, a huge sword fell.

*

“Wow, it was really cool.”

I almost made it to the goal.

It's also not easy to avoid Seregia falling unprotected.

In the meantime, I had to escape from the collapsing space with Seregia.

In fact, this was the most dangerous case.

I will not be destroyed by the enemy.

I believe so.

However, it was different when people were caught up in an accident like this.

Even Seregia wasn't my enemy, so I couldn't even imagine her as part of the struggle.

"Seregia, wait for a while and then come in."

Had even a few minutes passed, I would have prepared to escape in a stable manner.

In fact, it didn't even take a few minutes.

It depends on when I decide.

[Why did you ignore me like that?]

"When did I ignore you? I said I can hear you."

[I didn't hear it.]

Seregia replied confidently.

Even though she was connected to me, it seemed as if the answer didn't come back and she immediately rushed in.

[I couldn't hear it either.]

Said the God of Hope.

Yes, I didn't tell you, so you wouldn't have heard it.

What are you hoping for?

That's probably the reason why my voice didn't reach Seregia.

A tremendous amount of energy was pouring down from the temple of the God of the Sky located high above.

It is a summoning process to manifest here.

When Abubu who was acting on his behalf was hit, he seemed to have come to settle the situation by himself.

Then the will of the God of the Sky will be important.

What does he want?

[Let him out]

The God of the Sky said as soon as he revealed himself.

There's no room for negotiation.

[He is my apostle.]

The incarnation of the God of the Sky, manifested through the energy of the temple, was enormous.

Like the usual way of the gods.

His body looked white like a cloud.

Sometimes there was a part that looked dark like a dark cloud, but it was usually white.

His eyes, located near his face, were shining red like a fiery sun.

It was such a figure that fit the concept of the God of the Sky.

“He’s also the sword I had before that.”

I was the real owner of Abubu.

Until the God of the Sky recovered him.

And I never agreed to the recall.

Never.

[The child who was with you is now only a part.]

Yes.

You gathered and merged many Abubu who existed on the stages.

The Abubu who shared the same time with me is now part of the greater Abubu.

“Don’t worry, I’ll take him out again. I’ll return the rest.”

[Do you think the child will want that?]

I was silent for a moment.

I could not give a definite answer.

I do not know.

Whether he will be happy.

Rather, I would be pessimistic about his situation of continuing to merge and divide like a test subject.

Or maybe he will despair for another reason.

But I will do it.

It was selfish and for myself.

And for the Abubu who was with me.

The Abubu who had been with me would certainly have rejected it.

Even if he hadn't rejected it, he would never have liked it.

So, as I promised the giants.

And as it will be for all beings in the tutorial stage in the future.

I will also give Abubu his true self.

That was my will.

[It's terribly selfish. Are you trying to resolve the gap you had through others!?!]

The God of the Sky came to his senses.

The God of the Sky would do so.

To protect the believers, send Abubu to fight me.

If you are the God of the Sky who can come directly to protect Abubu, you can ignore the restrictions.

I understood.

And on the one hand, I acknowledged the words.

The enormous body of the God of the Sky shook.

The God of the Sky, with a lumpy human upper body, stretched out his huge arm.

Then a huge window appeared at the end.

It also looked like a harpoon.

Like that body, the power contained in the white window was recognizable at a glance.

“Seregia.”

The God of the Sky chose to solve the problem through force.

It was a good choice for me too.

Seregia reduced her size from the form of a giant sword.

Seregia had turned into a size that was easy to hold, so I took care of her and held her in my hand.

[Be careful, the God of the Sky.....]

I ignored the voice of the God of Hope, saying, to be careful.

“My King.”

Two giants who were far away approached.

“Yes, he is our enemy. Go.”

As soon as they heard me, the giants flew toward the God of the Sky.

There was a good reason for bringing only the two of them.

Not because of optimism.

It was because the power of those two giants was so great.

For a long time, they were warriors who sharpened themselves only to catch and kill the gods.

But I couldn't leave everything to them.

Even without the warning of the God of Hope, I knew that the God of the Sky is a strong enemy that I should be wary of.

As the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple were confined, they couldn't exert influence on the world.

I heard that it is difficult to grow.

The God of the Sky played a pivotal role in an event that once almost devoured the entire universe.

For a clean victory, it's best to end the battle with the best blow without taking measurements back and forth.

While the giants grasped the God of the Sky, I prepared an attack.

A big one.

[The quest window is updated.]

[The God of Light proposes a new quest.]

[The quest window is updated.]

[The God of Light proposes a new quest.]

[The quest window is updated.]

[The God of Light proposes a new quest.]

[The quest window is updated.]

[The God of Light proposes a new quest.]

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[Warning!]

[Please leave quickly.]

The quest window message appeared unexpectedly and stopped moving for a while.

This quest window message has no function other than to deliver the quests of the Hundred Gods.

Kirikiri, who made the quest window, said so.

But what is this warning?

Should it be interpreted as Kirikiri's personal warning?

After a moment of doubt.

I could see the meaning of the warning.

[Kwaaa!]

A space opened behind the sky, and a strange creature appeared.

I wondered if it should be called a living thing.

It was clearly moving, but it looked like a metal device.

It was sparkling golden and had sharp nails.

It was divided into thousands of branches and tied the body of the God of the Sky.

The sharp golden blade at the end of a branch penetrated through the incarnation of the God of Heaven easily.

It was so absurd that I was just staring blankly for a moment.

It was an unrealistic show of power.

I realized when I was trying to ask the God of Hope what the hell was that.

What would the God of Hope, who loves to talk, look at with fear in silence?

“The God of Order.”

Chapter 360

God of the Sky (4)

It was unrealistic.

That expression was perfect.

That power felt so transcendent.

A golden metal device.

I watched from a distance as the God of Order binded the God of the Sky.

As if watching a scene in a movie blankly.

It was like a screen full of very colorful CG spreading out, like watching a blockbuster movie that took away your sense of reality.

Dazed.

And feeling a little ridiculous.

Sharp nails penetrated the body of the God of the Sky.

The continually expanding branches sticking one by one into the body of the God of the Sky reminded me of a plant taking root in the soil.

The God of the Sky could not even rebel.

His body was being eaten, but I did not see him struggle, let alone rebel.

[Let's run away.]

The God of Hope whispered.

It was truly a God of Hope-esque desire.

I ignored it.

I couldn't take my eyes off the sight.

I couldn't let go of such an interesting sight.

The scene where the God of the Sky was being overwhelmed helplessly.

The difference between the God of the Sky and the God of Order does not seem to be a simple difference of power.

The problem was the ability of that metal device's sharp nails.

After digging into the body, it was possible to paralyze even the nerves, so the body was stiffened and could not move.

No, this was a nonsensical comparison.

Because there can be no such thing as a nervous system in the incarnation of a god.

It must be the suppression of one's divine power.

Other explanations were impossible.

In fact, after the God of the Sky came into contact with the metal device, not only did he not move his body, but I did not see any movement using divine powers either.

However, it was not a convincing assumption.

It was the same even when I saw Seregia in my hand right now.

She also had the ability to suppress divine power.

With that power, I was convinced that we would have the upper hand no matter what god we would collide with.

And I never thought that other gods would have this ability too.

Blocking other gods' powers was no different from giving up one's own powers as well.

Had it not been for Seregia's use limited to weapons, it would have been impossible to even try.

"You said you were a believer of the God of Order."

[Apostle.]

There is no way that a god who has apostles as well as believers can use the same method as Seregia.

In addition, that golden mechanical device was not a weapon or something of the God of Order's, but the God of Order itself.

[Just because I am an apostle of the God of Order, does not mean I can escape this situation. Come on, you have to run away while that monster has his eyes on the God of the Sky.]

It was a whispering voice, but this time it was too much.

He was straining his voice so much that it sounded like gasping rather than speaking.

It was strangely unpleasant.

[Let's run away.]

Somehow, the God of Hope seemed certain that the God of Order would attack him.

Despite the fact that he was an apostle of the God of Order.

Rather than keeping order, he is a God of Hope who uses the gaps in the system to do business with all gods.

There must be a lot of things.

“I’m sorry.”

I had no intention of running away.

Actually, I couldn’t.

The God of Order seemed to be focusing all his attention on overpowering the God of the Sky.

It seemed that he wasn’t even interested in us.

This is worth a closer look.

[Stop! Why are you flying over there!?!]

“I need to take a look.”

I couldn’t see everything from a distance.

Having pushed the two giants away, I approached the God of the Sky and the God of Order.

[Stop it! We should run away, so why are we going in the opposite direction!?! Hey!]

The God of Hope shouted.

This guy, he’s in a hurry, so he’s talking again.

[You’re crazy!]

Uh.

He even swore.

“He’s not responding to us.”

The God of Hope said he was distracted by overpowering the God of the Sky.

However, the God of Order was overpowering the God of the Sky too leisurely.

It wasn’t that he couldn’t pay attention to us, he wasn’t.

He was just ignoring us.

With such an opponent in front, I couldn’t turn around and run away just because he looked strong.

[.....]

Even the God of Hope was silent for a moment, wondering why the God of Order did not show interest in us.

The golden metal blades were still digging deeper and deeper into the body of the God of the Sky.

I went closer, and closer.

The method Seregia and I discovered to cut off the circulation of divine power was through the contamination of the divine power.

When the two divinities are mixed together, the divinity loses its original meaning and cannot supply any more divine power.

That was our way.

But if it was not this way...

How does the God of Order block the divine power of the God of the Sky?

The God of the Sky also found a way to block divine power through Ahbooboo, but in the end, it wound up freezing both of our divine powers.

It was a technique that came from our experiment.

There was nothing different besides using a space called a virtual world as a medium instead of Seregia.

After all, it is impossible to unilaterally ignore only one divine power.

That's what I know so far.

I got closer and closer.

Stretching my arm, reaching through the distance.

Like an incarnation, even though there were holes here and there, no bloodstains or stiffness occurred.

It was natural.

Blood, nerves, muscles, and bones do not exist.

Only divine power flows in there.

I looked closely, but still couldn't find any clues.

It was a sight that seemed impossible the more I thought about it.

Considering the nature of the divine power.

Divinity is power after all.

Dominance is not defined by the dominance of other beings.

The power to ignore the dominance of other beings and exercise your own dominance is.....

Ah.

I could finally understand.

A God above God.

There was the God of Slowness who tried to be reborn as a being higher than a god by taking countless gods of the world as believers.

The God of Slowness wanted to spread his own meaning all over the world.

It is impossible to even try if one is a general god.

Apart from the consumption value.

I couldn't stop the world's time even if I ignored the cost of using divine power.

It was impossible as long as there were gods other than myself in this world.

Because their territory cannot be invaded.

The gods were playing the role of the axis that supported the world from going to extremes, using only their existence.

But if the God of Order is beyond the standards of a deity.

Just as a deity can ignore the dominance of a non-deity and carry out their will.

He will be able to carry out his will.

Like the past God of Slowness had tried.

[There is fear in your heart. Haven't you thought of running away? Don't be too discouraged. Shouldn't we live first?]

But not yet.

The God of Order has not yet been reborn as a completely superior being.

I could be sure.

Seeing that he is overpowering the God of the Sky, it seems that he has stepped closer to some extent.

He wasn't perfect.

If he was, there would be no confusion left in this world.

The world would already be changed into the way the God of Order wants and thinks.

The God of Hope, who is whispering to my ear to run away right now, should have disappeared.

By the fact that the God of Hope, who loves confusion and extreme emotions more than anyone else, and causes confusion by using the gaps in the system, is still alive and his normal sense, I could know that the God of Order has not been able to impose his will on the whole world.

[The God of Order is such a god. Do you know how many gods want to get out of the system's constraints? The most powerful gods of the Hundred Gods Temple and the great forces of the Pantheon. He is a god who is binding them altogether alone.]

He was indeed worthy of it.

[It is difficult to even call him a god. As we call it, he is a system that encompasses all of the world. Now do you understand how reckless you are?]

“Okay. I understand.”

[Good. Then let's go back quickly.]

Instead of preparing to go back like the God of Hope said, I called the giants.

“Old Man, Grandmother. Bring the kids to where I am now. Right now.”

[...What?]

The Old Man and Grandmother replied that they would come straight away.

It won't take long.

[What are you trying to do! Stop! Don't do it!]

Then, let's start the outpost until the Old Man and Grandmother come.

[No, you're crazy!]

“Zit pop.”

* * *

[King. What is that?]

Asked the grandmother.

Grandmother was a little late to bring all the giants scattered in small groups.

So I explained it again.

“The God of Order. The System. And the true owner of the Tutorial. It's our main enemy.”

[It looks quite different from what I expected.]

Grandmother said with curiosity.

It was a different response from the old man.

The Old Man was agitated after listening to my explanation, and he ran straight to the God of Order with his subordinates.

And attacked again and again.

Of course it was pointless.

Like the zit pop I used.

No attack could damage the God of Order.

It was so hard and sturdy that it ignored all attacks.

Rather, no attack went in at all.

As if it doesn't exist in this world.

Like an illusion that exists only as a hologram, it was impossible to exercise physical force on the golden metal blades of the God of Order.

The God of Order still only restrained the God of the Sky.

I asked the God of Hope for an explanation.

[Ha! That stupid piece of gold!]

The God of Hope shouted triumphantly.

His attitude changed.

Is he okay with that?

He said he was an apostle.

[It doesn't matter if you are outside of the target of that execution. That thin god is basically harmless. Unless you are subject to sanctions.]

And the God of Hope, he was convinced that he was definitely the target of sanctions and was scared in advance.

He was quite a bit of a guy.

Really.

“Oh my.”

It became embarrassing.

I called out to the old man and grandmother and everyone else.

I thought that if I could win against the God of Order at this opportunity, I would be able to achieve my goal immediately.

But it doesn't even fight me at all.

This made my position quite miserable.

I might not be more than the God of the Sky.

The intertwining of the God of the Sky was a sight to behold.

He was overpowered by the God of Order and couldn't even say a word.

In that state, he was attacked directly by the zit pop defenselessly.

Since then, he has been exposed to the angry attacks from the old man and the giants.

Looking at that form, I was convinced.

The God of Order appeared here only because of the God of the Sky.

Because of the fact that the God of the Sky ignored the rules and tried to act directly, he was arrested.

Well.

So what about this one?

“Old man. Stop for a second.”

I approached the God of the Sky.

The God of the Sky was still grasping a huge spear.

Although he couldn't lift a single one of his fingers.

I put my face to the front of the huge spear.

What if I was cut by this spear?

The God of the Sky was subdued just by trying to act on his own.

If someone is harmed by that action.

Will he be subject to more sanctions?

Chapter 361

God of the Sky (5)

“Oh, the God of the Sky is beating a man. Oh, it stings.”

I wandered around the God of Order with my face flowing with blood.

Of course, I wouldn't bleed just because my face was stabbed.

It was the blood I made for a more colorful presentation.

The God of the Sky did not respond.

He didn't even budge as he was bound by the God of Order.

[Mad lad.]

The scornful curse of the God of Hope flowed in.

[Do you know that the intelligence of the God of Order is at the level of a monkey? How about you stop using that appearance because I'm embarrassed to look at you.]

When I listened to the God of Hope, I became a little bit embarrassed myself.

I stopped the blood that was flowing like a waterfall and returned to the front of the God of the Sky.

So self-harm blackmail didn't work.

Too bad.

I wanted to find out how the God of Order would move after the God

of the Sky attacked me.

Would the sanctions be strengthened, or would he take action?

If not, would he judge me as an attack against the God of the Sky under his jurisdiction and try to intervene against me?

Whatever I did, I thought I could test the behavior of the God of Order through that action.

It was really worth trying.

Above all, I thought it would really work.

If the God of Order is as the God of Hope had explained.

If it exists as the system itself.

If he's a self-less mechanical god.

I thought he could act with the fact that I had been injured by the spear of the God of the Sky.

Or maybe he wasn't aware that I was attacked.

Because the damage was too minor?

Will it change if I take a little more lethal damage?

For the sake of experimentation, one or two arms could be cut off by the spear blade of the God of the Sky.

It's easy to recover anyway.

This time, before implementing the idea, I sought advice from the God of Hope.

[...How could it be? The God of Order would have already recognized it. It

is not a wound according to the will of the God of the Sky. And that you're trying to blackmail him.]

The God of Hope said in a low voice and swallowed his sigh.

Somehow, it was a voice that was filled with pathetic feelings.

Even a little regret.

What are you regretting?

[Would you like to stop doing this and return to your planet?]

The God of Hope keeps whining.

It was no different from a child who whined to his parents to return home.

Anyway.

The purpose is to understand the God of Order.

It's a matter of course.

I underestimated the intelligence level of the God of Order.

I thought that artificial intelligence that would become the most powerful god in the world is an artificial intelligence of the level that Earth's science could achieve.

"Then how about cutting myself on the blade of the God of Order?"

[...Please stop.....]

The God of Hope groaned.

To begin with, it failed.

Attempting to blackmail the God of Order by self-harm.

“Did you know?”

[...Of course I didn't know. You were the first to come up with the idea of approaching the God of Order and attacking yourself.]

Surely.

There must have been a few people who thought the same thing as me before.

[There wasn't.]

Just because the God of Hope doesn't know, doesn't mean there weren't any.

At least one.

[I'm sure, there wasn't. And if there were any beings who tried to do such crazy things to the God of Order, how would I have no idea? I am an apostle of the God of Order.]

He boasted.

He was so scared of the God of Order that he couldn't wait to run away.

[Usually, when facing the God of Order, it is common to try to escape the situation, to be discouraged, or to run away. There has never been a case where someone attempted a stupid experiment like you did.]

Well.

I could understand.

In the first place, in front of the God of Order, there will be only a few

beings who can fully maintain reason.

Between all the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon, there would not even be a hundred.

Anything less than that would not even be able to touch it in the first place.

I told my thoughts to the God of Hope.

[A hundred? It's not even ten.]

“What ten, there’s the old man and the giants…….”

Without much thought, I looked back at the old man and giants.

And I could see them frozen in tension.

[I don't know when the excitement of the battle paralyzed their reason, but there aren't many beings who can face that with a calm head.]

I think so.

The emotions on the faces of the giants were not fear.

Fortunately.

Rather, it was closer to the tension and pressure felt by the warriors facing the bloodiest battle of their lifetime.

It was amazing.

Even though it is clear that the God of Order has no intention of harming us, they have such feelings.

That’s why the God of Order has a great presence.

Just being there is enough to press their minds.

“Old man.”

[King, we are ready.]

Ready for what?

All of a sudden.

[We will not back down. We will fight together!]

“Okay, just go somewhere else.”

[King!]

“Noisy.”

I sent the old man and the crowd of giants to another place.

At this time, I also sent Grandmother and the other giants.

I sent a message to continue the pursuit of the remnants of the Pantheon gods before the summons.

Grandmother answered affirmatively, but the old man did not.

The attack on the God of Order seems to have inflicted mental damage one way or another.

After all this work is over, I think he will need separate care.

“It’s hard to reach a fight.”

I grumbled for nothing.

Then I reached out my hand toward the blade of the God of Order again.

[Can you stop doing this and go back?]

I can't.

I ignored the words of the God of Hope.

Reaching out my hand, I tried to touch the golden blade.

Naturally, the cold and sharp texture peculiar to refined metal was expected.

But my fingertips just passed through the golden blade.

Like holding air.

Like trying to touch a hologram projected by light.

It was also fun.

After becoming a god, I believed that there would be no unknown realms to me.

I thought that even though there are stories of the past that I do not know, there are no unknown abilities that I do not know.

I thought I understood and mastered all the powers in the world.

The fact that an unknown realm did not exist gave me a strange emotional sense of stability.

But on the other hand, it was a little sad.

The fact that there was no longer something to be discovered.

And today.

Contrary to my expectations, I was facing a number of abilities that touched the unknown.

The golden blade of the God of Order was still embedded in the

incarnation of the God of the Sky.

But if I try to touch it.

My fingertips once again shook the air.

It is an illusion.

Is this possible?

It's a real blade for the God of the Sky.

To me, it was just an illusion that was visible to the naked eye and did not exist materially.

This may be the reason why it did not suffer any damage from my Zit Pop, from the Old Man, and from the attacks of giants.

It's an attack that can't reach it in the first place.

Only the God of the Sky, who had been arrested, suffered damage, but he could not attack the God of Order.

It was mysterious.

In the midst of this, the God of the Sky was bound by the blades piercing his incarnation.

It was absurd.

Existence to one deity, and illusion to the other deity.

I tried a few things, but I couldn't find a way to physically contact the blade of the God of Order.

If it were in my days when I was human, I would have skipped it and moved on.

Because the other person is God.

But now that I have become a god, I can clearly see how ridiculous it is.

It is applied to one deity and at the same time exists as an illusion to another.

[Why do you do that?]

Asked Seregia.

No, just.

Somehow it felt similar to Seregia.

The God of Order.

[It's unpleasant.]

...What the hell

All of a sudden.

“Too bad.”

Somehow I wanted to find out the behavior of the God of Order.

It was a little far-fetched and foolish.

That's because a certain deity's behavioral style is valuable information.

The divinity of order explains some of its behavior.

Indeed, the concept of the order was very vague.

“I’ll take Ahbooboo with me.”

I approached the face of the Heavenly God and said.

He was in a terrible situation, but his two eyes were still shining like the sun.

I looked at his eyes that were flickering quietly.

His eyes seemed to send a meaningless meaning.

Sorry I couldn’t read anything.

“As I said before, I’ll return the rest.”

I didn’t have to keep the God of the Sky’s new Aubutz, as it was not the Ahbooboo I knew.

I didn’t even want to.

I will separate it and return it.

I looked around.

It was full of energy and heat generated when the giants and I attacked the God of Order.

This may be the reason the God of the Sky is still holding on so far.

It was clear why the God of Order appeared here.

To stop the God of the Sky who tried to act directly by ignoring the rules.

That was all.

It was correct to think that he was not punishing the God of the Sky for trying to violate the rules, but that he was preventing the act of

breaking the rules itself.

If so, how long will this state last?

For the purpose of deterrence, not punishment.

It would be reasonable to keep the constraints until the God of the Sky gave up his willingness to act directly.

I think so.

I raised my head and looked up there.

The temple of the God of the Sky was still shining.

It wasn't just shining.

The power of that temple formed a barrier, preventing the full heat near me and the God of the Sky from escaping outside.

Enough heat to burn this planet.

"Come here."

I gathered and absorbed the dense heat around it.

It was a little tricky to absorb the energy of the giants, but it was not impossible.

Their foundation was, in the end, my existence.

After absorbing all the heat, I spoke to the God of the Sky again.

"I'm sorry, but I have to see what was going on on this planet."

The God of the Sky sent his apostle Ahbooboo down.

He talked about the fundamental reasons for his own appearance here.

“But I will try not to damage the planet’s believers as much as possible. I promise.”

I could have done that much.

Neither did I want to disturb mortals and hurt those who had nothing to do with the gods.

The God of the Sky stared at me for a moment, then slowly turned to light and began to disappear.

As expected, the God of Order did not even prevent the retreat of the God of the Sky.

It is just preventing behavior that violates the rules.

The God of the Sky was just holding on because he was worried about the believers of the planet.

Soon, the enormous incarnation of the God of the Sky disappeared completely.

The God of Order began to crawl back into the black space where he came out.

[Unexpected]

“What?”

[Because you had the upper hand, I thought you would try to tear off more from the God of the Sky.]

I would have done that normally.

But not now.

Then, if the God of the Sky weakens further, and if the god becomes unstable, it can be an excuse.

“Then, if the God of Order eats the God of the Sky, it will be troublesome.”

He is already a God of Order that seems to go beyond a usual deity.

I couldn't know how far he would go if he had eaten the God of the Sky.

It would become very difficult if the God of Order became something similar to the God of Slowness in the past, a god above a god, a god of transcendence.

[Is there any way to do that? The God of Order cannot do anything else unless it is his mission. In the first place, his ego doesn't exist entirely, so there's no way he can act according to his arbitrary judgment. You can't say that.]

The God of Hope spoke of the God of Order.

He has no ego.

He can't speak.

I am sure about that.

The God of Order would have tried to eat the God of the Sky without hesitation if he had a chance.

[It's ridiculous. There is no personal desire in the first place for that mechanical god.]

It's something that I've already experienced.

On the 59th floor, with the help of the God of the Sky, I achieved a small source and divine power.

And after clearing the stage, before moving to the fields of Kirikiri, I was summoned into a dark space.

And all the power accumulated on the 59th floor was deprived by an unknown entity.

Now I know.

That existence was the God of Order.

I told the God of Hope about my experiences.

And then.

[It was mine.]

Said the God of Order.

The God of Order was creeping into the black space.

The God of Order, who had never spoken a single sentence let alone a word, rebelled against my words.

This is nonsense.

“It was the power that I achieved and gathered with my abilities. How is that yours?”

You’re like a robber.

[It is my strength. It is the power you have achieved in my world. The enemies you met there and the humans who gave your strength are all mine.]

Because the world in the Tutorial is part of him.

It was the claim of the God of Order that the source and the divinity, completed by receiving the faith of the people in the world, also belonged to him.

[The world is a part of me, and I am the world.]

“It won’t be soon.”

[That won’t happen.]

F**king bastard.

It’s been a while, but when I heard that voice, I felt like a bug in the past.

“I’ve said it before. I’ll visit you someday. And I’ll let you pay the price for taking my power.”

[Well, come and see, challenger.]

The God of Order finally completely entered the black space.

And the black space was immediately closed and cut off.

Son of a b****.

I can’t stop swearing.

Come and see, you know I can’t go.

“Tsk.”

I clicked my tongue once.

Then I asked the dumb God of Hope.

“Who has no ego again?”

[...That can’t be true.]

Chapter 362

God of the Sky (6)

[Are you going back now?]

Asked the God of Hope.

“Don’t talk to me.”

The God of Hope bit his lip again.

The more I saw it, the more strange it was.

[...What do you want me to do?]

What can you do?

You need to explain.

In the deal with the God of Hope, there was also the requirement of giving information.

I wanted to receive information from the God of Hope.

However, if the information of the God of Hope is wrong, what kind of damage will be done?

[The God of Order... He shouldn’t have an ego]

The God of Hope explained.

[It is too great of a power to be given to beings with ego. When the Hundred Gods Temple was first created, the system existed only as a system. It gained divinity over time, but that was all.]

The divinity acquisition of beings without an ego is understandable.

It is more common than you think.

In ancient beliefs such as totemism, things were often sanctified.

Stones, skulls, jewelry, as well as civilizations and artworks from the previous era can be sanctified.

What comes to mind right now is Earth.

Although it has no ego, it has acquired divinity through the indirect faith of humans for a long time.

Then, the power was extracted by the rulers.

Probably not just Earth, but countless planets.

However, Earth did not acquire ego until the end.

The only intention that Earth could express was an apology for all beings that gave their divinity meaninglessly.

On the contrary, the system, the God of Order has transcended those limits and has a self.

He has realized his desires and is expected to be able to act arbitrarily.

[If the God of Order had a high level of intelligence, he would have been hiding that fact. Isn't that natural?]

“Why?”

[That's because the gods will change the system.]

Replace.

It is the role of the God of Order to keep the Hundred Gods Temple

and Pantheon gods from getting out of the system.

But if they replace the system with a new system instead of editing the system.

It could be an action within the order that is allowed for them.

“Then it has come to light now.”

[Well.]

To the gods.

The God of Order was even hiding the fact from its apostle, the God of Hope.

I didn't think that he had shown that he had an ego by my provocation.

Rather, it is more correct to say that he had announced himself.

[I don't know if he has self-assurance.]

“What kind of self-assurance.”

[Assurance to not to be replaced.]

He was to not be replaced.

It was ambiguous.

“How would the other gods react if they realized that the God of Order has an ego?”

[It will be crazy. Gods usually hate someone above them. Even the system was like that, but if the system was a god with reason, it would cause madness.]

It was.

I think so too.

So it will be possible to replace it as well.

If most of the gods reject the God of Order with an ego, the system will be replaced or renovated through the voting of the entire Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon.

Suppose he is confident to stop it.

How is it possible?

[First of all, it is impossible to block voting through politics and power wars.]

“Why?”

[How is it possible? The God of Order has no power. Right now, you don't have to see the Pantheon, where several forces are intricately entangled, just by looking inside the Hundred Gods Temple. The Sky that formed one axis will be weakened by this event, but Adventure and Slowness are still there, and I am too.]

The end is a little weird.

Maybe the God of Hope overestimates himself too much.

Showing off?

[...no.]

“What about using the loopholes of the system?”

[Impossible. The gods of the Pantheon were too much for me. As soon as I got weak, they ended up talking to each other. Apart from the discipline of the system, new rules arose between them.]

He is showing off.

[More than anything else, the God of Order cannot do such a thing. Opening the loopholes of the system itself is contrary to the divinity of the God of Order, and just supporting that fact will weaken its power... Hmm.]

“Why again.”

The God of Hope was silent while talking.

When I asked why, the God of Hope replied with an unpleasant voice.

[I wondered if this was the reason why the God of Adventure made me an apostle of the God of Order.]

* * *

[Should I go catch the little punk here?]

Asked the God of Hope.

I have to go catch it.

That’s why we set foot on this planet in the first place.

Pursuing a sub-god who was called by the god of the Pantheon and tried to rebel against me.

[Should.....]

I should go.

I.

We were now down to the planet’s ground.

To be precise, on the streets of a bustling city.

I had to go back a bit because I promised the God of the Sky that I would try to avoid damaging the planet and the believers as much as possible.

The place where I could feel the energy of the lower god was the hillside that I looked up at from my distance away.

An unusual building was built on the hillside.

It seems to be a temple of a lower god.

It was not a high mountain, but it could be seen from anywhere in the city.

It was a good location.

There was a needlessly powerful barrier.

In order to invade from the outside, you would need a pretty big impact to spread to the surrounding area.

However, if you follow the road through the city to the main gate of the temple, you are not caught in the barrier.

It is probably the way believers come and go there.

The streets were lively.

It was a good place, as Ahbooboo who was sealed in the subspace said.

There seemed to be a lot of food.

“I want to eat that one.”

As I was looking around the street, Seregia’s voice interrupted me.

When she changed to human form again, she stood next to me and pointed to a kiosk stand.

“I have no money.”

“Shall I steal?”

Seregia asked naturally.

She had a voice full of confidence, as if she was going to take care of it on her own.

Good people walking through the streets approached the stall before experiencing the rare event of being pickpocketed by a god who wanted to eat grilled skewers.

Seregia picked up a skewer from the kiosk and started eating it before ordering anything.

Fortunately, the stall owner didn't pay much attention.

I asked while checking the look of the currency used by people on the street.

“How much?”

The owner simply answered four.

The currency here is divided into coins of various colors, such as white, yellow, and red.

The problem was that I couldn't figure out which four coins to give.

[You can pay for it with yellow coins.]

There was advice from the God of Hope.

I pretended to take it out of my pocket, made four yellow coins in my hand and handed it to the owner.

It was an illegal act equivalent to counterfeiting currency, but it was made so elaborate that it would not be noticed, so there will be no

problem.

“How did you know he was asking for yellow coins?”

[Of course I should know. Hope can be presented only when people understand their most basic desires. In a world where the market economy is active, capital always stimulates people's desires, and the basis of which is always money.]

I don't know what you mean.

“Come to think of it.”

The stall owner, quietly grilling skewers, said abruptly.

“Are you faithless?”

Not really.

I have a religion.

Even I am the god of that religion.

“Would you like to believe in the God of Earth? Then I'll give you a few skewers for free.”

Although Seregia almost became a believer of the God of Earth, I managed to get her out of it.

* * *

“You were born~ to be loved~”

It was definitely a song I heard from somewhere.

It was a song with beautiful lyrics with an upbeat pitch.

“And you are receiving that love through your life now~ God of

Calmness~”

“Yes, get off.”

If it weren't a song for missionary work, I would have listened to it without much thought.

[T/N: Yes, it is a real contemporary Christian song in Korea! Titled ‘당신은 사랑받기 위해 태어난 사람’ or ‘You Were Born To Be Loved’.]

And if they hadn't been singing while holding hands around me, I wouldn't have gone so far as to tell them to shut it off.

No, why are they doing this in the middle of the street?

Is it a type of shame play?

Is it a new type of bullying?

It can't be.

People were trying to preach to us with all their heart.

“Seregia!”

In the distance, Seregia was being tempted by an uncle chef with food that looked like kebabs.

I don't know what kind of god the kebab uncle believes in.

The start of the incident was that uncle grilling skewers made a fuss.

From then on, everyone on the streets realized that we were faithless.

And the endless missionary work began.

The way of preaching was not unpleasant or dangerous.

It was like giving food for free, trying to give a bouquet or candy, or singing a song like they just did.

The problem was that I had no intention of turning to another religion.

Seregia seemed a little different.

Eventually, I had to take Seregia off the street.

I climbed onto the roof of the visible building.

People started to murmur because of us who suddenly disappeared, but they decided to just ignore it.

“Why are they doing that?”

The God of Hope, who was giggling at me in trouble, explained.

[Because you are faithless. People here distinguish religion with a badge on their chest. For reference, the ratio of religious persons on this planet is over 99%. It's a social structure where you can't help but have a religion until your adult age.]

Looks like so.

Everyone will have a religion if they are shamed on the streets whenever they are found to be faithless.

[That's not it. The gods here are actively giving out to the believers. It is a competitive field where various religions are mixed, and because the population of this planet is so large, it is a market with fierce competition.]

So naturally, they give as many benefits as possible to the believers.

As a result, there is no reason for people to be non-religious.

It's a bountiful market.

[If an adult is not wearing a badge, it may have been accidentally left behind.]

“Left behind?”

[It means you have recently abandoned your religion.]

Abandoning religion?

What does that mean?

[Whether you had discord with the priest in charge, or are looking for a different religion that gives you better benefits.]

It was a more trivial reason than I thought.

[Therefore, everyone has embraced their religion.]

It was a bizarre society.

It was somehow a worrisome experience.

[There are several places like this. Where competition among the gods is overheating. Excessive benefits are poured out to the believers, and the priests try to attract even one more believer.]

At first glance, this may be the reason why this planet has too high a happiness index compared to its development level and is bustling.

The gods and temples will be in charge of their lives.

When I thought about it, I thought it would be comfortable for the people here to live.

A life in which the gods take care of both safety and food, clothing, and shelter.

You won't be desperate, and you will be able to pursue what you want with your extra effort.

There will be no utopia.

It would be frustrating because their share of gods rarely increases.

It would be a very desirable social system for believers.

“It’s okay.”

[Do you really think so?]

I really thought so.

I have seen many worlds.

In tutorials and outside.

In the tutorial, I have seen worlds where no god saves anyone.

Some people struggled and tried to survive on their own in the pit of doom.

In front of overwhelming despair, we could see even humans losing hope and despair.

It was a dead world.

Conversely, after the Tutorial, I have seen worlds ruled by only one god.

These were mainly the holy lands of the gods.

It was the same even when I thought of the God of the Sky.

He is a God of the Sky who treats believers well and has a good management system and doctrine.

But what about in the holy place?

Everyone will be equal under the God of the Sky.

It may be the ideal form of socialism and egalitarianism.

However, in that world, the desire to go to a higher place through development and achievement will be intensified.

Equality, but everyone is always everyone.

You can be the same self as everyone else in the world, but you won't be respected for your own personality that is different from anyone else.

From a point of view, it was also hell.

The holy land of the God of Hope was a shock to me.

They were confining believers in glass tubes, forcing them to live and die, and exploiting the hope arising in the process.

I wasn't shocked and angry because I felt rejected by the inhumane treatment.

My shock was that I was reminded of my holy land in the holy land of the God of Hope.

For victory.

The world of giants who struggle and overcome themselves only for victory.

The giants had to endure the harsh and cruel acts repeatedly to the point that victory over themselves would be established.

Of course, it was what the giants wanted themselves.

Like I did in the past.

But that wasn't what a normal world looked like.

Chapter 363

God of the Sky (7)

[Let's go to my temple.]

Said the God of Hope.

Out of the blue.

“Why your temple?”

[Don't you need time anyways?]

“What time.”

The God of Hope made a giggling sound.

I had heard it many times already, but each time I heard it it was a fresh, irritable laugh.

[If you are crushed because you need time to clear up your confused mind, is there a need to shiver on a cold roof like this? If you need guidance and rest, let's go to my temple.]

Even the roof is not bad because I can think quietly by myself.

And I haven't even caught the lower god who has fled here yet.

I have no intention of leaving this planet before then.

[It's not far from here.]

“Huh? Here?”

[If you turn to the left in the direction you are looking at, it will be quick.]

Looking at the direction the God of Hope said, I saw the roof of a temple building.

The temple was easy to recognize.

Because there needs to be symbolism.

Temples are always designed with the feeling of ‘oh, this building is a temple”.

“That’s your temple?”

[Yes.]

It was surprising.

Truly.

I couldn’t easily accept the fact that there was a temple of the God of Hope in the middle of the city.

No, its existence on the planet itself was strange.

The reason was obvious.

It was because of the grotesque ideals of the God of Hope.

The God of Hope believes that the most desperate moment is the moment when hope shines the most.

And there was no urgency on this planet.

They couldn’t get desperate.

It is a planet where many gods are competing for benefits.

In the midst of this, if a person's life is to become desperate, they would need a very elaborate and complex story.

Even if the God of Hope encouraged such a situation to his believers, it would not be easy to maintain it.

It was only if the believers abandoned the God of Hope and returned to other gods.

So I did not expect that there would be a temple of the God of Hope on this planet.

However, the God of Hope introduced the temple in the middle of the city as his own temple.

Oh, that's it.

Something like the hidden dark forces of the continent.

A social group that is intriguingly conspiring to destroy the peace in the world.

As I recalled, it was plausible.

[That is a false preconceived notion.]

What false preconceived notion.

I think it fits within the probability of his behaviors.

[If you go, you will know.]

"If I go, I feel like I'm going to feel uncomfortable."

He must have hidden something like a torture chamber in the basement of the temple.

It was clear.

First, I headed to the temple as the God of Hope said.

In fact, the God of Hope was right.

I needed time to organize my thoughts.

There was also a need for planning to catch the lower god.

Most of all, I wanted to see the temple of the God of Hope, which stimulated my curiosity.

*

“What, this is.....”

The temple of the God of Hope was unexpectedly bright and lively.

The believers wandering around looked relaxed and clear, as if they came out of a neighborhood drinking party rather than a temple.

Priestesses were serving people with smiles like salespeople.

People looked peaceful.

I got little goosebumps.

[What was that you were saying earlier?]

The God of Hope said in an elated voice as if he had won.

“What.....”

Is it such a level of mental pollution that I can’t even notice?

Otherwise, it couldn’t be explained.

[Don’t keep saying nonsense.]

As I was blankly looking at the people around me, a priestess came to me.

The priestess was wearing a robe uniform with a sprout drawn on it.

Is that sprout a symbol of the Church of Hope?

It's ridiculous.

[That is the case here.]

Oh my gosh.

It's the end, it's the end.

That kind of society is using a hopeful symbol like a sprout.

It was a Church of Hope without even a minimum of conscience.

[Would you stop being so sarcastic?]

"Brother, is this your first time here?"

The God of Hope and the priestess asked at the same time.

I nodded.

*

The priestess guided me to a private parlor.

As soon as I entered the parlor where I was guided, I patted various places on the wall.

There seems to be no hidden room.

"Why are you knocking on the wall?"

“I was wondering if there was a trap installed.”

Like sleeping gas.

Like paralyzing poison.

Or just poisons.

Like curse magic.

Or just an arrow.

“No such thing, brother.”

The priestess said with a smile.

As she said, there was no such thing as a trap.

That’s why.

I wonder if there is a trap that even tricks my senses.

That was more rational.

Rather than accepting the fact that the temple of the God of Hope is really a normal temple, it’s better to think that there’s some terrible trap hiding.

“You can write simple personal information here.”

The priestess handed out a piece of paper.

Oh, is this a trap too?

Are you trying to take advantage of other people’s personal information?

[This is a guestbook. Just roughly write something down.]

It wasn't.

As I drew graffiti in the guestbook, the priestess asked me about my visit.

[You can say you need guidance.]

As he said, I stated I needed guidance.

Then the priestess was greatly pleased.

"If you have any thoughts of returning--"

"Nope."

I said in a nutshell.

"Yes?"

"No."

"Ah... Yes."

The priestess was visibly disappointed.

But she didn't do missionary work any more than that.

Instead, she asked again about the business.

"Then what kind of guidance would you like?"

I said that I would like to ask the priestess to guide me to the temple of the lower god I saw earlier.

"Ah, it was a guide! Please wait here for a moment. I'll be ready soon."

The priestess said so and left her parlor.

I don't know what she's going to prepare.

[Simple. She's just changing into outdoor clothes and coming.]

Is that so?

Well.

[What, if there is anything you want to ask, ask.]

Said the God of Hope.

As he said, there was something I wanted to ask.

"Why is that priestess trying to guide my way? We are not from the same church."

[That is the role of my priests. To guide.]

It doesn't suit you.

[Hope is a vague expectation.]

The God of Hope explained.

[The role of my priests is to be a light that illuminates when people are lost and wandering, or when they are unable to go on their own. As a result, people give hope to me, and in addition, even if there is a problem in the future, they can ask for help from the nearby Temple of Hope.]

It was a very different story from the view of hope of the God of Hope that I had known before.

The God of Hope is not satisfied with the meaning of a light that marks milestones on the road or a degree of prevention that can overcome anxiety about the future.

[So my priests show people the way. They guide you through the streets and provide directions to people who are mentally wandering. The answer

is not always correct, but it is my priests who will walk together.]

I couldn't take it anymore and asked.

That isn't like his ideal.

Does he not believe that hope in despair is the brightest hope?

[Of course it is.]

The God of Hope replied.

[But is there any reason to ask for only the strongest hope? Weak hope is also hope. Of course, from my point of view, it would be nice to receive strong hope with faith, but if the situation doesn't work, I have to pursue other methods.]

Is it different depending on the situation?

When I think about it, it was.

If you think of the sanctuaries of the God of Hope who were in an extreme situation like hell.

They were all sacred sites of the God of Hope or areas exclusively owned by the God of Hope.

It was the same on the 49th floor of the Tutorial when I first encountered the God of Hope.

It was a world of mixed religions.

All denominations fell and only the sanctuary of the God of Hope remained.

The reason the God of Hope established a truly hopeful denomination on this planet was not for good or evil and not for morality.

It was just a management strategy according to the conditions.

When I thought so, I finally understood.

*

Following the priestess, I went back to the streets.

There was one obvious advantage.

Since there was a priestess attached to me as a guide, there were no people who bothered me for missionary work.

There was also one drawback.

Seregia was eating too much from the priestess.

It's a bit embarrassing as a party.

"He said that if we believed in the God of the Earth, he would give grilled skewers for free."

"I'll buy it instead!"

Like an idiot, the priestess kept buying food for Seregia.

It was already the fourth time I saw it.

Perhaps the priestess seemed to be still open to the possibility of us returning to the Temple of Hope.

Unfortunately, she was unable to give up her vain hope.

[All my priestesses are underpaid. Stop.]

The God of Hope said this.

After taking Seregia who was trying to eat all the street foods, I headed to a place where I felt the energy of the lower god.

A long, long staircase stretched from the street to the building on the hillside.

It wasn't a very high mountain by my standards, but it seemed too difficult for an average person to walk up.

The stairs were steep and too high.

No matter how much I looked at it, it wasn't a stairway to be climbed.

"Let's go."

The priestess spoke briskly and began to climb the stairs in the lead.

As she climbed the stairs she asked me.

"Seeing you go to the sage, do you have any concerns?"

"Sage?"

"Yes, the sage over there."

The priestess said, pointing to the shrine on the hillside.

Sage.

Was the lower god serving as a sage here?

It was surprising.

I asked about the sage.

As the priestess headed to the sage, I questioned her about the sage, but she answered me sincerely.

"He is a wise person. If there is a major disaster or crisis on the continent, he'll tell us. He thinks deeply about even the smallest issues between people and makes wise judgments."

Listening to the priestess' words, the sage did not seem to be regarded as a god.

Could he maintain faith through mere respect?

It seemed to be possible if he was not a definite god but a lower god of an ambiguous level.

Pretending to be a sage may be his strategy in order to receive faith on this planet where several gods coexist.

“Then there must be many people visiting.”

“Well, as you can see.”

The priestess said.

There were not a few people climbing the stairs.

“But there aren't many people who meet the sage.”

“Why?”

“If you walk this staircase while thinking about your worries, your worries are solved.”

*

It was literally like so.

People who have started climbing the stairs with their own problems stopped step by step.

Then they turned around and started going down the stairs.

There was no magic staircase that solved people's concerns.

“Heuk, heuk... keuhk.”

The priestess was breathing heavily.

It was a natural reaction.

As such, this staircase was a structure that was difficult for ordinary people to climb.

It was so steep that you can't stop to rest.

The slope gets worse, and it becomes almost the level of rock climbing.

If you miss your step, you would fall right away.

It was a staircase that instilled not only physical suffering but also mental horror.

As you climb stairs like this, minor worries will naturally disappear from your mind.

It was natural.

Even the worries that were not there will disappear.

Chapter 364

God of the Sky (8)

“Heuk, haah, haah.”

The priestess gasped wildly.

After taking a breath, the priestess shouted:

“You’re very strong-willed to come up here!”

That is what I want to say.

The priestess, who I thought would go back after getting separated far away, was still chasing me.

The priestess was trembling in her arms and legs and she was far behind but she was still chasing me.

“It’s okay, you can go back now.”

The priestess’s job was finished by guiding me to get out of the crowded streets easily and explaining the Church of Hope.

It was enough.

But that priestess didn’t seem to think so.

“You can’t do that!”

She cried out.

It’s a bitter voice.

It was understandable.

The stairs to the sage's shrine were now becoming like rock cliffs.

Honestly, it was too weird to call it a staircase.

Is there a stairway where one hangs on a rope and climbs up against it like a cliff?

As you climb higher, the wind gets stronger.

Naturally, we couldn't even hear each other's voices well.

It was an irrelevant problem for me, but the priestess was screaming loudly.

Of course, her throat was as hoarse as it could be.

"As a guide, I have an obligation to accompany you to the end.....!"

Be nice, be nice.

I felt like I was looking at someone in the past.

"She's gonna die like that."

Seregia muttered from the side.

It wasn't a very sad voice.

She was just muttering about what would happen soon.

I couldn't help but ask the God of Hope.

What are you doing to foster such a Spartan priestess on such a peaceful planet?

[That's the doctrine.]

“To accompany me to the end?”

It was an absurd doctrine.

[No, to survive until the end.]

To survive.

She'll be short-lived keeping that doctrine.

[I'm not talking about her life.]

Tsk, and I had no choice but to click my tongue.

The priestess was now at her limit.

Her trembling lips were telling me that her body was exhausted.

She stopped occasionally and didn't make any movements, indicating that her body was preparing.

That wasn't a pause for a break.

Because of excessive pain, fatigue, and fear, her brain is eagerly secreting hormones.

When the human body faces a limit, it does not squeeze the last force to overcome it.

Instead, it anesthetizes itself as if preparing for death.

I watched her for a while and reached out to the priestess.

Even after seeing my extended hand, the priestess did not react for a while.

It was only after I waved my hand like a float in front of a fish, and then the priestess' eyes accurately recognized my hand.

“Grab on. I’ll pull you up.”

“...Thank you!”

In the meantime, the priestess tried to express her gratitude with a bright smile.

Then she raised her hand and held mine.

There was no strength in her grasp.

She was moist with sweat.

I was a little uncomfortable.

I grabbed her hand and raised it.

Halfway.

The priestess’ hand was held forward.

Naturally, the priestess moved away from the ropes and from the sides of the cliffs.

She was just stuck in my hand.

“Ex, excu.....”

The priestess looked at me with confused eyes.

Her black pupils spoke of many feelings.

I’m a little sorry.

Even so, I hoped she learned from this opportunity.

Her own plight.

I let go of my hand.

The priestess, who had no strength in her grasp already, began to fall.

The priestess could not even scream properly.

She just kept looking at me as she fell.

There would have been nothing to look at other than me.

She kept falling, focusing on the hand that let go of her.

Tak.

By flicking a finger, I moved the priestess in front of the temple of the God of Hope.

The priestess rolled over on the street in front of the temple and looked around in confusion.

After a while, she figured out where she was, and she lost strength and laid down on the street.

People wandering around the temple recognized her and began to support her.

She will be fine.

Although her muscle pain would be serious.

After drinking a potion and resting for a few days she would probably be healthy again.

[Hehehehe, very good.]

And the God of Hope was happy.

Extremely so.

It was enough that I could feel his emotions.

“What? The fear and despair that the priestess felt while falling, and your existence that came to mind at that moment?”

[Yes, it would have been nice if she fell to the bottom.]

The bastard.

This guy's believers should also know this.

[The falling human is always conscious. Oh, I'm falling from this point. They had already foreseen death when they started to fall, but there is the illusion that comes to mind at the last minute of the end. Maybe they can survive this. Like this. Oh, that's really good.]

This is the problem.

God does not care about the well-being of each human being.

[If they only moved a little further away. A little bit more.....]

It wasn't even worth answering.

I ignored it and quietly started to climb the stairs again.

This path, which was called a stairway but should truthfully be called a murder rock climbing course, was entwined with magic.

It was much further than looking up from the street, and it was rough.

The sage up there was said to care about even the little things of each individual.

Of course.

If they can overcome this stairway, they will be one of the best superhumans on this planet.

I heard that the only things that the sage went ahead and solved were related to preventing a crisis or disaster on the continent, and so on.

Nevertheless, he was building a false reputation of treating all people equally and solving all worries.

He was at an ambiguous level of a deity standing at the boundary between a superhuman and a god.

I had a good understanding of the nature of gods.

Indeed, he deserved to be called a sage.

“In that sense, the God of Order is an ideal god.”

It is literally an ideal god.

While imposing minimal rules on the gods, it has little involvement in mortals.

No matter how much I thought about it, the farther away God was from humans, the better.

God is never beneficial.

Although it may seem indispensable for the world, God is absolutely not beneficial to ordinary intellectuals who make up the majority of the world.

At least it was the case for all the gods I saw and experienced in this world.

Deities are bound to be extreme, and the moment you force them on your own believers. The believers' lives begin to crumble.

It was a little bit better for a world where many gods were mixed like this planet so that God couldn't force anything on the believers.

“The God of Order will try to become a transcendent god.”

[Transcendent God? That's a plausible expression.]

The God of Order, who has nearly become a transcendent god, will surely impose his order on the world.

As the God of Slowness in the past tried.

[The God of Order has revealed that he has an ego.]

By my provocation.

No matter how much I thought about it, there was no reason to just let the provocation pass.

The God of Order deliberately showed the world that he had an ego.

That means he has confidence.

[That means there's not much time left.]

It was exciting.

It's a staircase that solves your worries.

As I climbed, I could clearly see what I had to do in the future.

Soon I was able to climb all the stairs.

There was no priestess who was delaying me, so it was very quick.

At the end of the stairs was a well-established shrine.

This is the Tower of Dragon Ball's Korin*.....

There were some strange things.

Of course, it was annoying that the interior and landscape conditions were like in a famous cartoon.

There was something more strange than that.

There were guards here, who made it ambiguous whether this was a temple or a storage warehouse.

And all the guards wearing strangely designed armor stood still.

I got closer and looked.

The guards were fine.

There was no sign of being enchanted, nor were they rigid.

They just stopped.

Soon I could see what had happened to the guards.

Time confinement.

They were stuck in time.

The power of the God of Slowness that slows down all worlds except his own self.

It was an overwhelming power to the extent that it seemed like the power of the God of Slowness almost devoured the world of the past.

These guards were overpowered by that power.

Even in a state of deformation.

Time confinement applies to all of the world, leaving only one's own self as an exception.

However, the time confinement unfolded here was only applied to the guards, not the world.

The guards were trapped in an infinitely slow world.

They were just looking ahead and standing on the lookout without thinking, but from the outside, the guards were completely stationary.

Of course, the guards were the hands of the sage.

They are the servants of a god.

The powers of other gods cannot be applied in this way to those under the power of a god.

They can't do that.....

“Things beyond common sense keep happening.”

It was already a few times today.

What day is it?

“Did the God of Slowness intervene?”

[No. Rather than being the God of Slowness, um.....]

The God of Hope stopped talking while trying to explain something.

The God of Hope did not open his mouth.

He flutters all day, but when it really matters, he doesn't help.

I ignored the guards and entered the temple.

And I could face the sage.

Like the guards outside, the sage looked bizarre.

He was turned into a stone.

That's absurd.

I came to this place by pursuing the power of the sage I encountered in the Pantheon.

So I could be sure.

That stone is the sage.

Should I say it is dead or alive?

It wasn't just the appearance of a stone.

The sage was literally a stone.

No reason, no self, nothing left.

It was the same as Earth, with divinity, but no ego.

“Huh.”

If it had been dead, I would have just let it go.

God wasn't completely immortal.

But for a god to be a stone.

Let's organize the thoughts.

The next question is how the sage ended up like that right now.

The purpose of the one who made the sage a stone was of utmost importance.

“It's probably because of me.”

[I think so.]

Rather than an unidentified being who suddenly had a grudge against the sage, he made the sage into stone today and enshrined it here.

It was better to think that it had something to do with me, who was pursuing the sage.

[Rather than someone turning the sage who fled to this place into a stone it was more correct to assume that the sage was brought here after getting turned into stone. As far as I know, that stone has a base on several planets. This place is rather small.]

I thought so too.

Originally, I thought that the sage, who became a stone, remembered the God of Sky, and fled here.

If someone intentionally put the sage here.

It can be said that it encouraged a collision between me and the God of Sky.

Inevitably, the conflict that the God of Order would respond to.

Who is it?

I understand the nature of the God of Sky and me.

A being who can intercept the sage by intervening between the Pantheon and my conflict.

In addition, being able to encourage this situation by using a technique that I do not understand.

Do you want me to notice?

Or did you think I wouldn't notice?

If so.

"You seem to be looking at me as an idiot."

“How are you?”

The answer did not come back.

There is just calm tranquility.

Kirikiri did not wait for an answer.

Answers that don't come back right away don't come back forever.

The god who proves time talks like that.

“I guess it's worth it. Good luck. Nice to see you after a long time, too.”

Kirikiri said 'hng' and sniffed.

The room of the God of Slowness was a strange place.

Even after visiting several times, she felt that way.

“It's time.”

[You came to steal my power again.]

Footnote:

*) So in Dragon Ball there was a wise cat living in the Korin Tower which is a tower that was built high up in the sky, so LHJ, like Goku has to continue to climb to meet Korin.

Chapter 365

Earth (5)

I stood still for a while.

Looking at the blood-red stones.

“Let’s go back and think about it. That would be good.”

It didn’t seem like something I could fix right away.

Although the shrines of the gods of the Pantheon were all destroyed, the problem of Earth will still remain.

Of course, I believed that Yong-yong and Hochi were coping well.

In the midst of this, it was not desirable to do something else.

Even more so if I don’t really know about the new problem.

[I agree.]

I decided to take care of the sage who became a stone.

The self was completely gone, and even when I held it in my hand, there was no response.

He had turned into something like an energy source that contained divine power.

There was no reason not to take it.

It was a treasure with condensed faith.

It was such an object that would surely have turned eyes if the gods who were sucking the source and putting a straw on the planet to gain more power had seen it.

It wasn't that great just because of the power it contained.

[Can you figure out how?]

The God of Hope muttered.

I was thinking similarly.

If it is possible.

If you can attack other gods, downgrade them to an energy source, and absorb them.

You can literally accumulate overwhelming power.

[I could make all the gods in the world kneel down and beg.]

The God of Hope's point of view seemed a little different.

It won't make a big difference.

"I have to do some research."

I said that, but I was skeptical.

It won't be easy.

A sub-space was opened and the sage stone was stored next to the sealed Abubu.

I closed the subspace again and prepared to return to Earth.

The war is over.

The first war since I came to Earth.

No, it was the first war I ever fought.

Until now, I fought countless times, but this was my first war.

I have always fought alone with nothing to protect.

But this time it was different.

There was something to protect, Earth and the believers.

Together with the giants, I formed a force and fought against the huge forces of the Pantheon.

I didn't feel any special feelings.

Of course, there was a difference from fighting alone.

Thinking that the war was over safely, I felt a sense of relief.

It was the opposite of the emptiness and regret that I felt every time a battle was over before.

“Warrior?”

After a while, Seregia called out to me.

“Nothing. Let's go back.”

* * *

Earth was still in chaos.

Contrary to what was feared, there was no direct invasion of Earth by the gods of the Pantheon.

However, the troops were a problem.

The unidentified force's number was too large.

Most of them were killed or crushed immediately after being summoned, but some survived, and some actively initiated destruction on Earth.

Fortunately, at some point, no additional summoning portals were created.

The situation was a little different from the beginning when the summoning portals appeared endlessly and even changed their locations randomly.

It was because the giants invaded the gods of the Pantheon in retaliation, and the gods of the Pantheon, who were quick to notice, just pulled out their feet.

However, the troops already put onto Earth were still there.

The troops were never repatriated back to their home.

Even before that, the summoning portal itself was closed as the gods of the Pantheon were extinguished by the giants.

The way to return had disappeared.

Some troops summoned by the gods of the Pantheon did not have the will to fight.

On the other hand, some were very belligerent.

This was the case with the Mahabaha tribe summoned to Australia.

This race, with dozens of black horns on their foreheads, did not fall to death during their summoning.

All the summoned members came safely to Earth and began to carry out their purpose.

“Kaaak! Kill it!”

“Smash and break it!”

“Burn them! Ka-Ak!”

“Our God is coming here!”

They shouted so and began to destroy everything they saw around them.

A group of people who were running away from the Mahabaha tribesmen screamed.

“It’s blocked!”

There was an invisible wall erected in the air.

People knocked on the transparent wall, but, of course, it was a wall that ordinary humans could not break.

In the sight of those who looked back in haste, the Mahabaha tribesmen who had been pursuing them were seen.

People had no intention of opposing them.

They are monsters who crush concrete walls and destroy skyscrapers with force.

An Awakened might be able to stop them.

However, the awakened people didn’t even see where they went.

Kang!

The people tried hitting the transparent wall with tools such as a wrench that people had, but that too was no use.

But people were desperate.

People hit the wall endlessly with the objects they were holding or with their bare fists.

The tools broke and blood splattered from their fists, but they couldn't stop.

Dozens of the Mahabaha tribesmen were running towards them.

Humans who were blocked in front had nothing to do other than bang on the wall.

A message appeared in front of them.

[Miracle- Summon Intermediate Guardian]

[11 intermediate guardian apprentices are summoned.]

Bang!

As a powerful explosion broke out, dozens of Mahabaha tribesmen, who were running toward the humans blocked by the wall, were pushed out.

When the dust generated by the explosion subsided, the seven summoned appeared.

Summoned, they were chatting.

“Damn, please let me take some time to rest.”

Someone complained that way.

“Where is this again? Is it New York?”

Someone looked around.

“No, it’s Sydney. I’ve been here before.”

They looked very relaxed.

They seemed to feel annoyed rather than fearful in this situation.

“The training is crap, but the practice is worse. At least give me time to breathe and pamper me. I will die of overwork.”

“Don’t say that. This is better than staying locked in Hell difficulty forever.”

The complaining person agreed with their words.

They were challengers who were stuck on the Tutorial’s Hell difficulty.

It wasn’t the low sections like the 1st and 2nd floors, but the challengers of the Hell difficulty of the United States, who were stagnant without exceeding the early 30th floor.

“Help me!”

Those who were smacking the wall when they saw them asked for help.

The challengers were bewildered and paused rather than seeing them and running to help.

“Eh. Why are there people left in the barrier?”

“Ah. The protected targets are neglected here.”

The challengers quickly reported the situation.

In the meantime, the Mahabaha tribesmen, who had collapsed due to the explosion, woke up.

Recalling the explosion that occurred at the same time as the

challengers' appearance, the Mahabaha tribesmen quickly made a decision.

“Kaaak! It's the enemy!”

“A new enemy has appeared!”

The Mahabaha tribe shouted out loud, summoning their people scattered throughout the city.

The summoned challengers frowned at their appearances.

“I think I saw them on the 31st floor. Isn't that a demon?”

“I'm sick of seeing those with horns on their heads now.”

[Existing mission will be canceled.]

[A new mission has occurred.]

[Mission-Survivor protection.]

[For unknown reasons, protected areas remained within the restricted area. For unknown reasons, the safety of protected persons is at risk. Reinforcements will be dispatched to ensure the safe containment of protected persons. Protect those under protection until reinforcements arrive.]

[Time remaining until reinforcement: about 5 minutes]

A message appeared telling them what to do.

As they read the message, they smiled.

“It's okay if it's 50 minutes instead of 5 minutes. Let's take a rest here.”

“Yeah. Hahaha.”

They were confident.

Until the arrival of the Mahabaha reinforcements.

A terribly large number of Mahabaha tribesmen flocked to the outer walls of the building because they were unable to fill the roads.

“50 minutes?”

“5 minutes is just right.”

The Mahabaha tribesmen gathered in no time and ran toward the challengers without delay.

“Kaaak!”

“It’s the enemy! Kill them!”

“Burn them!”

“Rip and Tear!”

Dozens of Mahabaha tribesmen were bombarded at once by the magic of the challengers, but they did not stop.

“Soon our god is coming here!”

They were only moving forward, crying out for the existence of God.

* * *

Ka-Ak!

Several Mahabaha tribesmen attempted to jump over from the roof of a building.

It was to attack ordinary people who were protected by the challengers.

The Mahabaha were trying to attack the challengers, realizing that they were protecting the weak humans behind them.

Each time the challengers had to take a break to protect the weak.

There was an endless explosion.

The flame soared higher than the building.

A whirlwind blew, and the asphalt floor froze and melted.

Challengers were pouring out a variety of magic to deal with the large number of Mahabaha tribesmen.

They swung their fists at the stuck Mahabaha tribesmen.

The heads of the Mahabaha tribesmen who were beaten by a fierce punch fell under their shoulders.

Several Mahabaha tribesmen were swept away at the same time by each stroke of the sword that was released.

The exchange cost was overwhelming.

None of the challengers had died, but they already killed thousands of Mahabaha tribesmen.

They are not just superhumans, but challengers who have survived for a long time in the Hell difficulty level created by the gods to cultivate talents to be apostles, and have gained some achievements.

They were challengers who had been together for a long time and had been working together, as they overcame many enemies.

But this battle was overwhelming for them too.

It was because of the people behind them.

Even if your mission is to protect someone in the Tutorial, you don't

have to worry too much about it.

If you failed, it was possible to challenge the floor again.

Your own life was the most important thing.

Then the life of a colleague.

Then the information about the stage.

But on Earth it was different.

The people behind them were real, living humans.

They couldn't leave them unattended or hurt them.

To protect them, they had to either continue to allow gaps or constrain their own strength.

“Damn it. I will die.”

The challenger, who was bleeding from his forehead, muttered.

“When are they coming?”

The five minutes that the message told them had already passed.

“Kaah! God is coming!”

“God is looking at us!”

“God is with us!”

The Mahabaha tribesmen were crying out to their god with great strength.

At that time, a space opened up in the air.

Seeing it, the Mahabaha burst into cheers.

The challengers also smiled quietly.

“You idiots. That’s our side.”

It was a human who came out of the cracked space.

No, although they were human, they were also inhuman.

[Reinforcement has arrived.]

[The mission has been completed successfully.]

[Until the arrival of the reinforcement, you have completely protected those behind you.]

[Reward will be paid according to future performance.]

[Reinforcement (1/1)]

[Lee Hochi]

Hochi walked out of the space, confirming the crowds and challengers gathered in the corner, and raised his hand toward the Mahabaha tribe.

Hochi didn’t really enjoy fighting with anyone.

He hated it very much.

Lee Ho-jae advised not to wipe out those summoned through the summoning portal indiscriminately.

Hochi agreed with his opinion.

They were victims.

However, seeing the Mahabaha tribesmen in front of him, he could see that they were not of that kind.

They were aggressively attacking and were attempting destructive acts.

The Mahabaha were not an object of mercy to Hochi, who protected Earth and its believers.

Lee Ho-jae once said that when the day came when Hochi had to put blood on his hands, he would regret not having experienced it beforehand.

It was tiring.

Hochi, who had something to protect, was willing to be cruel.

[Magic oppression]

[Absolute targeting]

[Generating ultra-small black hole]

A small black space opened above Hochi's hand.

“Activate.”

It was a short and simple starter word.

As Hochi spoke out the starter word, the nearby Mahabaha tribesmen began to be dragged into the space.

It was an invisible force.

And it was an overwhelming power.

The Mahabaha desperately resisted so as not to be dragged by force.

It was all pointless.

No matter how hard they tried to endure, the Mahabaha tribesmen were sucked into the space.

The power of the black hole was applied only to the Mahabaha and anything blocking them.

Therefore, there was no damage to the people or buildings around it.

The Mahabaha tribesmen were too strong to hold onto something properly.

Even if they tried to hold on to the streetlight next to them, they were already being sucked into a hole in space before reaching for the streetlight.

The Mahabaha tribesmen inside or behind the building were sucked into the building with the rubble of the collapsed building.

The Mahabaha became bloody and sucked into the space.

Just 1 second.

Shortly after the space opened and began to suck in the Mahabaha tribesmen.

There was not a single enemy left on the street.

Only the breath of the surviving humans panting in terror rang silently.

Chapter 366

Earth (6)

The Mahabaha tribe, which made a noise loud enough to deafen ears, was instantly annihilated.

In the deserted city, the sound of the wind and buildings and vehicles burning was heard.

And the sound of people breathing quietly

It wasn't a sigh of relief.

It was thin and intermittent.

It was a suppressed breath.

Hochi came to save them, but the humans who saw him felt horror.

It was difficult to blame them.

The unknown and death have always been a realm of fear for humans.

The sight that Hochi showed them was enough to remind them of both the unknown and death.

On the other hand, the challengers showed the opposite reaction.

They felt excitement and anticipation.

“Looking back at it again, it's a total hoax.”

“It said that what we're getting is minor, but depending on the combination, it might have a similar effect.”

They had seen this scene several times already.

When they first saw it, they were embarrassed.

They recalled the effort they put into training and were frustrated.

However, their attitude changed when they realized that all of the techniques Hochi used could be acquired.

Challengers who were trained in the new tutorials and given missions were promised a definite reward.

Just as the members of Earth are rewarded for their faith and achievements through the system.

The challengers were promised more rewards.

There was only one thing the challengers who were trapped in Hell difficulty wanted.

Even more powerful abilities.

And Ho-jae had the power to satisfy that desire.

The powers paid through their rewards were slightly downgraded compared to the originals, but the challengers from the Hell difficulty gladly accepted that.

The challengers were happily looking at the powers in the reward list, using them together in combination, or predicting the synergy with their current abilities.

This is why they remained cooperative despite sudden summons, hard training, and nonstop missions.

The frightened people and the challengers thrilled with anticipation.

Hochi had a completely different reaction from all of them.

It was right after he wiped out the Mahabaha, but he didn't relax.

On the contrary, he was more alert than when he first appeared.

"Yong-yong, I think I found it."

Hochi spoke quietly.

Obviously, all of the Mahabaha tribe were swept away by a small black hole and sucked out of space.

But now, there was a Mahabaha tribesman standing on the street.

On a deserted street where no one was there just before, a being stood peacefully, as if he had been there from the beginning,

"You are the guardian of this planet."

The Mahabaha tribesman opened its mouth and spoke first.

Guardian.

It was an unfamiliar name, but it wasn't wrong when it came to his consideration.

Hochi nodded his head to show affirmation.

"What do you want?"

Although they had already invaded Earth, Hochi was willing to listen to their stories as much as possible if he could solve it smoothly.

"You."

However, the Mahabaha tribesman said with a real smile, as if playing a joke.

"The God of Destruction is coming down here soon. Our mission is to

keep things out of the way until then. The things that protect this planet like you.”

Hochi was silent for a moment.

The group of survivors remained unmoved in the restricted area.

Strangely, this area was difficult to communicate in and observe.

It was suspicious.

Hochi and Yong-yong thought there was something here that interfered with their observation.

Perhaps one of those invading this area had a special object interfering with the observation.

So rather than adding more challengers, Hochi came here.

But now, it seemed that the problem wasn't an object, but the ability of the Mahabaha tribesman.

“Your god will never appear on Earth.”

Hochi was sure.

From some point on, the summoning portals stopped appearing.

The summoning portals that were previously connected had also disappeared.

All of the remaining summoning portals were initially opened and left unattended.

“Tell your god who is hiding because he doesn't want to use his strength.”

The Mahabaha said so.

In fact, Lee Ho-jae was not hiding, but he was away from Earth to directly attack all the gods.

It seemed that he didn't know that much.

Hochi judged.

There seemed to be no room for negotiation, and there was no information he could find out through conversation.

And it was a bit burdensome to defeat him through battle.

“Yong-yong, help me.”

At Hochi's request, the space opened again.

Looking beyond the space, something inhuman walked out.

It was a huge eye.

The giant silver-lit thing moved slowly.

As if looking around, the pupils moved back and forth, and then fixed toward the Mahabaha tribesman.

The Mahabaha, who had just spoken to Hochi with a high-powered voice, couldn't even say a word and stiffened.

The same was true of the humans behind.

The survivors who managed to survive and maintain consciousness collapsed.

The challengers, who had just been admiring Hochi's abilities, were overwhelmed by embarrassment and fear.

‘...What, is that.’

‘I have to run away.’

‘Something seems to be wrong.’

‘Shall we surrender? Then can we live.’

They were confused.

They didn’t understand the silver eyes that appeared out of nowhere.

However, they could only vaguely feel the brutality in the eyes.

The eyes stimulated their survival instincts.

Apart from the situation, only ways to survive filled their minds.

However, it was not comparable to the Mahabaha tribe who were faced by the eyes.

The minds of the Mahabaha were completely empty.

From the moment of eye contact, the Mahabaha’s reason was blown away, and it was just a shell looking ahead in fear.

Hochi thought that he should deal with the Mahabaha as soon as possible and send Yong-yong’s eyes back, for the sake of the frightened humans.

He took out the most powerful and deadly means he knew.

Hochi approached the Mahabaha and used his power.

[Death]

Black energy was flowing over Hochi’s hand, and Hochi swung it and slightly cut the neck of the Mahabaha.

It was a small wound, but it was enough.

This power, with the grand name of Death, was actually the final evolution of the poison skill Lee Ho-jae was studying.

Even after becoming a god, he steadily improved it, and by mixing the existing poison with divine power, it gained a poisonous effect that can literally kill a god.

There was a disadvantage of having to penetrate the enemy to inject the poison through a direct attack, but there was no more lethal attack to an opponent whose movement was suppressed.

The body of the Mahabaha began to melt down.

It died too easily and vainly to a being who could no longer be considered a mortal beyond the category of a superhuman.

Watching the scene, Hochi thought.

He should be a god himself.

The difference between a non-deity and deity was too great.

Now that he had something he had to protect, Hochi began to feel the need and desire for a strong power he had previously avoided.

*

‘Clear the Paju area.’

“Get ready to go right away. There is still a lot left. No, I don’t have time to rest! Take care of it while you’re on the go. There will be reinforcement in the Gangwon area.”

Kim Min-hyuk sent telepathic messages and looked at the map again.

The map showed the number and status of invading beings on Earth in real time, and the status of the Awakened and troops scattered around the world.

Kim Min-hyuk, who received various help such as telepathy and mental response with Yong-yong's help, was in charge of commanding the Awakened who were reaching for him and advising the military unit.

Perhaps because of the long-lasting concentration, he felt a fever on his forehead.

If Kim Min-hyuk was not an Awakened who came out and cleared the Tutorial, he would have collapsed earlier.

Maintaining concentration isn't just something one can do.

Humans need calories, stamina, and mental power to focus on something and create enough ideas.

He looked at the situation around the world, and had to improvise to move the Awakened and troops to produce the best results.

In the meantime, he had to argue with the Awakened people who didn't listen.

He even had to negotiate to persuade those outside his control.

Sometimes, when his troops were lost, his heart was overwhelmed by the fact that people were sacrificed because of his own judgment.

Kim Min-hyuk raised his head for a while and looked ahead.

Yong-yong, sitting quietly, covering one of his eyes with his hand.

He felt in awe at the sight.

The child who loves to wear pretty clothes, and only rolls around in his room as if he is nothing special, was doing all this perfectly.

Many of the challengers in the Tutorial were assigned and sent to the battlefield in combinations that suit the circumstances.

And in every moment, he made the best judgments.

Even if it might be a little too much for Kim Min-hyuk from the side, the mission ended with success somehow through the combination of the challengers.

Yong-yong divided districts by establishing barriers across the globe.

He prevented intruders from gathering or dispersing.

While the intruders were cleared one area at a time, he moved the humans in the dangerous areas to the safe areas.

In the meantime, he even got involved in the battlefield at Hochi's request.

For Kim Min-hyuk, it was an ability that could not be imitated or understood.

Yong-yong, who was still concentrating, suddenly raised his head.

Kim Min-hyuk asked without realizing.

“What is it?”

Kim Min-hyuk felt his heart stiff again because he was wondering if there was a problem.

Fortunately, it wasn't bad news.

Yong-yong smiled brightly.

“Dad is back.”

Shortly after hearing Yong-yong's answer, Kim Min-hyuk could also recognize it.

In an instant, the air changed.

It became heavier.

Through the windows of the temple building, the giants were seen.

The giants who appeared immediately after the Pantheon gods invaded Earth and disappeared immediately.

Giants who had been sent out to directly attack the gods who invaded Earth reappeared back on Earth.

What that meant was clear.

Kim Min-hyuk asked Yong-yong.

“Then did we win?”

Yong-yong smiled at Kim Min-hyuk again when he heard him.

*

“It’s a mess, really.”

[This should be considered to be very good protection, King]

Grandmother said.

I also agreed with that.

Yong-yong and Hochi held back Earth’s invaders well.

The damage was less than I expected, and they were defending much more systematically and efficiently than I expected.

Still.

“A mess is a mess.”

The scene where the minions of the Pantheon gods were all over Earth

was beyond description.

[What do I do?]

Old Man said.

The Old Man has been less talkative since facing the God of Order.

There is no big problem in sight.

After this work was over, in-depth consultation seemed necessary, but I thought it was not serious enough to become a problem right away.

“My gosh.”

Those who remain on Earth now are those who have been neglected by the gods.

Even the gods were torn apart by giants and died.

It was clear that all of the holy lands of the gods that connected the summoning portals to Earth had been dealt with without missing a single place.

“Hold them down. Wipe out those who resist.”

No need to attack those who had no will to resist.

They’re all resources.

“Let’s get this over with as soon as possible. It’s a war that has already finished. We won.”

Chapter 367

God of Victory (1)

“Yong-Yong did a good job.”

I could recognize it at a glance.

Barriers were spread across the globe.

Like lines drawn on a checkerboard, lines were drawn on the earth at regular intervals.

It was simply a barrier for dividing areas, but the effect was clear.

Enemies in one area were completely eradicated, and humans were evacuated to safe areas.

Not only was it easy to wipe out the enemies, but it was also possible to minimize the damage to humans.

It was the cleanest and most perfect response under the assumption that there would be no additional enemies summoned.

[What should I do?]

Grandmother asked.

She was not really asking for advice from me because she didn't know what to do, but rather to get directions.

I answered without a long pause.

“Take care of each area.”

No further instructions were needed.

The difference in power was overwhelming.

There must have been fierce battles on Earth as well, but the direction of the war was irrelevant to Earth.

The minions of the Pantheon gods that were summoned to Earth were only a force meant to drain our power.

Our side was similar.

Yong-yong, Hochi, and the challengers of the Tutorial were left behind, but they were only defensive forces to protect the humans of Earth.

The main force was me and the giants who went directly to attack the Pantheon gods.

The war was already over when the giants, who had gone out to attack the Pantheon gods away from Earth, appeared in the air above Earth.

Among the minions of the Pantheon gods, there was a rare mix of powerful men who could be called superhuman, but most were cleared up by Hochi.

There were some who were the apostles of the Pantheon gods, but now that their gods, the source of their power, are extinct, they will not be able to use much power.

When the giants were put into ranks, there were no enemies on Earth who could resist them.

The giants that were filling the sky began to descend.

* * *

As expected, the giants easily cleaned up the remaining forces on

Earth.

Enemies who encountered divine authority in front of them froze as they were, and managed to move the remaining pieces of their reason to surrender to the giants and save their lives.

Sometimes those who tried to resist were lightly burned or crushed.

The ones who surrendered were locked in a subspace as soon as possible.

When I came back to the temple after taking care of the remnants of the Pantheon forces on Earth with the giants, Yong-yong ran and greeted me.

“It was difficult! I had a hard time!”

Yong-yong shouted in my arms.

He whined that he was tired while protecting Earth.

This didn’t happen often.

Yong-yong, who had been following my training without much difficulty, whined like this, so I thought that the work on Earth must have been fierce.

“Yes, Yong-yong, you had a hard time.”

Yong-yong, who was hugging me and telling me about his hardships, fell asleep shortly afterward.

Although Yong-yong was outside the general category of life, he still sleeps regularly.

It was not known whether Yong-yong’s characteristic was unique to him, or whether it was a trait peculiar to the dragon race.

While holding Yong-yong, I also relaxed. When I returned to the

temple building and laid down on the sofa, my body regained comfort, but my heart couldn't.

“Homen! Homen! Homen!”

The sound of that Homen that people were shouting from all over Earth stimulated my nerves.

This was something I couldn't stop listening to even though I didn't want to hear it.

The voices of the believers crying out with intense devotion flowed directly into my mind.

“They're just trying to embarrass me now.”

Every time I heard it, my face was burning.

My God, Homen.

As time passed, it became embarrassing.

“Hold it. I think you will hear it all your life.”

Hochi said, giggling.

All my life.

It was terrible.

I might have to listen to that forever.

Fortunately, Earth's believers were not hit hard in the midst of the invasion of the Pantheon.

It was a relief that there was not much damage. It was acceptable to the people on Earth, as they got used to misfortune since the creation of the gates

Lee Ho-jae Faith's system also played a big part in reducing the damage to the believers.

In the meantime, believers collected points with public merits and faith points. When the Pantheon's invasion arrived, the believers began to purchase abilities or items.

Depending on how it is used, it was possible to avoid dangerous situations by using rewards with powerful effects.

Since then, the damage was far better than expected because of the safe evacuation by Yong-yong and Hochi's quick response.

There were also believers who gained more faith points through this incident.

It was possible because I had already verified my abilities to the people of Earth.

Even in the midst of this crisis, there were believers who believed that I (someone seen as dead) would appear (again) to help them.

Such a belief was a meaningful faith to me.

Believing in my victory was more than just worshiping me as a god.

Just as the God of Hope wanted to have strong hope for the believers, I also wanted the believers to have faith in my victory.

As they believed, I appeared with the giants.

Faith soared accordingly with Yong-yong's and Hochi's leadership in response to the invasion of the Pantheon gods.

"Just looking at the results alone, the denomination itself has grown significantly. To the point where we can't grow anymore on Earth. Now, not quantitative growth, but qualitative growth remains."

Hochi said.

“I think it will not be long before we can make Earth your holy land.”

It wasn't very pleasant.

I didn't even need it much.

If Earth becomes my holy land, it will surely be a great power.

The basis of my divinity is the actual force of me and the giants.

The power through human faith was not desperately needed.

I made a decision.

“Let's change the name of our denomination. I will also announce my godhood.”

Until I couldn't hear the prayers of 'Homen' 'Homen' and it was not called Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Not only was it embarrassing to hear, but it wasn't the right expression.

When my denomination grew up and entered another world, I was worried about how the others would respond to the denomination's name.

It was easy to make a decision because I gave up the idea of forcing my divinity on the believers.

My divinity was absolutely indispensable to overcome the obstacles that seemed impossible to defeat and to achieve my ultimate goal, as it fits best with my ideals.

Sadly, however, it didn't mean that it had common sense and was a normal ideology.

It wasn't something that could be easily accepted by others.

I couldn't ask all believers to challenge themselves and march toward grand goals, like the giants and me.

Of course, that will be my greatest faith.

The extreme nature of divinity was only poison to the lives of mortals who had to walk many paths.

Of course, I couldn't tell the believers to live completely independent of my divinity.

However, if the believers believe and trust in my victory.

So, even when something like this happened again, I could be satisfied with that faith if they believed that in the end I would be victorious and overcome the crises with them.

“Godhood?”

“Yes, my godhood.”

I've been thinking for a long time.

I'm afraid it feels like too much to reveal my divinity to others and enforce the doctrines that follow.

Like the days when I was a challenger in the past tutorials when no one could sympathize with my steps.

However, when I gave up the idea of imposing my divinity and decided on an appropriate compromise, I was able to confidently announce my title.

“God of Victory.”

* * *

It took quite some time to return their lives back to before the Pantheon's invasion.

First of all, it was not easy to return the people who had been moved from place to place for evacuation, one by one.

Buildings and facilities that collapsed in the middle of the invasion were restored as much as possible, and in the case of human casualties, the families were compensated for the damage.

It was a minimal action, but even that took more time and labor than expected.

After taking care of the earthly believers, there are now the remnant people of the invasion.

Among them, those who gave up resistance and surrendered became a problem.

Few of those who had been put onto Earth could be called warriors.

Most of them surrendered as soon as they encountered giants.

Thanks to that, we were able to secure a number of survivors that easily surpassed Earth's population.

"It's much more than I thought."

An unexpected problem has arisen.

Even if there were many survivors, there were too many.

There was no space to collect them.

At least on Earth.

Most of the survivors were ordinary mortals, and they needed a minimum of food, clothing, and shelter to sustain their lives.

There was no way to provide them both living space and a living base.

"Let's put them in the subspace."

Hochi said.

Just as he said.

I had put the survivors in a subspace.

But that didn't solve all the problems.

"They won't endure it long.

A subspace is not a space where humans can live.

Although the people collected from the holy land of the God of Hope were placed in a subspace, that was possible because there were only a few of them.

It was possible because the time flow of the subspace was slowed, and the believers of the God of Hope were so familiar with the situation.

However, if the number of people entering the subspace exceeds billions, the story is different.

Slowing the flow of time for all of them is a heavy burden for me too.

Unless my divine power was infinite, I couldn't even try recklessly.

And if you can't delay the time, those who went there won't last long.

Even if there was enough food, I couldn't guarantee how much people could survive in a dark, gloomy, and nothing-to-do and nowhere-to-go world.

An ordinary person's spirit goes crazy after only a week of confinement in a solitary room.

It was said that if a large and overflowing number of people came together they would form a society, but that was not comforting.

Rather, it was more dangerous because it could induce collective

madness.

“What about releasing them to the worlds of the gods of the Pantheon you’ve destroyed?”

Impossible.

It wasn’t practically possible yet.

There were several planets that became empty mountains without an owner after killing the gods of the Pantheon.

(T/N: Empty mountain without owner is self-explanatory, but it can also mean an ownerless land, or a place that can be easily occupied or settled.

I couldn’t call those planets my territory.

It was literally just blank space.

And in order to put people under my influence in such a world, it deservedly needed protective measures.

Probably, it would be in the form of sending giants to protect them, but that was impossible.

It wouldn’t be a problem to leave one or two worlds to be managed by the giants which became gods, but the powers of the giants should not be dispersed yet.

The assembled giants are one of the most powerful forces I have, and I can’t divide them when I haven’t achieved my goals.

“That doesn’t mean you can’t just throw them out.”

I couldn’t do that.

Even if they were thrown as victims by the gods of the Pantheon, I didn’t want to do that.

There was a way to solve this problem.

It's also very neat.

“When I get the Tutorial.”

All the problems will be solved.

Many tutorial stages have been destroyed by monsters or disasters.

Solving the problems there and resettling the survivors, everything will be solved neatly.

Easy, Normal, Hard, Hell.

There are over 100 worlds each on four difficulty levels.

There will be enough room to distribute and settle billions of survivors.

Taking ownership of the Tutorial was also my ultimate goal.

However,

I sighed without knowing.

It was because of the God of Order.

I was thinking that if there were any gods who opposed the transfer of the Tutorial, I was going to forcefully get consent through an armed demonstration.

However, the God of Order, encountered by chance in the realm of the God of Sky, shook such thoughts.

In the first place, it was questionable what significance an armed demonstration would be against the existence where a special attack did not even go through.

“The God of Order?”

Asked Hochi, who was quietly listening to my explanation.

First, I decided to explain the God of Order to Hochi.

* * *

“Then, you think that the God of Order will become a transcendent god?”

Hochi asked.

“Maybe.”

I don’t know if it really will, but the God of Order will be hoping for it.

[Maybe.]

The God of Hope has the same opinion as me.

It was inevitable.

To be reborn as a transcendent god means to paint the whole world with yourself.

And most gods won’t give up on that opportunity.

Looking at the self and the abnormal abilities displayed by the God of Order, it seems that the God of Order is already close to a transcendent god.

In the meantime, it would be strange if the God of Order has no intention to be reborn as a perfect transcendent god, who has the self to gather more power.

“Then.”

Hochi said again.

“What happens when the God of Order becomes a transcendent god?”

What will happen?

The whole world becomes a holy land for the God of Order.

“So what kind of world is that?”

I was speechless at Hochi’s question.

It becomes a holy land for the God of Order.

I knew that far.

However, I did not think about what the holy land of the God of Order would look like.

Chapter 368

God of Victory (2)

“It will be a world where everyone keeps order.”

It wasn't an exact expression.

In the world of the God of Order, order will not be something to be kept.

In that world, order will be as natural as breathing.

Order will be the world's most powerful law.

There is no possibility of breaking order.

In this world, there are cases where it is unavoidable to break the rules, but the world of the God of Order will be perfectly structured to prevent such accidents.

It would be like a factory.

Like a program, people digest a set schedule from birth to death without any errors.

People maintain the world and devote their faith.

In fact, it will be the same regardless of the holy place of any god.

From the perspective of believers, the holy land is nothing more than a factory of faith.

However, in the case of the God of Order, the expression of 'factory' came to mind.

Considering the propensity of the God of Order, all the established rules will be kept perfectly.

People will live within a set frame without any deviation.

At first glance, it felt similar to what I had expected of the holy land of the God of Sky.

On the other hand, the God of Sky will only force equality on all, but the God of Order will force more mediocrity.

“What kind of order is that?”

Hochi said.

It seems that his question has not been resolved since earlier

“What is considered natural order in some places can be treated as heresy in others. Does it exist in the first place, an order that can be applied equally to all worlds?”

Hmm.....

Hearing Hochi’s question, I scratched my chin.

It was a problem I hadn’t thought of.

“Is it similar to the tutorial system?”

He is the God of Order who claimed that the Tutorial was his own world.

It was possible that the holy land of the God of Order resembled a tutorial.

But when I recalled the Tutorial, I couldn’t tell for sure what kind of order it contained.

There was no social discipline.

Although there were days of dialogue agreement day or community, it was conditional, and it was always optional.

The only clear order in the Tutorial was a few unbreakable propositions.

You must clear the Tutorial before you can go outside.

If you die in the Tutorial, you really die.

The simple rules of that kind.

My thoughts became more complicated.

I decided to ask the God of Hope.

The former apostle of the God of Order will know of the ideal order pursued by the God of Order.

[I do not know.]

Damn it.

He doesn't know anything.

Oh, of course, if he knew so much, he wouldn't stop talking.

However, he did not know about the important and necessary information.

[How can I guess that there is an ideal for a machine god who doesn't even have an ego? I was just going to do that.]

It didn't help.

Really.

"Hmmhmm. There is a text from a book I read deeply."

Hochi coughed and said abruptly.

“Dragon Raja?”

“Oh, that! How did you know?”

How many books do you think Hochi will bring out, saying he read them deeply?

It was me who wrote the books in the first place.

“I read it there, and order is one aspect of chaos.”

Hochi said with a serious face as if saying something very important and meaningful.

“So?”

“Maybe the world of the God of Order is unexpectedly normal. Moderately harmonious, moderately confusing.”

Do you think so?

I disagree.

Although order may belong to chaos, it was unlikely that the God of Order would include chaos in order.

Again, the theme came to what the God of Order thinks is order.

Order is seen as an objective and public discipline.

However, that objectivity is inevitably diluted in the face of diversity.

In Korea, the sentence “people eat a lot of kimchi” can be an objective fact.

But in Wakanda, it’s not obvious.

Therefore, order can be regarded as subjective.

In the Holy Land of the God of Order, all rules will be established under the supervision of the God of Order, so this would be more correct.

[I can tell you that.]

The God of Hope whispered.

Suddenly I had doubts.

I doubted that the God of Hope would tell me something.

Maybe this guy is saying he knows something but he doesn't know it well.

[Really.]

The God of Hope grumbled and spoke as if it was unjust.

*[Aren't you curious about the order that the God of Order thinks about?
The subject of order and its ideals?]*

I nodded my head in affirmation.

*[As I have said, the God of Order is a mechanical god without ego. If so,
what is the subjectivity?]*

I don't know that.

There were too few clues to speculate on the subjectivity of the God of Order.

[Simple.]

The God of Hope said calmly.

[The subjectivity of the God of Order is the subjectivity of the creator. The ideal of the God of Order will also be the ideal of its creator.]

*

-Homen.

It was the closing comment of the broadcast.

Damn it.

“Hey, you changed the name of our denomination, right?”

“Oh, that’s right.”

Replied Hochi, who was rummaging through the newspaper.

I was upset.

I announced my name as the God of Victory, and accordingly, the name of the denomination was announced again.

People were still saying Homen Homen.

“It sticks well to your mouth.”

Just say Homen and I won’t even talk to you.

People were also still using the name Lee Ho-jae Faith.

It wasn’t worth the trouble to tell them of my status as a deity.

“To be honest, the response is a little bad.”

“What.”

“The God of Victory. It’s kind of like something someone with second-year syndrome would say.”

...My world.

Second year syndrome.

(T/N: second year syndrome or more commonly known as 'chūnibyō' where early teens (middle school) convinced themselves they have hidden knowledge or powers.

“Oh sorry. But to be honest, it's kind of like that.”

Hochi apologized for being too harsh.

The truthful apology hurts even more.

“You have been associated with the gods in the Tutorial. But it's kind of unfamiliar to be accepted by ordinary people. Lee Ho-jae Faith is more comfortable.”

It was true.

Compared to the existing religions of Earth, I am clearly an unfamiliar new deity.

“What shall we do?”

Hochi asked.

I pondered for a while and answered.

“Leave it. Use whatever you are comfortable with.”

If it was simply because my reasoning wasn't spread, I could just skip it.

Although it's a little embarrassing every time I hear it.

As Hochi said before, it will become dull someday.

“Is that okay?”

Hochi asked.

Of course it wasn't okay.

The gods don't just put forth their deity name for no reason.

It is possible to receive faith by using a nickname other than the divine name, but then the quality of faith will deteriorate.

Just as the God of Hope gains more power of faith when believers think of themselves with intense hope, rather than just worshiping the name.

It was important to put up the concept of faith.

“If you lose something else, isn't it just a matter of losing your strength?”

Hochi asked without hesitation.

He did that because Hochi had no interest in divinity and did not study.

There was something I picked up, but I didn't know for sure.

“That's okay.”

It wasn't the best way to get power.

As much as the members of Earth give me faith, there is a perception that I must protect and take care of them with a minimum sense of responsibility.

There is no need to impose the best way to receive faith from believers.

However, it became necessary to devise the best way to protect the

believers.

This was really annoying.

It doesn't matter if I can completely protect the believers.

If something like the last time, the invasion of the Pantheon happens, it will become quite difficult.

It was a reckless act to directly attack the giants and the Pantheon gods.

The decision was made by speculation without knowing the enemy's history.

It was also an unavoidable judgment.

To minimize damage to Earth and its people.

It wasn't the best judgment for an efficient victory.

But on the contrary, if I had to aim for a safe victory at the expense of Earth's people, the damage of Earth could be considered defeat to me.

"There are more losses than benefits anyway."

Overwhelmingly.

It was for this reason that the Old Man and Seregia have always warned me.

I smiled and moved on saying 'I knew it'.

Seregia was still concerned about the risk of my judgment.

Hochi got up from his seat saying he knew.

Somehow, as the work increased, it became more common for Hochi

to go outside.

He just stopped by to watch the first broadcast of the newly created Lee Ho-jae Faith religious channel together, but he had to go back to work immediately.

I was alone again.

Yong-yong, Seregia, and the giants were back on the 61st floor.

Oh, I wasn't alone.

Because there was the God of Hope.

But the God of Hope was also strangely quiet.

It was a perfect situation to organize my thoughts calmly by myself.

I opened the quest window.

I didn't do much, but most of the quests were completed.

What stands out is the quest of the God of Order and the God of Adventure, which remains unfinished.

This is a quest window created by Kirikiri.

Its function is to display quests, but it is also possible to contact Kirikiri.

However, communication has been interrupted for a while.

I tried to contact Kirikiri again and again, but no answer came back.

I was always curious about her intentions.

It has been like that since I first saw her.

Anyone would have.

A bright field that appeared when I barely cleared that hellish stage.

The rabbit was happy jumping endlessly.

I was always curious about her goals and tried to find out.

Whenever that happened, Kirikiri gently shared her intentions.

One by one.

To fulfill one's responsibility and duties.

To support talented challengers.

For a friend who presents a cake every time we meet.

To properly grow a challenger who will be an outstanding apostle.

To grow him into a Joker card that will free her from the system's constraints.

To use the boundaries of the system to keep the Rulers and the God of Hope in check.

But I couldn't erase the feeling that she always had more motives.

It was like that every time.

Actually, Kirikiri always had more intentions than what she was telling me.

And now is really the time.

I have to figure out what Kirikiri's final goals are.

What is the ideal Kirikiri wishes for?

How much is the God of Order, which is gaining self and becoming a transcendent god in line with Kirikiri's ideals?

Are they contradicting again?

What is Kirikiri's intention?

I had to find out how far and what is it that the God of Adventure is looking towards, the God of Adventure that created the present system and won against the God of Slowness who was trying to swallow up the entire universe.

[I'm sorry you seem to be thinking about something important, but there is something you need to know right now.]

The God of Hope who had remained quiet said.

"What is it."

[Voting has begun.]

"Between the Hundred Gods Temple?"

[Yes.]

Hundred Gods Temple who are bound by many restrictions, as an exception can reset their boundary of behaviors by voting.

It was possible to reward the challenger beyond what was allowed, or force the challenger to move to the next stage.

From what I've seen and heard, I've known that voting happens very often and routinely.

[By the way, the subject of the voting is a little.....]

The God of Hope blurred the end of his words.

An embarrassment emerged from his voice.

“What kind of vote is it, is it?”

[A vote for a war against the Pantheon.]

Chapter 369

God of Victory (3)

“War?”

A war between the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon.

Could the two groups be divided that way in the first place?

It seems that the gods are controlled by a system, but I heard that the Hundred Gods Temple and other gods belonging to the Pantheon are specifically classified as management targets.

By the way, is a war between the two forces led by the Hundred Gods Temple possible?

Looking at the purpose of establishing the Hundred Gods Temple, it doesn't make sense.

[It is possible. It is also one of the loopholes in the system. A majority vote can overturn some of the system's limitations.]

Certainly, the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple have sometimes ignored the limitations of the system.

However, it was usually only for the intervention of a challenger in the Tutorial.

I've never heard of a vote on anything else, in other words, affecting other gods of the Hundred Gods Temple, not just challengers.

Oh, there was only one time.

It was the time when the God of Remorse, who presented me with a fragment of the source, was disciplined.

Kirikiri explained that the relationship between all the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple was not good, and it was difficult to agree with each other due to the nature of each god.

Thus, it is unlikely that the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple would happily vote in favor of war.

[The new faction of adventure is actively advancing. I don't know what will happen yet.]

The God of Hope stopped talking, saying that he would also participate in the voting a little deeper.

He seemed to be intervening in the voting scene through his incarnation in the Hundred Gods Temple.

The faction of adventure is coming forward.

That means the mainstream forces in the Hundred Gods Temple are leading the way.

It was said that the Hundred Gods Temple was divided into several factions, but it was quite self-evident where the mainstream was.

The Hundred Gods Temple was born in the process of preventing the unification of the universe caused by the God of Slowness.

And the winner was the God of Adventure on the other side of the God of Slowness.

As a result, the unification of the universe has not been achieved until now, and most of the gods, including the God of Slowness, are restricted by being included in the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon.

So, even the surviving gods and the extremely influential gods can expect that the God of Adventure will dominate.

The God of Order seen in the realm of the God of the Sky

And the lower god, the sage, was used as a tool to guide me there.

The two seemed to be related in some way to the war being discussed through voting.

* * *

“I’m not crying anymore.”

Lee Yeon-hee glanced at me instead of eating soup.

It was a mixture of embarrassment, a bit of resentment, and criticism.

“You think I cry every time I eat something?”

Lee Yeon-hee asked sharply.

There was a feeling of desperation.

It was the same as the conversation we had before.

The other person wasn’t Lee Yeon-hee.

I raised my hand, saying that I knew, and Lee Yeon-hee again focused on soup.

In one way or another, Lee Yeon-hee ate joyfully whenever we brought soup.

Her state, which seemed confused, has also somewhat stabilized.

There was no problem with proceeding with the conversation.

It was a fast recovery.

I know from being in a similar state, but it was a really fast recovery rate.

In the past, I had expected that she would be in half-ruin.

Lee Yeon-hee's recovery could be seen just by looking around.

The scenery on the 60th floor has changed a lot.

It was thanks to Lee Yeon-hee's remodeling.

Lee Yeon-hee was redecorating the exterior of the 60th floor.

She rearranged the streets and placed the sculptures.

As if playing a city management game, she was managing the 60th floor where no one lives.

It's not bad.

This kind of hobby is helpful in many ways.

Since it is part of simple labor, it can be done without much thought.

It was great to concentrate on something while emptying your thoughts.

In the meantime, it also demanded creativity.

You can contemplate your own tastes and reflect on them.

It certainly helps to establish oneself.

I used to have similar hobbies.

[Hororong?]

The God of Hope, who was quiet, asked.

Ugh, coming back with the things I want to forget.

Why are you revealing other people's dark history?

[Because that scarf is famous even in the Hundred Gods Temple. At that time, there was a really long discussion about whether your actions were right or wrong. It is clear that the God of Devotion still remembers the color and texture of the scarf.]

Damn it. Damn it.

I can't believe there are hundreds of guys who have been watching my black history with interest.

I got goosebumps all of a sudden.

I felt sorry for Hororong too.

To me, he was a friend who meant much more than Wilson.

Still, I wanted to protect my dignity as a human being.

I'm going to build a shrine for you later.

"Is the voting over?"

[Not yet. But it is almost there. Wait a little more.]

Suddenly I spoke out, so Lee Yeon-hee looked at me again, wondering if I was calling her who was quietly eating soup.

I woke up while leaving a message to Lee Yeon-hee to eat.

* * *

[It seems like a war will happen anyway.]

The God of Hope said so.

With a troubled voice.

It was surprising.

If it were the God of Hope, I thought that he would happily accept the war.

[Most of the gods who are not a part of the God of Adventure's factions have passed. Due to long time constraints, there are many people in favor of the war just because they have been bound by restrictions for a long time.]

It was as exciting as when you heard about a reward vacation in the army.

I understand.

[The God of Slowness is silent as always, and the God of Devotion somehow agrees. The God of the Sky has not been able to properly express an opinion because of what happened a while ago.]

The God of Hope explained the state of the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple.

There was one god missing from it.

“The God of Light?”

The God of Hope didn't answer right away but began to click his tongue as if he had no answer.

[...It's luminous.]

Well, that's it.

It must be radiating like crazy in an ambiguous sense.

[The cause of the war is that some Pantheon gods fluttered in Thanatos, the realm of the God of Death, and interfered with the responsibilities of the God of Death.]

I said yes and moved on.

I knew that the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple were subject to stealth attacks from other gods because they were bound by constraints.

It was the same kind of attack as the one on Earth by the rulers.

Going to the 61st floor, I searched for Old Man who was lying in the depths of the volcano.

I came back into the Tutorial today to check his status.

“Old Man.”

The body of Old Man, which had been submerged under the lava, slowly emerged.

It passed my eye level and rose to a position where I could make eye contact only by raising my head.

That’s just standing up from where he was lying.

It was a size that I couldn’t adapt to even if I looked at it again.

[What’s the matter, King?]

“I just came to see you Old Man.”

After attempting an attack on the God of Order, the Old Man appeared to be depressed.

It wasn’t just a bit of heartbreak, it seemed to me that he was under mental pressure.

“Grandmother was worried a lot too.”

Old Man quietly nodded.

Usually, Old Man would laugh loudly even when I talked about Grandmother getting worried and yelled at her.

He looked a little bit sad.

It feels like seeing a close brother in the neighborhood lying tiredly because he is sick.

[I am fine but.....]

Old Man's voice still sounded weak.

The God of Order introduced itself as the system.

As for me, he was the main enemy to overcome for Old Man and the giants, and the main culprit behind their confinement.

The fact that he attempted an attack on the God of Order but did not do any damage, and eventually had to retire from being exhausted, will surely be enough to break his heart.

More than anything.....

“Old Man?”

While I was organizing my thoughts by myself, a question came up.

What did he feel in front of the unusual power of the God of Order?

“I'm just saying this”

[Right.]

The Old Man had lost his mind even before I started questioning.

I could feel strong frustration and depression from that short response.

[I lost my confidence. Whether we can beat that monster or not. Will

we be able to achieve our dreams?]

Only then could I understand the Old Man's strange state.

It wasn't the strange power of the God of Order.

He was just really frustrated mentally.

Enough to weaken his divinity.

The belief that you will eventually win.

That was all we had.

I stood up with that faith, and I was able to come this far.

Conversely, without that belief, there was no difference from the time when I was imprisoned here helplessly.

Old Man apologized to me saying sorry.

I didn't accept the apology.

I was sad and angry.

For the last decade.

When we put all of our stagnant times together, we have been together for a time that we can't even measure ourselves.

But I was upset that he had lost faith enough to weaken his divinity by meeting the God of Order for a while.

[I'm sorry, King.]

Old Man apologized again.

He nodded with a crumpled expression and apologized.

He is my colleague, my subordinate, my apostle but also my family.

“It’s all right.”

So I could say.

“The lost faith can be recovered.”

[...yes. I will get up soon. Breaking through walls that seem insurmountable. That was our job. Wait for me King. I’ll catch up with you soon.]

Old Man said so.

I consoled him, saying that getting enough rest is the first step, and I left the 61st floor.

Old Man’s will was conveyed.

He faced an enemy powerful enough to feel frustrated, and he was constricted, but he was also willing to overcome it someday.

But I was skeptical.

He has lost faith.

The previously held faith that Old Man had before was powerful enough for him to become a divine being.

The power of the God of Order that broke his faith would also have been strongly imprinted.

You cannot regain your faith just by devoting yourself.

You can have the desire to win, but you won’t be sure of it.

Confidence is not something that can be obtained that way.

I gritted my teeth.

I could see the frustration that Old Man would have faced and the helplessness that he would have felt in front of it.

I was able to comprehend the feeling of Old Man facing the wall that blocked us in the past again.

It was harsh to want him to overcome everything on his own.

I will show you

That we will finally be able to win.

That the path that he walked with me is the path to victory.

I stood in front of the portal back to the 60th floor.

There was a faint voice.

[Come to me, challenger.]

It was a strange voice that felt like something inorganic, without elevation.

It was the God of Order.

Was he exerting influence at the door of my holy land?

In the first place, the Tutorial itself belongs to the God of Order. It could be said that it was part of the God of Order itself, so there was nothing strange.

Of course, that fact and the displeasure I felt were separate.

I could have guessed the purpose of the war the God of Adventure is trying to bring about.

Weakening of the system.

If the system that encompasses both the Hundred Gods Temple and Pantheon is part of the divine power of the God of Order.

The God of Order is weakened just by digging into its essence and becoming meaningless.

[Challenge me.]

The complex interests of the gods were irrelevant.

Whatever the purpose they are aiming for.

Among them, achieving my goal was the most important.

I ignored the voice of the God of Order.

Returning to the 60th floor and taking steps, the God of Hope spoke.

[The vote just ended. Soon a war will break out.]

The results came out faster than expected.

[Now I want to ask you what you're going to do. Are you going to join the war? Maybe both the Hundred Gods Temple and Pantheon will contact you.]

“I will participate.”

[Which side?]

Of course it's the winning side.

My choices are always set.

When I told the God of Hope my answer, he asked again.

[Which side do you think it is?]

“The side I chose.”

Still.

I was convinced.

I would win.

Chapter 370

God of Victory (4)

On the 60th floor, there was a sealed Ahbooboo.

There was no other place to put him other than this place.

It was also the best place for research and experimentation.

While watching Ahbooboo, who was bound by a clinging barrier, I asked Seregia, who was watching him.

“How is his condition?”

“Not good.”

Seregia replied with a serious face.

I don't like it.

Was the decision to get him too much?

“Honey was flirting with me to escape.”

“Crazy.....”

[No, it's a little embarrassing to say so plainly, Miss Seregia.]

It's a pity as soon as you wake up in a state of restraint.

Tsk tsk, she clicked her tongue.

[Haha, unlike in the past, when she was locked in the sword and didn't speak for several months, Miss Seregia has become a lot more

active. I'm trying to seduce her with my brilliant charm and eloquence because I'm in a human form.....]

Ahbooboo who opened his mouth began to chat endlessly.

To put it nicely, It was pleasant, but if I expressed it honestly, then his words seemed cheap.

Of course, Ahbooboo is not really interested in Seregia.

I wouldn't have thought that Seregia would respond to the joke.

Basically, the two are swords.

A sword that can take the form of a human, not a human that can take the form of a sword.

The difference was great.

[What a shame! She almost fell for it! I wish Warrior came in a little late!]

He just has that kind of personality.

I laughed at the absurdity on one hand, but on the other hand, my heart became warm.

Due to the fact that the appearance of the Ahbooboo that I used to know remains unchanged.

"I wasn't disappointed, at all."

Seregia also refuted Ahbooboo's words as before.

It was a conversation that really reminded me of the past.

But that Ahbooboo doesn't exactly match the Ahbooboo I knew.

That is the result of fusion with the numerous Aubutz that appeared on the stage.

Of course, he also has the appearance and memory of the Ahbooboo I knew, but there will be more parts that I don't know.

The unanswerable delight seemed to be the personality that all Aubutz have in common.

[That's why, Warrior.]

Ahbooboo, who was babbling alone, called me.

And he naturally asked.

[Warrior, can you just send me back?]

To put it so politely, it sounded like a request, such as 'would you like to have a glass of water?'

Or something like 'can you turn off the lights before leaving?'

"Hmm, no."

[That's too bad! You almost fell for it!]

"I wasn't sorry for anything."

Ahbooboo cannot be released right away.

If so, I wouldn't even bring him in the first place.

Before I separate the Aubutz that are fused into one and bring out the Ahbooboo I know from them.

So, I had no intention of returning Ahbooboo until he was made to exist as a single entity.

[Then, will you send me back after that?]

“Well, it looks like the God of the Sky will put you back together again.”

The combined Ahbooboo is definitely useful.

I knew well because we had faced each other.

In the first place, the fact that a single apostle was able to confront a god proves Ahbooboo’s performance.

I have heard that the God of the Sky has an exceptionally large number of subjects and believers among the Hundred Gods Temple.

Ahbooboo’s combined abilities will be very necessary to manage the areas scattered around the world.

And knowing that, I’ll go find Ahbooboo again.

Like the repeat mark , the same thing will be repeated.

[Then, I will contact the God of the Sky before I go back. We can get a promise not to merge me back together. The God of the Sky keeps his promises very well.]

Ahbooboo spoke in a sly way.

He wasn’t daunted by my opposition and suggested a way back.

“Do you want to go back like that?”

[Yes.]

It was an immediate answer.

It’s a little disappointing.

Really.

I knew he would answer, even if it was an empty word.

[Warrior, I found meaning there.]

“From the God of the Sky?”

[No, from those believers.]

A couple words spoken in an unkind, serious voice.

It was a statement that was not like an apostle who worshiped God, but it was possible because of the significance of the apostle of the God of the Sky to the believers.

[Looking at the people who lived peacefully and serving them. Although I couldn't be like them, I was able to project their happiness onto me while protecting their lives.]

I understood.

Even at this moment, Hochi, who is working hard on Earth, is feeling the same thing.

In Hochi's case, there was a personal taste that was added in.

Even I felt a similar joy while watching Earth's believers.

It was also the satisfaction of self-consciousness filled with good intentions.

It was also a vicarious satisfaction that I felt when I saw others enjoy the kind of happiness I couldn't get.

[This will remain the same whether I get divided again or remain as I am now.]

It was a voice with strong determination.

[Of course, if you promise to send me back, it would be okay to stay here for a while, even for the sake of the future. I want to do that too. I have a lot of things I want to say.]

Ahbooboo said so as if he had read my heart.

A lot to say.

I wanted to know what happened after we separated, and I also wanted to tell him what I went through.

[Because of my long memories, the years I spent with Warrior were really meaningful. I was aware of the world outside the stage, and we went around many worlds together.....]

Following Ahbooboo's words, the memories of that time came to mind.

Certainly, the time I was with Ahbooboo could be called a decent memory in the Tutorial.

[Then are you sending me back?]

"No."

[Why!]

Why are you even asking?

"Not until I take out the abilities you used."

Did you think you showed me those abilities and thought that I would gently let you go?

I won't be satisfied until they are implemented and improved to a perfect level.

[Ahhh! Where is this!]

Where? You're here.

Leaving Ahbooboo to Seregia, I approached the portal to Earth.

[Ah, Warrior! You're not going to go like that, are you? No?! Oh, wait a minute! Wait a minute! Ah! Hey...!]

Leaving behind Ahbooboo's cries, I moved to Earth through the portal.

*

Earth was noisy.

To be exact, the area near the temple.

"What is going on?"

Even the interior of the temple was noisy.

"It's opening day today."

"Ah."

There was a space for believers in this temple.

There were also prayer rooms and exhibition halls or tourist attractions, event halls, and rest areas for those who come to play or visit lightheartedly.

"It's not perfect yet, because this and that happened. It opened a bit too early to change the atmosphere and draw attention from people."

"Yes, good job."

Since Hochi decided that way, I had no intention of making a fuss.

Rather, I should ask Hochi before doing anything.

“Dad, I did a good job too!”

Yong-yong, who was sitting on the sofa, raised his hand and shouted.

Yong-yong was in charge of the design and interior of the temple.

“Yong-yong did a good job too.”

After answering, Yong-yong tried to sit next to me, but I saw something strange.

Someone was lying on the sofa on Yong-yong’s lap.

It was the mantis.

It fell asleep on Yong-yong’s knees.

Compared to the small Yong-yong, the relatively large sized mantis was on his knee, so it looked somehow incongruous.

Anyway, that’s disgusting.

I haven’t even laid down on Yong-yong’s legs.

I lifted Yong-yong up and sat him in front of me.

When Yong-yong’s legs, which were supporting its head, disappeared, the mantis fell on the couch and smacked its head, but did not wake up.

“It sleeps often these days.”

Hochi said, pointing to the mantis.

“Often?”

“I’m putting it to sleep. The mantis is tired.”

Yong-yong said, waving his short legs in my arms.

Putting it to sleep.

There's no way that the mantis will be tired or sleepy.

The source was a crystal of power which accumulated power to the extreme and finally gained reason.

I looked at the mantis, which was still not waking up.

Soon I could see the reason.

It ate a lot too.

It was very full of faith.

And that faith was gathering and trying to form a new form.

It's a transitional period.

The stage of making the power of the gathered faith into one's own and to sprout divinity.

It seems that Yong-yong is putting it to sleep to stabilize the mantis that is going through that period.

I don't think I need to care about the mantis anymore.

Yong-yong was taking care of it better than expected.

It did not cause any problems even in the Hongcheon Church, and was quiet, only eating faith.

It was doing well when told to be the mascot and security guard there.

"Anything you want to say?"

Hochi asked.

The story between the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon.

This is also something that is not directly related to Earth.

It is a story that is difficult for ordinary humans to understand and interrupt, so I didn't call Kim Min-hyuk.

It seemed to be enough to tell him that this was happening later.

“...Another war.”

Hochi shook his head as if he was tired.

“Wow!”

Yong-yong was excited.

“...Yong-yong, war is not a good thing.”

“No?”

Hochi, who was shocked to see Yong-yong innocently asking him back, immediately stared at me.

Well, what did I do wrong?

I told him everything I heard from the God of Hope about the war.

Hochi, who was listening quietly, suddenly asked me with a surprised expression.

“The cause of the war is the place called Thanatos?”

“Hmm. It is said to be the estate of the God of Death where its territorial disputes lead to war.”

Of course, that's not the only reason for the war.

Now, it was strange that all of the Hundred Gods Temple was going out due to the problem of one god's area.

The timing was also strange.

No matter how hard I thought about it, it seemed to be a war related to the God of Order, who began to be reborn as a transcendent god.

Whether it is to give more power to the God of Order or to keep it in check, I will be sure to go and see it in person.

"If it's Thanatos, isn't it there?"

"Huh?"

Hochi said as if he knew a place called Thanatos.

Was there such a place on the Tutorial stage?

I don't think I've ever heard of a stage with such a name.

"No, it's not a tutorial, Lee Jun-seok."

"Lee Jun-seok?"

"Yes. In the past, you sent him to take care of an annoying quest instead of giving him an item. Wasn't that Thanatos?"

"...Huh?"

I hurriedly opened the quest window.

[God of Death-Purification of Thanatos (in progress)]

*In Thanatos, the realm of the God of Death, there are increasing numbers of regulars who refuse to comply with justice. Those who

were once oppressed in the name of the specters are now being reborn as a new class, not marginalized, in their society.

The God of Death seeks to purify Thanatos and smoothen the flow of order before the whole society is taken over by the regulars.

*You sent Challenger Lee Jun-seok instead of going directly, and the God of Death is very anxious about your passive decision.

“...That’s right, Thanatos. The place where Lee Jun-seok was sent.”

I forgot.

At that time, I sent him without thinking.

As it turned out, it was the place where a massive war between the gods would take place.

Hey, is he still alive?

Chapter 371

Thanatos (1)

“Why did you forget that? You sent him.”

Hochi said, with a double candlewick in his eyes.

(T/N: ‘to have double candlewick in one’s eyes’ means to glare with anger. You know, when characters get super angry, their eyes light up with literal fire. Like so.)

I had nothing to say.

“Even if you forgot about other people, you should have remembered him.”

This was a very unusual experience.

I’ve never been scolded by Hochi.

I don’t know if it’s just anger or resentment.

“Hey, don’t think about anything else. I’m talking to you.”

“Yong-yong, Uncle is scolding Dad.”

I tried to ask for help from Yong-yong sitting on my lap, but Yong-yong looked at me and Hochi and just smiled.

Contrary to my wishes, Yong-yong did not take my side.

Yong-yong had a stricter side than expected in judging my wrongs.

“Hey! Focus on what I’m saying!”

Hochi screamed.

“No, how can I remember all that. I’ve had a lot of work to do these days.”

“You’re a god! How can a god forget about it?”

What do you think a god is capable of?

It’s unfair.

A person’s memory is very strange.

Obviously, I became a god and had a memory beyond the normal range.

I could remember each and every single dish served at my first birthday party.

If I tried to remember.

Conversely, if I don’t think about remembering it, it’s just buried in my memory.

“What will you do about Jun-seok?”

Hochi asked in an unpleasant voice.

He’s more angry than I thought.

When they went to Japan together in the past, it seems that they got closer to each other than I thought.

“I’ll go. Is it Thanatos or Tadatatos? We have to go and bring him to Earth before the war breaks out.”

“Yes, go right now while only the words have been spoken. Just in case.”

Hochi decided to start right away.

I was the opposite.

“Give me one day, no half a day. I’ll leave after half a day.”

“Why? Do you have anything to prepare?”

“Hmm. The item I decided to give him.”

I decided to make it for him next time, but I haven’t even touched it yet.

It had to be made in a hurry in half a day.

“...Yes, make it fast and go. It might be dangerous because it’s a war zone, you irresponsible bastard.”

* * *

Inside a dark abandoned building.

There was a man looking over a cracked window like a spider web and applying a potion to the wound on his shoulder.

It was Lee Jun-seok.

“Ah.....”

He was groaning a little because of the pain.

Lee Jun-seok, who applied the potion, wore a coat roughly.

There was no need to bandage or tighten the affected area.

Lee Jun-seok’s natural healing power was at the level of self-healing to where he could ignore wounds even if a hole was drilled into his internal organs.

Applying a potion to speed up healing, and taking a break for a while was enough.

“Sigh.”

He sighed.

In fact, he was more cold and hungry than pained from the injury he felt on his shoulder.

And the fact that there was no way to overcome this cramped situation made Lee Jun-seok even more distressed.

Sunlight began to appear through the window.

He couldn't see the sun when he tried to go to the city center full of skyscrapers, but he could see that morning was coming.

Like this, another day began.

According to Lee Jun-seok's standards, the day has ended again.

Lee Jun-seok, who is in the position of a fugitive, was able to move only after the sun fell.

That wasn't easy for him, but it was better than moving in broad daylight.

On the planetary system of Thanatos, which was more developed than Earth, he could not attempt to assassinate enemies in bright daylight with a wanted criminal status.

Even ordinary people across the country and on the streets recognized him.

Specifying the target of the assassination, and even wandering around to obtain information about the target had to be done at the risk of his life.

The assassination itself was also very difficult, but it took a really long period to plan one assassination.

At this rate, he wasn't sure how many months or years it would take to complete the mission.

It was questionable whether he would be able to successfully complete his mission in the first place.

He tried to sleep in his sleeping bag, sighing once more in his tight heart.

Bang!

At that time, an explosion occurred in front of the main entrance of the abandoned building.

Lee Jun-seok, who was lying in his sleeping bag, got up again and looked at the situation.

In his senses, no animals such as wild cats were detected, let alone people approaching the abandoned building.

Pazizik!

However, in front of the front door of the abandoned building, the trap he had installed was triggered, and it was pouring lightning on someone.

The person's figure, seen through the dazzling sparks, stood still in the midst of the lightning strike.

No matter how much he looked at it, the person wasn't affected by the surprise lightning.

Considering the power of the lightning that turned ordinary humans into human-sized chunks of charcoal at once, it was a truly unrealistic sight.

Lee Jun-seok was convinced that his enemies had found the location of his hideout and attacked him.

“Heeeeeeeeyy.”

Standing in the middle of the trap, the man caught in the blitz, even opened his mouth and tried to speak to him.

“Itttttssssssmmmmmmeeeeeee.”

It was a word that Lee Jun-seok could not understand.

Lee Jun-seok prepared for an attack before the enemy who appeared out of nowhere escaped from the trap.

“Ah, aaaaaa. Thiiiiissss. Leeeee, shi.”

Along with the man’s yelling, a loud bang rang and the trap collapsed.

Just before Lee Jun-seok had finished preparing to attack, he had to stop his movements.

It was because the man’s face, who appeared in the lightning spark, belonged to someone he knew.

“Shit. You got all these different traps.”

“...Hojae-*hyung*?”

When Lee Ho-jae appeared at an unexpected point in time, Lee Jun-seok approached him confused.

* * *

“Hyung, what are you doing here?”

Asked Lee Jun-seok.

How should I answer here?

“I’m worried about you. It seems like the work is taking longer than I expected, so I came here.”

“Hyung.....”

It’s a lie.

Now, I don’t feel guilty about lying now.

My conscience was too strong for that.

Lee Jun-seok looked at me with his moist eyes, as if he was moved.

He’s become more sensitive than before.

I understood.

Originally, rolling alone in a place like this without something to rely on, it is a great mental comfort when you meet someone who treats you well.

Especially since Lee Jun-seok before this was sitting comfortably on Earth, so he must have been under greater pressure than in the Tutorial.

Following Lee Jun-seok’s guidance, I entered the abandoned building.

It looked like an old abandoned factory.

It was bad, but I could see Lee Jun-seok had used it as a base for a long time. The traces of cleaning all over the place were visible.

“Don’t mind the explosion earlier. I have a barrier so that no sound can be heard outside.”

“Ah, that’s fortunate. I was worried about having to move my hideout.”

Lee Jun-seok laughed a little as if he was relieved.

I said I had a barrier, but he's still speaking his words softly.

It may be a temporary habit caused by hiding for too long.

I asked Lee Jun-seok about the progress of the quest.

As I remember, Lee Jun-seok showed confidence in the quest of the God of Death.

He even talked about it as if he had already gone through this place on the Tutorial's hard difficulty.

This was also a reason for sending Lee Jun-seok alone to another world without much thought.

However, contrary to expectations, Lee Jun-seok had not been able to clear the quest for a long time.

Even looking at this abandoned building and his slightly limping movement, he seemed to be struggling.

"You said you've been here once in the Tutorial."

"Yes. I did....."

"And you said you caught a ghost or something."

"Yeah....."

Lee Jun-seok replied without energy.

"I've caught them before. The situation has changed a lot between then and now."

"Then and now?"

“Yes, about 3,000 years.....”

Lee Jun-seok briefly explained the difference.

“I mean, those who used to carry swords and shields now shoot laser guns.”

“Yeah. Well, putting it simply it’s like that.”

According to Lee Jun-seok’s explanation, the technology of this place called Thanatos seems to be considerable.

The level of advancing into the satellite system of another planet and building a space colony was a level far beyond that of Earth.

“Besides, the social position of the ghosts has changed so much. They are no longer called ghosts.”

The quest explained that there were ghosts and irregulars in Thanatos against the will of the God of Death.

“In the past, they were treated as monsters and hunted by ordinary humans, but now they have become social leaders.”

That would be a bit of a problem.

As civilization advances, the power of the social leaders becomes proportionately stronger.

Of course, there are also means to check that power, but usually those with such means also belong to the social leadership.

“What exactly is that ghost?”

“They’re immortal.”

“Immortal?”

“Yes, it literally doesn’t die. They die when attacked, but they don’t

naturally die because they don't have a lifespan."

What, that's cheating.

Is it like a vampire?

"No, it doesn't matter if they wander in the sun. They don't even drink blood. It's just like an ordinary person. The only difference is that their skin becomes translucent and requires magical surgery."

The risk is too small.

Being transparent is a really meaningless risk.

You just need to wear clothes underneath.

When the skin on the face becomes a little translucent, it is not a disadvantage compared to eternal life, although it may look disgusting.

The need for magical surgery was not a disadvantage, but rather an advantage.

"Surgery will be expensive, right?"

"Yes, so only people with a lot of money can do it."

Of course, everyone who can get surgery is getting it.

Those in power will be those in power for the rest of their life, and only the workers under them will die and be born again and again.

It's the worst social structure.

It was understandable that Lee Jun-seok was not using much power.

Those in power here will wield powers closer to gods than kings.

Immortality.

The God of Death deserves to be hated.

Humans who overcome death appear in the realm of the god that symbolizes death.

No matter how much I thought about it, it wasn't normal.

It must have been the skill of a god who wants to keep the God of Death in check or covets this realm.

“Is that so?”

“Of course. It makes no sense that eternal life is possible in the first place.”

It was impossible without the involvement of divine power.

Even those who have gone through the Tutorial get older as they age.

Their aging rate is only slightly lower than that of the general public.

But those who have the same body as ordinary people, having their life expectancy extended to near eternal life?

It was impossible without divine power.

It was said that this happened even before the technological prowess of this world developed, so I was even more certain.

When I heard that Thanatos became a place for a war between the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon, I thought it was just an excuse for the Hundred Gods Temple to start a war.

But now that I see it, it is really a place where a conflict could happen.

I don't know what kind of god it is, but it was too blatantly outspoken in its quarrel with the God of Death.

[As if prepared for war.]

The God of Hope, who had been quiet for a while, said abruptly.

What, all of a sudden.

[I have something to say.]

What.

Did any new information come out from the Hundred Gods Temple?

[Let me go.]

At those sudden words, I had to stumble for a moment.

What?

[Let me go.]

What if I let you go?

[I want to go back to my sanctuary and hide for a while.]

As far as I know, there is no sanctuary for the God of Hope.

Of course there was, but I destroyed everything.

[I just need to rebuild it.]

I ignored those words.

Whether reconstruction was possible or impossible, it was none of my business.

The God of Hope was held by me for the obvious use of providing information.

I'm also worried about what kind of accidents he would cause if I let him go free that would make the situation more complicated.

The God of Hope's hope was not in consideration.

The God of Hope, who was denied his request, remained silent.

This is a little weird.

Whether it's interrogation or torture, I thought I should talk to him in depth later.

* * *

"Is everything alright on Earth? Are you all doing well?"

Lee Jun-seok asked.

I had to think about it for a while.

There was something special.

While Lee Jun-seok was not present, I thought about how to explain that the Pantheon invaded Earth and it was chaotic, but somehow we blocked it well.

And I gave up.

"Uh, nothing much."

I decided to let him ask Kim Min-hyuk or Hochi for an explanation later.

My conscience began to itch.

I took out what I had prepared to ease my conscience.

"What is it?"

“An item. I said I’d make it for you before.”

In fact, the reason Lee Jun-seok was sent here was because of this item.

Because I had disposed of the items Lee Jun-seok used in the Tutorial, I issued him a new item.

And it was bothersome to get it right away, so I sent him here to get some time.

“This.....”

It was a gauntlet that I handed to Lee Jun-seok.

“Originally, I was going to make a bracelet, but these days, gauntlets seem to be the trend.”

“Wow, that’s perfect.”

Lee Jun-seok, who wore the gauntlet on his hand, said.

“What is the effect?”

“I prepared that too.”

I flicked my finger and opened a message window in front of Lee Jun-seok.

[Gauntlet]

*Physical Damage Immunity

*Magical Damage Resistance

*User Protection Effect

*User Lightning Immunity

*Lightning Damage Amplification

*Magical Power Recovery Increased

*Gauntlet made by Lee Ho-jae.

It has been made with great care for a long time, and has perfect performance without any flaws.

As expected, the item needs such an intuitive explanation.

“When you press on an item, the exact number is also displayed.”

“Hyung.....”

Lee Jun-seok looked at me with a face full of gratitude and joy as if he was moved to tears.

Chapter 372

Thanatos (2)

“Hyuuunngg.....”

Lee Jun-seok choked up.

Yong-yong will hug you without knowing. I tried to take it as usual, but I struck him with my hand.

Why is the grown-up guy doing this?

Even though Lee Jun-seok was brutally rejected, he was still moved.

The back of my nose was twitching.

It was a meaningful gift to Lee Jun-seok.

When you are struggling, there may be emotions that come from someone helping you and giving you good will.

Lee Jun-seok cleared the Tutorial and was unable to use his proper strength due to the absence of his items.

He feared that he would hurt not only the enemy, but also the people around him and himself because of his excessively strong attack power.

Many people may be impressed that he has finally recovered the power he polished for a long time in the Tutorial.

“The lightning resistance built into the gauntlet is almost at the level of immunity. In addition to the lightning resistance, there is magic to protect users, so it won’t be a problem even if you pour out your power to your heart’s content. Of course, when there are people

around, you should naturally be careful using it.”

Lee Jun-seok looked at me with eyes that started getting moist, and said,

“Hyung, thank you very much.”

Lee Jun-seok expressed his gratitude, and frankly talked about his resentment of the past saying that he had been neglected for a long time and was afraid he was forgotten.

“There’s no way. I thought it was later than expected, but I always remembered you.”

“Hyung.....”

“I didn’t come late because I didn’t care about you, but I was late to make this. There was also some other work. Understand?”

“Yes, hyung.”

Ok, fine.

It’s heartwarming.

My mind was refreshed.

[The God of Death is frustrated.]

[The God of Death is urging you.]

“That’s easy.”

From a while ago, the God of Death continued to send messages.

“Can you see the messages too?”

“Uh, I can see them.”

Lee Jun-seok seemed to be looking at something similar.

It seemed as if a message came to mind from the Tutorial.

The quest window was also a quest window, but more was possible because this is the realm of the God of Death.

“Are there any other gods’ religions on this planet?”

“No. It’s almost a holy land, but it’s not a holy land. It’s such a place.”

It meant that all religions are unified as the religion of the God of Death.

In the midst of that, there were people who abandoned the doctrine of religion and wished for immortality.

As time passed, such apostles came to occupy the top of society.

Therefore, the God of Death sought to solve the problem by hiring mercenaries from outside.

This may be the background of this world.

Looking at it like this, it really reminds me of the time when I was clearing the Tutorial stages.

“So, what is the solution?”

The God of Death requested the purification of Thanatos here.

I had to know the exact meaning of the word purification.

“It’s extinction.”

Oh, that’s nice too.

The God of Death is not afraid.

If you kill all the social leaders, there will be a lot of problems.

Of course, it's not a problem for the God of Death.

"How is the progress?"

First, let's hear how far Lee Jun-seok has gone here.

Lee Jun-seok began to unravel the things that had been happening here over the past few months.

*

"Hitman?"

"Yes, that is correct."

It was an unexpected choice.

"Because there aren't many ways I can kill the nobles."

Noble meant the irregulars who chose the surgery to make them immortal.

It wasn't that wrong, since only the wealthy can undergo surgery.

Anyway, it's an assassination request.

I thought about it for a moment.

If it were me, I would have attempted terrorism by finding a place where nobles gather.

There was a clear problem with the assassination hit.

If there is no quest, you can't kill even if you want to kill.

However, if there is no quest and you kill someone, you won't receive

quests.

Your credibility as a contractor will decrease.

Who would ask the crazy guy who kills people without a request?

Therefore, the fact that Lee Jun-seok chose assassination can only be seen as restriction by a narrow range of actions.

With or without a quest, it is very difficult to assassinate someone, and it takes a very long time.

So, there is no loss of time even if you move only when performing the quest.

“Yes, that is correct.”

Lee Jun-seok admitted coolly.

“Really?”

With Lee Jun-seok’s skills, the assassination itself would not have been difficult.

Information or preliminary work would be a bit of a problem.

“First of all, as the mission was prolonged, I needed money and a base to live in. I needed information, and above all, the assassination itself was a little.....”

“Why, are the kids here so strong?”

Do all of the targets have enough power to kill Lee Jun-seok alone?

It was surprising.

It was also quite interesting.

Lee Jun-seok is definitely strong.

He was even more so among beings who could not deal with divine power.

It is a planet where Lee Jun-suk is a rare opponent who can finally express his true colors.

“Oh, that... After I started my activities, all the nobles.....”

“Well, what.”

Lee Jun-seok blurred his works.

“Because of the non-conductive equipment.”

What equipment?

“Because the lightning doesn’t work anyway, it’s a bit difficult to kill... A little difficult for the mission.....”

I looked at Lee Jun-seok with a slight sense of absurdity.

Hey, look at the person you’re talking with.

Lee Jun-seok shouted, blushing his face, as if embarrassed.

“It’s because the technology is so excellent here!”

The excellent technology doesn’t matter.

Lightning attacks are easy to deal with because their attack methods are limited.

“I obviously told you to learn things other than lightning before, right?”

Obviously he would fail.

But Lee Jun-seok ignored my words.

It was a time when he was on the hard difficulty of the Tutorial, and he was feeling strange competitiveness toward me.

No, Pikachu also uses lightning tails.

It's like having the guts to boldly focus only on lightning skills.

“It's cool.”

“Is that important?”

Lee Jun-seok did not answer.

Instead, he nodded his head softly.

Yes, it's a bit important.

[The God of Death feels impatient with your conversation!]

[The God of Death urges you to complete the quest as quickly as possible!]

“Ah, scary. Tsk, what should I do.”

“What?”

It was because of the war.

A war between Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon.

It was a war that was scheduled to take place right here in Thanatos.

It turned out that the war had not yet begun.

I came in a hurry to evacuate Lee Jun-seok, but if I go back hurriedly, it won't seem right.

I am convinced that Thanatos is nothing but an excuse for war.

Whatever it is, it's a war caused by other needs.

However, it was clear that Thanatos was the excuse and justification of the war.

How about completing the mission before the war begins in earnest?

What would occur if the possibility of a war in Thanatos was resolved in advance?

Of course, another war might happen elsewhere.

Maybe there was no war.

[Let's complete the quest quickly.]

Oh, what, again.

The God of Hope suddenly expressed his opinion.

Recently, his sudden outbursts kept getting worse.

It wasn't because he suddenly told his own intentions.

The God of Hope, who was constantly trying to show me his presence, constantly snarling and babbling, was weirdly silent, so I was more concerned about him saying a word in the meantime.

[Maybe we can stop the war. It may be delayed, or we may be able to reduce its scale. It is better to prevent it.]

This is surprising.

I thought the God of Hope had encouraged war, but he didn't seem to mind.

I was thinking that he had become quiet recently because he was planning something with his incarnation in the Hundred Gods Temple.

Likewise, he suddenly told me to let him go.

The actions of the God of Hope became increasingly suspicious.

‘Doesn’t hope bloom in despair?’

[Yes. Only when despair exists can hope sprout on it.]

The God of Hope sank into silence again in the end.

I tried to summon the sunken God of Hope, but he did not respond.

*

“Jun, who is he?”

An Irregular, who endured to become an apostle here in Thanatos, which follows the doctrine of death, and was immortalized through an unidentified operation.

So the Noble asked Lee Jun-seok.

Their appearance was very impressive.

He was wearing a loose robe.

He looked like an important character coming out of Star Wars, but in fact he looked like a leader character anywhere where the Extras are.

This was an outfit with a food worker hat on his head.

As I heard from Lee Jun-seok, their appearance was not very different from humans except that the skin on their face was really translucent.

“This is my colleague.”

“Hmm, is he someone you can trust?”

The two started a conversation.

Lee Jun-seok was moving while receiving the Noble's assassination request.

And the client was also a Noble.

Well, this would be natural if all the upper classes of society became nobles.

As if the relationship between Lee Jun-seok and that Noble had become quite good, he was having a fairly comfortable conversation.

It seemed that he had built up trust.

Tutorial challengers love this aspect.

Being an all-rounder.

Since they are tested not only in their combat abilities but also in the trivial things, they can also create allies and socialize this way.

Of course, there are cases like me who progressed while beating them all without such a thing.

I carefully reviewed the appearance of Noble.

Immortality is certainly a tremendous advantage.

Instilling divine power and making them an apostle can make them immortal, though some may not want it.

If we could immortalize the humans we know through some surgery without any risk.

Obviously it wasn't bad.

So I was thinking of getting to know the technique.

“Hey, why didn’t you tell me? The story is a little different.”

“...Yes?”

Lee Jun-seok, who was talking with the Noble, asked, confused.

I approached slowly and took off the Noble’s food-worker hat.

There was a soft head on his translucent skin.

“You never said that one of the risks of being immortal was being bald.”

“Ah ah! What are you doing!?”

The Noble rushed to take back the food-worker hat that had suddenly been stripped off.

I ignored it and slapped him on the back of his head.

It was cold.

Rather than human skin, I felt like I touched a window.

“Ahhh!”

“Shut up.”

It’s not just baldness.

It was possible to recognize at a glance that all the pores of the scalp were wiped out by the magical reaction.

In short, he became bald because of the surgery of immortality.

“It’s still immortality, but it’s a bit too much to say that losing a little

hair is a risk.”

Lee Jun-seok said naturally.

This guy is screaming as if it was a big deal.

“You, what would you choose if there was something that would increase your lifespan but would make you bald?”

It’s not even just hair loss.

It was a bizarre twist that looked like a hybrid of some kind of jellyfish and octopus because of the perfect hair loss that peeled off from end to end, and the skin of the head that became translucent.

“Well.....”

Lee Jun-seok couldn’t answer easily.

Look.

If this becomes your job, it’s never a light job.

I remembered Park Jung-ah, who became bald in my head for a moment, and then quickly erased it.

Obviously, quite a few people would probably refuse the surgery to make them immortal because they do not want to be bald.

I was sure.

“If you give up your immortality in order to not become bald, what should I call it? Death with dignity?”

“This, bastaardd! This bad bastard!”

The Noble screamed with tears in his eyes.

Chapter 373

Thanatos (3)

“Turn to the side a little bit.”

The Noble obeyed me and turned his head slowly.

He listened better than I thought.

“How is it?”

The Noble asked me, as I was observing the back of his head.

How did they do it?

“I don’t think I can.”

“Ah... Is that so.”

The technique of immortality was amazing even to me.

The one drawback is that their heads are translucent and smooth like glass.

How to solve the shortcomings... I looked around the Noble’s head and could not come up with a specific method.

“I wanted to see how immortality was possible, so it seems like the body is made of magical materials. Of course you won’t die if you do this. Although, your physiology will also disappear. Well, it’s natural that there is no hair. Have you seen fur on a magic stone?”

“Ah.....”

It was definitely a strange operation.

It is a surgery that replaces only the body with magical substances without affecting the ego and soul.

If this operation was possible even in the days when there was no advanced science and technology, there must have been some god intervening.

This is unbelievable.

“I think what I said earlier would be possible instead.”

“You mean going back to the original body?”

“Yes.”

“...Thank you so much, God.”

The Noble named Dosifer, who was introduced by Lee Jun-seok, surprisingly, wanted to return to his original body.

I thought it was because of the baldness, but he said he had no intention of becoming a noble.

“Isn’t it a waste of immortality?”

“It’s not a waste at all. I am a priest who serves the God of Death.”

It wasn’t that Lee Jun-seok introduced me to him for nothing.

Both Lee Jun-seok and Dosifer were cooperating with the same goal of killing Thanatos’ nobles.

“I was forced to choose immortality to destroy the apostles.”

I guess so.

If all of the social leaders became immortal nobles, he would also have to be a noble in order to keep them in check.

Or maybe we have to gather the will of the lower class and start an uprising.

No matter how large a force the crowd has, it is difficult for mortals to destroy immortals with wealth and power.

It wasn't a question of ability, it was a question of the available time allowed in life.

"If everything is sorted out, and if I have a chance, I want to return to being a normal human again."

Dosifer said firmly.

"I think immortality will be a waste as well. If you do research, you might be able to transplant your hair one day."

Immortality isn't just something you can obtain.

Really.

When you become a deity, you naturally acquire it, but it is not something you would like to gain.

On the other hand, immortality is a blessing that you just need to rejoice in comfort.

"Thank you, but I have to decline. I don't want to miss the opportunity to approach the great rest."

"Why, because of the God of Death?"

I asked if he was considering immortality as a curse rather than a blessing because he worshipped the God that symbolizes death.

"It's a curse. Death is the only absolute truth that exists in the world."

It's the absolute truth.

I think I heard that somewhere.

Dosifer spoke with a passionate voice like a theater actor.

He started talking with excitement that he felt joy in revealing his beliefs that he had to hide to live.

“Why is life precious? It is because there is an end. We can live more passionately because we have limited time.”

Lee Jun-seok, standing outside of Dosifer's view, shook his head and sat down on a chair a little further away.

It seems that Lee Jun-seok has already heard Dosifer's lecture on theology.

“There will be a cycle in everything. The beginning will promise the end. Death in itself proves this world.”

“One thing.”

There is a loophole in the theory of the theology of death.

“There is one exception.”

“What is that?”

There are beings in this world who have overcome death.

Unlike mortals, there are beings free from the truths of the world.

Even though they are trapped in their own truth, they remain the exception in the face of death.

“Gods.”

Dosifer crumpled his face.

Look at him. Look at you not managing your facial expressions.

I told you that I am definitely a god.

“That’s right, God is the exception.”

Rather than managing his facial expressions, Dosifer distorted his face even more.

As if he was angry with the fact.

“There are too many gods in this world. There are too many.”

Well, I can’t stand it.

I hit Dosifer’s head.

“Ahhh!”

“You big bald head, there’s nothing you can’t do before God! You’re going to die.”

*

“Isn’t it beautiful?”

Asked Dosifer.

I nodded and affirmed.

Dosifer’s residence had a glass ceiling.

Like his head.

Unlike Earth’s night sky, stars and satellites were clearly visible.

[The God of Death is very impatient!]

[The God of Death urges you to take action!]

You're going to die soon from stress.

I must move before the God of Death falls out in rage.

“So what was you two's original plan?”

Lee Jun-seok and Dosifer looked at each other for a while and then explained their idea to me.

“It was to assassinate the Noble of the Nobles, one of the most powerful people in Thanatos.”

That's unexpected.

I was expecting a plan to destroy the immortal surgical facility.

“The supreme power gap will naturally lead to confusion. Someone will have to take that place.”

“And it was my original plan to be more active in the gap of that confusion.”

It was a plan for Lee Jun-seok to work hard as a hitman amid the power struggle to assassinate the highest power and take the place of that power.

“In the end, the power structure will be stabilized.”

“That's why we have to choose the targets for the assassination well. First of all, it is an advantage that we can be more active.”

It wasn't my favorite plan.

“Where is the highest authority?”

“It’s here.”

Dosifer explained, pointing to the building on a translucent tablet.

“This building is the target’s residence. Armed guards are guarding it tightly. It is impossible to enter through the entrance. We tried to break into other buildings, but the other buildings in the vicinity are also owned by the target, so the security system is shared and we failed.”

“What about bombing?”

“...Yes?”

“Bombing.”

Lee Jun-seok would have been able to blow this building up.

Of course, human damage may have occurred on an enormous scale, but that doesn’t make the attempt impossible.

Or you can try to snipe from a distance by determining the location of the target a little more accurately.

“Oh, that’s.”

Lee Jun-seok scratched his head and explained.

“The building has a shield, hyung.”

“Is your attack not working?”

“Yeah. The building will probably be fine even if a nuclear bomb falls.”

Certainly, I realized that it is a planet that is technologically far ahead of Earth.

It’s not an underground bunker, but a high-rise building like that has a

shield to withstand a nuclear attack?

It was a planet with a lot to learn.

It would be nice to bring Yong-yong later and find out about it.

I was in the midst of getting information by constantly talking with Dosifer and Lee Jun-seok.

“What.”

“...Yes?”

There was a hole in the dimension.

Not even one or two, but dozens.

This is something I experienced once a while ago.

When the Pantheon attempted to invade Earth.

[It started.]

Said the God of Hope.

“It’s far earlier than expected.”

Too early.

It wasn’t long since I first heard that the war discussions had begun.

The gods already appeared in the place that had been marked as the battlefield.

[The gods. Is there anything they need to prepare for the war?]

Why, well, there could be.

Like having to prepare a large number of troops like when they were poured onto Earth.

[The situation is different from then. It is an all-out war between numerous gods. No matter how much a mortal intervenes, it makes no difference.]

The God of Hope explained in a light-hearted voice.

[The Pantheon made a decision.]

“What?”

[All out war.]

[Yes, as you said, it was an early decision. I am also embarrassed to hear the news from a spy. But it doesn't seem like I'm the only one who planted spies.]

[The core personnel of the Pantheon did not panic at all and united their opinions, as if they had heard a prophecy. And all the gods of the Pantheon announced their intention to participate. It's weird enough that we should be suspicious.]

Each of the gods began to pass through the rifts that were forcibly opening on this planet.

They were the gods of the Pantheon.

And I could see one thing.

That the gods who took the lead in the invasion of Earth were really at a sloppy level.

There were also a number of gods of a class that could be compared to the God of Flexibility that I encountered before.

[Lastly, I'll ask you one more time.]

The God of Hope whispered.

[Let me go.]

“Why.”

[I have to go and hide. It will be done in one way or another.]

The voice of the God of Hope seemed desperate.

I wondered if there was another god in the world that was so subdued and timid.

“I can’t. If you need a place to hide, just hide in me.”

Above all, it felt a little unpleasant that the God of Hope, who seeks safety, senses danger and tries to run away.

“Hey, how did this happen?”

Dosifer asked urgently.

The whole planet was trembling as if an earthquake had occurred.

“It seems that the God of Death could not stand it anymore and called for friends. What would you do?”

As soon as Lee Jun-seok made eye contact with me, he showed me a determined look.

Our warrior, who had escaped all sorts of battlefields, exclaimed confidently.

“To the subspace!”

“Yes.”

Quick judgment.

Great judgment!

Lee Jun-seok was placed in a sub-space.

I was worried that he was too light-minded when viewed in competition, but he grew up very well.

“What are you going to do?”

This time I asked Dosifer.

“I will remain.”

“It will be dangerous.”

“That’s all right.”

Dosifer seemed unwilling to bend his will.

“I will stay here. Even if it is dangerous. I am not afraid of death. Rather, I haven’t been able to fulfill my mission so far.....”

“Yes, do it.”

Dosifer nodded his head.

“If you ever change your mind, let me know.”

Maybe it will change soon.

The gods of the Pantheon were appearing in Thanatos from beyond the dimension.

“Where are the gods appearing?”

Asked Dosifer.

Where is this.....

“About the other side of the planet. I don’t know the exact name of

the place.”

The gods of the Pantheon are gathering around there.

What should I do?

In this war I am a third party.

The God of Hope expected both the Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon to come in contact with me, but he was wrong.

Neither of them contacted me.

If so, how should I intervene in this war?

While I was thinking, I realized that a new god appeared in Thanatos.

It was a god I knew.

I could notice that it had a divine power I had felt before.

[It is the God of Sacrifice.]

The God of Hope whispered.

Unlike the Pantheon, where many gods were entering, the only god belonging to the Hundred Gods Temple was the God of Sacrifice.

Finally, both sides faced.

I watched the situation, wondering what kind of conversations would come and go.

The situation went in a completely different direction than I expected.

The God of Sacrifice looked exactly as I had seen on the 61st floor.

The God of Sacrifice, who appeared, tried to attack the gods of the

Pantheon.

Kwa-Aang!

On the other side of the planet, there was a clearly audible sound.

Whether the gods of the Pantheon were expecting a raid, they gathered together to prevent the attack.

The attack of the God of Sacrifice could not penetrate the defense, but it did not fade and bounced in all directions.

As if a bombing had occurred, continuous sound rang from everywhere.

No, only I can hear it, so I'm sitting there listening to this.

Humans will not even hear this sound properly.

Humans will not even be able to hear properly.

Because their eardrum must have ruptured already

“Are you okay?”

Dosifer couldn't answer.

He seemed to have already lost his mind.

His body was convulsing with fits.

I said I would protect him.

Ordinary humans were too weak.

No, on the contrary, the gods may have too much power.

The building was shaking as if it would collapse at any moment.

Maybe in a little while it will actually collapse.

The screen of the tablet that Dosifer dropped from his hand caught my eye.

On the screen that was shining on the bustling city with the target building, only a black wasteland with nothing left and the flames burning above it were visible.

I could tell without having to look at the tablet.

Countless lives that were felt on this planet, which had a higher population than Earth, disappeared in no time.

Now, I could feel little life on this planet.

Just one attack.

And defense to prevent the attack.

That alone killed more than 90 percent of the planet's population.

The rest were also seriously injured, enough to die soon.

It was a vain and futile power.

“Is this really what you were hoping for?”

With this destructive force, you wanted to push away the planet where your followers live and deal with the apostles?

Even providing an excuse for the war between Hundred Gods Temple and the Pantheon.

[The God of Death affirms your question.]

Chapter 374

Thanatos (4)

Thanatos was quite different from my expectations.

When I first learned about Thanatos after reading the quest window, I thought of a swampy area full of poison.

You could fall in a swamp while walking around the town, die of poison while drinking water, and die from hail that flew through the roof while sleeping.

Well, it was reminiscent of such a neighborhood.

A world where death is closer than anywhere else.

However, Thanatos was a very normal neighborhood.

It is questionable whether the world ruled by the nobles who have undergone surgery to have the head of a jellyfish octopus could be called normal.

Compared to my expectations, it was.

To put one more characteristic, there was very advanced technology.

From the standpoint of eagerly exploring different worlds, it is rare for a world to have more or equal technological prowess compared to Earth.

The same was true of civilizations developed through magic, not science.

Probably because of the circumstances of the gods.

As civilization progresses, people become less dependent on God.

More problems are solved through technology, and values also changed pessimistically.

For the gods, the civilization of their believers are moderately barbaric, and at the same time, they are most appropriate to maintain a sufficient population.

But Thanatos was not.

Dosifer's passionate speech helped me understand the concept of death here in Thanatos.

The promised end.

Because of the finality of death, it was a world that believed that it is right to be more immersed in the present and live passionately.

Therefore, it would have been possible to possess such technology.

The tablet that Dosifier dropped was still lighting up in the city that had become ashes.

It was a worthless death.

They believe that death is the last salvation, and in the light of that death they were living a brighter life.

It wasn't assumed that they could feel any value in that vain death.

So I asked.

To the God of Death.

I wondered if that sight was really meant to be?

[The God of Death affirms your question.]

If so, that would be what you wanted me to do.

The goal was not to find and eliminate the nobles, but to annihilate the apostles even by sweeping the planet's surface right away.

Maybe ordinary people who were influenced by the nobles were also targeted for annihilation.

"This is too futile."

Dosifer, who called death the absolute good, and other believers.

[That is death.]

It was the voice of the God of Death.

It was a familiar energy.

It was because I had long used the powers I received from the God of Death.

"Oh, now we're talking directly. You should have done so earlier."

As in the days of the Tutorial, it was annoying to check intentions by only looking at the message window.

[Because I am ready to step up.]

It may be because of the war.

The war has just begun.

There was still a series of binge watching.

The war between the Pantheon and the Hundred Gods Temple began with the first strike of the God of Sacrifice.

[I hoped that using your skills, you would quickly solve the problem.

At least so that this war would start elsewhere.]

As expected, as soon as I came, I guess he wished that I would shoot a single Zit-Pop.

[But it doesn't always work out the way you want. Death is embarrassing and futile for the maintenance of life, but it must exist as a result.]

For these gods, this is the problem.

They'll start with a lecture on their concept as soon as they appear.

I'm not curious.

"Like when you tried hard, spreading some of your power, but I wasn't interested in your apostleship, so I roughly refused it? Oh, is that analogy a little weird?"

[.....]

The God of Death was a god who gave exceptionally many powers.

Of course, there was a limit to the powers that he could formally present, but the God of Death gave me powers even while concealing himself.

However, compared to the powers presented by the God of Adventure or the God of Slowness, they were not of great use.

[The problem will be solved anyway, so I will make the mission that was given to you a success.]

I had doubts.

It's so easy to complete the quest.

Not only the God of Death, but also other gods.

Kirikiri explained that this was the judgment of the gods who were reluctant to engage with me, but I was not easily convinced.

Rather, I felt that I had to roughly complete it whenever there was an excuse.

It's like the Hundred Gods Temple think I have to complete my quests as quickly as possible.

There would be no reason for me to do that at all.

[Go back now.]

Said the God of Death.

That said, he made a sudden big impression.

“Bullshit. Why am I going back.”

[Here, you are no longer.....]

I blocked the voice of the God of Death.

Why are you telling me to do this and that?

“Hey hey hey.”

“Ugh.....”

I kicked Dosifer down on the floor with my feet.

Dosifer was still groaning and had yet to become conscious.

I made him drink a potion, but there was no difference.

It seemed unlikely to work for some time.

I can't deal with this.

I roughly threw Dosifer in the subspace.

Lee Jun-seok will take care of it.

Dosifer himself may prefer to die as he is, but I still need him.

Bang bang!

Rather than sounds of war, it seemed like the sound of the final collapse of the world was constantly ringing.

The gods of the Pantheon and the God of Sacrifice were fighting high in the sky, but the aftermath fell to the ground.

A barrier was laid under the battle area to protect the planet's ground.

It wasn't very strong because it was roughly covered in a hurry.

If numerous gods gathered in Thanatos attempting to attack, Thanatos would be destroyed in no time.

It didn't matter.

The barrier was an expression of opinion.

Don't touch anything below this.

Any god who felt my strength in the barrier would have understood it.

As the barriers were laid, I could feel the eyes of various gods focusing on where I was.

Whoa.

It was burdensome for me too.

Too many gods were gathered to exist in one space.

Anyway, even in the midst of the battle, the gods recognized my existence, who had a barrier.

Unless you're a moron wanting to add an enemy for no reason in the midst of war, you won't be rushing to destroy the barriers.

"Seregia."

[If there's a flaw in the barrier, are you going to use it as an excuse? Can I just rush towards the barrier?]

Seregia, who was watching over, asked.

Well, is there such a self-injury blackmail operation?

"No, it's just a straightforward plan."

[As far as I know, there was an agreement made between the Hundred Gods Temple and Warrior.]

The agreement has already been broken.

"My stiff friend is hurt."

Dosifer is my friend.

Although we have not known each other for long, we have a deep connection and share friendship and trust.

I was convinced that Dosifer would also consider me a close friend.

I was outraged by the injuries suffered by such a friend, and I will inflict retribution on the gods for causing this damn explosion.

[That is perfect logic.]

"Are you sure?"

The battle of the gods continued.

They were fighting very hard without even paying attention as if both sides had agreed not to care about the barriers.

Maybe there is no time for that.

It was truly spectacular to see thousands of gods of the Pantheon filling the sky.

Among them, there was also the figure of the God of Flexibility who had been seen before.

The God of Hope explained that the God of Flexibility was one of the best in the battle and he explained that he would not be pushed even compared to other gods of the Hundred Gods Temple

That's what it looked like to me.

Even in the Pantheon, there were a few gods that could be mixed with the God of Flexibility.

It was a force of an overwhelming scale.

It wasn't that the God of Hope only praised the world's real heavyweights.

The battle was going in a one-sided fashion.

It would be normal for the large numbered side of the Pantheon to dominate, but surprisingly, the sole God of Sacrifice was overwhelming all of the Pantheon gods.

The God of Sacrifice was pouring out an enormous amount of power as if there was really no limit to its power.

The Hundred Gods Temple was focused on preventing attacks without

damage as much as possible against the God of Sacrifice.

Rather than reducing damage and attempting counterattacks, they seemed to aim to drain the God of Sacrifice's power.

It seemed to me that it wouldn't last long.

The output that the God of Sacrifice is showing is definitely over the line.

It wouldn't be strange even if it disappeared right now as a result of the immense power it is using.

Rather, it is strange that the attack is continuing.

However, the God of Sacrifice just calmly continued the attack.

"Good timing."

In any case, both sides are in balance and are in tight confrontation.

Either way, just before the counterweight collapses.

It will be just the right time to turn the table over.

Hundreds of red dots were created at the same time on the gods fighting excitedly.

This reminds me of the old days.

In the past, when the Spirit King and the Rulers were struck at the back of their head in the same way.

"Zit, Pop."

Hundreds of red dots exploded at the same time.

The Pantheon gods, who were distracted in battle, could not respond

to the sudden explosion.

Light and heat waves swept the gods in a flash.

Zit Pop is certainly a powerful skill, but it wasn't a skill that could defeat a godhood by itself.

Unfortunately.

Although it can cause damage to some extent, the main use of the method was to limit the other's response by spatial expansion of divine power and to disturb it through light and heat.

In the meantime, in the vortex of flames containing my divine power, giants with perfect immunity charge and end the gods in close combat.

In other words, the god killing power was slightly lowered, but the role of causing confusion could be carried out perfectly.

"Seregia, how's everything going?"

[Good, of course.]

Oh, it wouldn't have been easy.

[I placed a condition that I would allow him to walk in a human state.]

It was an overly cruel condition.

A little harsh.

[He hates being sealed still. I threatened to imprison him for about a thousand years using time warping.]

Of course he hates being sealed.

He was originally a sword that had been sealed for hundreds of years

in the basement of the imperial palace.

Maybe that squirm-inducing chatter is a side effect of prolonged sealing.

[Enter.]

A space opened with Seregia's words.

Today alone, thousands of gods were in Thanatos, twisting the space.

The twisting of space here was no longer strange.

However, what appeared in the newly opened space was not a deity, but two swords.

It was Seregia and Ahbooboo.

[The main character Aubutz has appeared!]

As soon as Ahbooboo crossed the gap in the space, he cried out.

And the virtual world unfolded.

*

"Looking back, it's a scam, this."

He said, scratching the dirt floor of the wasteland with his feet.

Just before, he was in Thanatos, but for a moment he was summoned into a virtual world created by the God of the Sky.

It wasn't just me.

The gods of the Pantheon and the God of Sacrifice were also summoned.

[I am so great, warrior.]

Through the voice of Ahbooboo, who was struggling, a shout of embarrassment and horror resounded here and there.

This virtual world created by the God of the Sky using Ahbooboo as a medium with my research was amazing.

It was to return the summoned target to the state they were in before acquiring their divinity.

-Kwaaaaa!

-Kaahak!

“Look at the things that you haven’t learned, it’s noisy.”

The gods of the Pantheon were going berserk in madness.

Those who had been devouring and devouring, became deified, and became gods.

When they lost their divinity, they returned to their original form, the monsters of their roots, possessed by the desires of the past.

It has been a long time since I last saw them.

Chapter 375

Thanatos (5)

“Kyaaaak!!”

It’s a mess.

I knew that many of the gods of the Pantheon were originally Rulers.

In fact, it turns out that almost all of them were made from Rulers except for a few. Non-Rulers were not the majority.

The Rulers who had returned to the days before becoming gods when they were called monsters of the source, were going berserk in madness.

Since they had just returned to the verge of reaching godhood, they were not completely devoid of reason.

But they couldn’t handle the sudden confusion.

Falling from divinity to mortality, returning to the days when reason remained, but still possessed by desire, they could not think normally.

Frightened and excited, they attacked whatever was nearby.

There were also those that showed off their survival instincts and ran away.

There was a phenomenon of chasing and being chased in all directions according to the complex hierarchy of the forces.

“Ohoho.”

Ahbooboo was smiling unpleasantly next to me.

“It’s such a great ability, isn’t it Warrior?”

He seems to want to show off his abilities.

I was trapped on the 61st floor because of that ability, and I didn’t think I was going to be trapped in the future.

I didn’t dare to point that out, and decided to just make Ahbooboo feel better.

“Yes, that’s great.”

It was really great.

It was an idea that we came up with on the 61st floor, but it was a discarded experiment because it was not realistic.

The God of the Sky who made it into a reality is really amazing.

Seregia sat quietly on the ground.

There was a somber look on her face.

“I feel heavy.”

I guess so.

Seregia lost her godhood, so if she considered her body light, then that would be even stranger.

For a moment, I watched the Rulers roll around.

I don’t know how long the confusion will last.

They certainly have reason.

Enough to rise to the level of a deity.

It will calm down soon.

And then, their anger and madness will focus on me.

But before that, there was something to be aware of.

“It’s been a long time.”

When I looked back, I saw a giant fox lying around a little away.

It was the God of Sacrifice.

This was the first time I saw her since the 61st floor.

The God of Sacrifice was not like the one who was dealing with the gods of the Pantheon, nor was she like when she borrowed the body of an apostle on the 61st floor.

She looked like a giant fox flapping hundreds of tails.

Which floor was it?

It was on the 19th floor.

At the stage on the 19th floor, where Myong-myong and the fox beast appeared, I encountered the God of Sacrifice, who had not yet reached godhood.

She looked the same as back then.

The appearance of a time when she was called the godmother of the fox beasts.

The only difference was that there were hundreds of giant tails fluttering behind her giant body.

“There are so many things I want to ask you about.”

Really? That’s very strange.

For me too.

From this bizarre war to the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple, the God of Adventure and the God of Order.

I even wondered what kind of ending Myong-myong had in his original time.

“But today is not that day either.”

The God of Sacrifice said something that seemed like she was backing out.

This is where our opinions diverge.

I had no intention of putting off my curiosity.

There was no need to worry.

I knew the art that allowed me to get the information I wanted.

“If you don’t like ordinary conversation, let’s move on to a more aggressive way.”

On the 19th and 61st floors, I wanted to fight the God of Sacrifice.

Even though I’m inferior in abilities, I wanted to hit and burn her.

I wanted to challenge her even if I was reckless.

The difference from that time was that I had the confidence to survive and win.

“I don’t want to.”

I'm sorry, but that's not up to the God of Sacrifice to decide.

It's up to me to decide.

I, too, was no different from the Rulers who fell into ungodliness and were in a riot of madness.

When I went back to my imperfect days when I couldn't complete myself, my emotions were fluctuating.

Tension and excitement.

The mighty power I feel from the God of Sacrifice stimulated me rather than discouraged me.

"I understand what you're saying, but I'm a pacifist. I'm sorry I can't accept."

You're a pacifist.

You say all sorts of things.

Like a fox.

It wasn't a word to brag about, considering the fact that not that long ago she participated in the war against the gods of the Pantheon alone and launched an attack, destroying the surface of a planet in the aftermath.

"Many sacrifices are expected in the future. We'll probably see each other again. By all means, I would like to be able to talk rationally then."

I sat there, forgetting about the talks.

I ignored those words and ran toward the God of Sacrifice.

But before I even approached, the God of Sacrifice faded and disappeared completely.

The only thing left in the place of the God of Sacrifice was a huge fox tail.

“...Are you a lizard*?”

The God of Sacrifice ran away again this time.

*

The space was shaking.

The God of Sacrifice disappeared silently, like paper wet with water.

But the aftermath certainly remained.

What method was used by the God of Sacrifice to escape this space and go outside.

She must have regained her godhood.

That fact was shaking the premise of this virtual world.

“How long can you stand it, Warrior?”

Ahbooboo said.

In the words of Ahbooboo, an actual user, this space will begin to collapse very soon.

This meant that the beings inside would go out and regain their godhood, and the number of Ahbooboos prepared at best would be in vain.

“Before that, I should reduce them as much as possible.”

No matter how much I’ve been preparing to deal with the godhoods, and although I say I have the abilities to match them, it is much easier to deal with monsters without godhood than to deal with ones with godhood.

I just entered the war, and the God of Sacrifice, who was one of the pillars, has disappeared.

There is a high possibility that the battle between the gods and mine will proceed, so I have to reduce their power over there as much as possible.

Even though I, like them, am ungodly and outnumbered, I was confident.

In the absence of the variable of godhood, I had the confidence to triumph against any being in the world.

“Ahhhhhh!”

One of the Rulers cried out loud.

Then, the movement of the Rulers who were in a riot around them became noticeably dull.

Do they communicate with such a scream?

You don't need a secret language.

The number of Rulers slowly regaining reason is increasing.

They attacked each other in confusion and are not immediately able to reconcile, but soon they will cease to fight.

I had to attack right now.

“Seregia.”

I called out to her and reached out my hand.

Seregia, sitting blankly on her floor, put her hand on my outstretched hand.

I was dumbfounded by her reaction, and I looked at her for a moment.

“I’m sorry, can you return as a sword?”

Seregia looked at me with a sulk for a while, then turned into a sword without a reply.

Ahbooboo, who was watching a little away, vomited blood.

“Ugh, Warrior, did you use poison?”

I didn’t use it.

This was not me, but the poison that Seregia was emitting.

It wasn’t just poison, it was Lee Ho-jae’s special poison.

But, Ahbooboo, this guy doesn’t have poison tolerance.

Come to think of it.

Ahbooboo is not a deity.

Although it could be said he is degraded in this space, it is not before becoming a god, but before reaching his current state.

Now he is just an ordinary superhuman.

It was sloppy.

This guy, why did I believe in him?

“Hold on anyway.”

“It looks like it’s going to be hard!”

“Then, run away.”

Ahbooboo immediately turned to the opposite and started running away.

It was a wise judgment.

Whoooo

A heavy roar rang from Seregia's blade held in one hand.

It was heavy.

Come to think of it, it was the first time I tried using this in practice.

To my surprise,

Before becoming a god, on the 61st floor, we had so many attempts.

Most of them were Seregia's remodeling experiments.

When it was difficult to find a way to damage the godhood, I tried to create a sword that could even injure the godhood with extreme destructive power.

It was the Seregia at this point that was completed as a result.

In the end, I couldn't do proper damage to godhood.

Because of this, most of the abilities were lost when Seregia ascended to godhood.

But there, there was no weapon like this against those imperfect monsters without godhood.

Poison, disease, curse, fear, confusion, hallucinations, flames, lightning, freezing, radiation.

It was the worst weapon using everything harmful to life.

I endured the heaviness I felt in my hand and ran forward.

Whether they noticed my approach or not, the closest Rulers focused

their attention on me.

You're late.

In order for them to increase their odds, they had to unite and ambush when I was talking to the God of Sacrifice.

Kwooooong-

A huge shield was created in front of them.

I threw Seregia at the shield.

A huge explosion occurred, and I was swept back by the aftermath.

But I got up again and ran forward.

I went through the heat wave.

There was a Ruler who was alive even though he was hit by the burst of radiation.

I grabbed Seregia who had flown into my hand again, and swung her towards the Ruler.

Once again there was a huge explosion.

With the explosion, all the harmful effects built into Seregia spread far and wide.

[Warrior, I think I will die first before the space collapses!]

Ahbooboo's whining was heard via telepathy.

Surely Ahbooboo won't last long.

Even me, who had enough tolerance, was wielding her while taking considerable damage.

[But hold on for a bit.]

Until then, I'll take care of everything.

*

The space is collapsing.

I could feel it even in the storm of the heat wave caused by the nuclear chain reaction.

[Are you alive?]

[Barely!]

I also thought that the space suddenly collapsed due to the death of Ahbooboo.

[Because I'm dying, it seems like the space is collapsing!]

It was right that I turned over.

Damn it.

I just need to kill some more.

Keughh!

I thought, sticking Seregia into the neck of the Ruler, who was making a thin scream.

Immediately after the first clash, the Rulers began to spread openly and flee.

If you were a god, you might not be able to easily choose the option of escape.

They were now in the form of those days, the monsters of the source

who valued only desire and survival.

There was no problem with chasing and killing them, but it took too much time to deal with them one by one, as they were struggling to run away and enduring it as long as possible.

Eventually, before the space collapsed, I realized that I could not kill all the gods of the Pantheon.

“That’s too bad.”

I escaped from the lightning storm and moved back to the sky of Thanatos.

This planet became a devastated field, but it was in quite a good condition compared to the place where I had just been.

[What. Are you feeling bad that you didn’t kill us all?]

Someone asked me as if they had heard my self-talk.

He was the God of Flexibility, a member of the Pantheon.

I was feeling a lot of intense anger on my skin.

The number of the Pantheon gods was greatly reduced.

At first glance, the number that had exceeded thousands had shrunk.

Now, I should call it not a war between the Pantheon and Hundred Gods Temple, but a war between Hundred Gods Pantheon and Hundred Gods Temple**.

It became very fair.

All of the gods of the Pantheon who survived in the midst of it were the powerful ones.

The gods of the Pantheon, who recovered their godhood and

recovered their physical damage in an instant, were sending me strong hostility.

[Take care of everything... Can't you?]

Ahbooboo asked anxiously.

Note:

*) Since lizards can intentionally break or sever their tail as a self-defense so they can escape from predators.

**) The Korean word used for Pantheon actually means 'Ten Thousand Gods Temple' like the 'Hundred Gods Temple', so this was to imply that LHJ decreased their number and evened out their numbers.

Chapter 376

Thanatos (6)

Puk. Puk.

Kirikiri pressed the floor hard with her feet.

Traces of digging remained throughout her garden.

Gods don't care about anything other than what they think is important.

Of course, they don't even consider the fine dirt floors they are trampling on.

It was after a long conversation.

There were close to one hundred gods gathered in one place to talk, so this much damage was natural.

“Hnnngg.”

Kirikiri sniffed hard and eagerly wandered around her garden, then she found a bunch of dirt and a wildflower uprooted.

Fortunately, neither the stem was broken nor the roots hurt.

Kirikiri planted the wildflowers back in the ground.

Kirikiri was an unusual god.

She was unusual in many ways, but also in that she was very interested in regeneration.

Instead of returning the garden to perfect condition herself, she waited and helped it recover on its own.

“It’s hard work.”

Beside Kirikiri, there was a person approaching gently.

Kirikiri was satisfied with the steps.

The other person didn’t care about weeds in the garden, but respected Kirikiri’s efforts to maintain the garden.

“Another tail is down.”

Kirikiri asked.

“I had to get out as quickly as possible.”

The God of Sacrifice replied.

As Kirikiri heard the answer, she thought the God of Sacrifice was like a lizard.

“It seems like it was a mistake to have the challenger in contact with the God of the Sky.”

The God of Sacrifice said she was worried that an unexpected variable was affecting her plans.

Kirikiri didn’t think so.

If it hadn’t been for the knowledgeable God of the Sky, there would have been no god to tackle, knowing that it was a trap.

“What about the other gods?”

“The God of Light is shining, the God of Regret is still regretting something, the God of Devotion is sad, and the God of Play is just fluttering.”

It was a routine reaction.

The actions of the gods were easy to predict.

They responded consistently in any situation.

The ancient gods of the Hundred Gods Temple, which existed before the cataclysm, were more prominent than those of the later era.

“...The God of Slowness?”

The God of Sacrifice seemed to be frightened when asked that one phrase, as her voice trembled.

It wasn't unusual to remember what the God of Slowness meant to them.

“The God of Balance is blocking it. It won't be long until the God of Slowness comes out.”

“If the God of Slowness emerges, it will collapse immediately.”

The God of Sacrifice said so, still anxious.

Kirikiri did not share the same worries as the God of Sacrifice.

The God of Slowness does not come out.

That is the world's greatest blessing.

The God of Slowness does not decide.

It doesn't move.

It just exists.

It exists in all spaces at the same time.

It exists in the past and in the future at the same time.

Therefore, the concept of movement or a change of state can not exist in the God of Slowness.

The God of Slowness is a god who can not see the world from a first-person perspective.

To the God of Slowness, the world is such a thing, although there once existed a self called the God of Slowness with a taste and a will.

It was nothing more than a thought that the universe accidentally gave birth to.

That thought has become the most powerful deity since the beginning.

And the gods who followed that god and the gods who opposed it made the world of today.

Kirikiri did not worry about the God of Slowness.

The God of Slowness will continue to exist as it is now.

“What are you going to do with the Thanatos side? Should I go back again?”

Kirikiri shook her head.

The God of Sacrifice had already sacrificed most of her sanctuary.

Now Thanatos needed a stronger deterrent.

“If all the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple die yet, you will be in trouble.”

“I will be in trouble when they die? Will the challenger die before that?”

Kirikiri shook his head again.

Challenger Lee Ho-jae was a god who was so fierce that he was obsessed with victory and tied it to causality.

“If there’s no chance, will you run away to avoid losing?”

Kirikiri shook her head again.

Perhaps because she sacrificed too many tails, the God of Sacrifice was showing a rather stupid appearance.

Kirikiri thought it was better off letting her rest.

In Lee Ho-jae’s causality, the result was not a victory.

It was the completion of the divine nature that weaves causality.

Processes and results did not always have to flow from the past to the future.

“The challenger doesn’t have to worry about it.”

Lee Ho-jae has already finished all preparations to achieve victory.

That’s why he could have acquired causality.

The only concern was the God of Order.

To the God of Order, who had already advanced to a realm Kirikiri was not aware of, she was unsure of how causality could have an effect on the God of Order.

Rather than worrying about Lee Ho-jae’s safety right now, the priority was to clear up Thanatos’ situation.

It needs strong power.

To disperse the gods of the Pantheon and Lee Ho-jae, the usual way will not work.

You will need a very extreme method.

Enough to even dare to face it.

There is only one god that is suitable.

A god who is eagerly waiting to do something for himself.

The hottest, shiniest god in the Hundred Gods Temple.

“Hngg... I hate it.”

Kirikiri raised her hand and pulled her ears down, covering her face.

The other person was a god she really didn't want to meet.

It was wisest not to be associated with that god, but she needed the power of that god right away.

Kirikiri was upset, humming alone in the fields that had been scattered up.

*

[Can you handle it?]

“Nearly.”

Ahbooboo asked anxiously.

It was worrisome.

Because the other side they were facing was the gods of the Pantheon.

Although they were reduced to a number of a few hundred and looked like defeated soldiers, in reality it was not like that at all.

In the virtual world of Ahbooboo, I fired a wide range attack to reduce

their numbers as much as possible.

Thanks to this, I was able to drastically reduce their numbers as I wanted, but their real power remained.

The God of Hope praised them for not being pushed back at all compared to the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple.

In fact, the powerful people who ruled most of the universe remained intact.

When it comes to this, I feel as if I am inspecting defective products.

I think I only did good things for others.

Of course, the gods of the Pantheon seemed to never think so much.

That was another problem.

The gods were basically arrogant and indolent.

It was natural.

Because they were gods.

Because I was a person who proved some of the laws of the world.

And the characteristics of those gods gave me great confidence.

When we had equal skills, it was obvious that I didn't even have to see the odds between a person who flutters and a person who runs desperately.

Most of the gods I dealt with were the former, and I was always the latter.

However, the gods of the Pantheon now seemed to have a lot of malice.

It was even after they were summoned to the virtual world of Ahbooboo and experienced the wildness of when they were a monster.

During the battle, there was a possibility of showing recklessness that would never be seen normally.

[Don't be pretentious, why don't you just run away?]

Soon Grandmother and the giants came.

I only had to hold on until then.

A meteor shower was pouring from space.

Along with that, various attacks were flying from all directions to prevent my movement.

I had to get closer and move before all the escape routes were blocked.

I was able to penetrate deeply into the gods of the Pantheon.

It was much better to dig into the middle of them than to confront the gods of the Pantheon.

Of course, that didn't mean it was safe.

[I remember we had an agreement!]

The God of Flexibility screamed and swung his huge arm.

It was an arm that looked as if it were fluffy like a liquid.

At first glance, it was poison or something like that.

It wasn't one with which my poison tolerance worked.

It was a thing made with unique divine power.

“That agreement is broken!”

Evading the arm of the God of Flexibility, I threw Seregia at their enormous body.

“Because you guys hurt my stiff friend!”

[Kaak!]

Seregia was accurately embedded in the body of the God of Flexibility.

Compared to their enormous body, it was almost as if she was a small thorn, but the effect was fatal.

Until the giants arrived, I was confident in my ability to hold on.

I had confidence in my skills, but it was also because of Seregia’s ability which was specialized against the gods.

“Zit Pop.”

F*** you, you bastard.

Actually, I didn’t like it before.

This is the second time we met, but I continued to unfold Zit Pop and swore inwardly at the God of Flexibility.

Zit Pop was harmful while the divine power was suppressed.

I rushed to finish the God of Flexibility, who couldn’t even get out of the range of Zit Pop.

Then something huge fell over my head.

The impact made me fall toward the ground.

The barriers spread out on the ground were broken like a sheet of

paper, and I fell on the ground of Thanatos, which had become a large field of dust.

Looking around, I could understand the situation.

The gods of the Pantheon were just focusing their attacks on me, who was close to the God of Flexibility.

It seems that they didn't even care about the health of their colleague, the God of Flexibility.

It's too harsh.

The God of Flexibility died instantly in a series of attacks while his divine power was restrained, and their huge body scattered around the ground did not move even after it was shattered.

And.

Meteor showers struck exactly where I was.

I couldn't properly prepare for defense or avoid their position.

It was perfect timing without even an inch of error.

Damn, is there a god who can foresee short-term to the future?

"Seregia!"

Seregia, buried in the remains of the God of Flexibility, returned to my hands.

I just held on.

Bang bang bang!

In the endless falling of the meteor shower, I repeatedly bounced back and forth while floating in the air.

After a while, my body fell to the ground again to see if the meteor shower had stopped.

It was a long distance from the place where the meteor shower hit.

In the distance, near the horizon, a huge tsunami caused by the meteor shower was visible, so I flew quite far.

Before even knowing the exact location, the Gods of the Pantheon came down to the ground and rushed again.

The Gods of the Pantheon were seen with their huge bodies shortened.

Yes, it's wise to do that.

Because the smaller the target, the harder it is to stab Seregia into them.

Decreased weight does not mean that the gods' abilities decreased.

Usually, even if the gods died soon, they maintained their enormous form, but the gods of the Pantheon seemed to be so full of malice that they didn't even care about pride.

However, I was confident in my interpersonal skills.

Far away, a tsunami is approaching.

Soon this battlefield will be swept away by water.

Sounds fun!

This mud fight was really to my taste.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

Maybe I was feeling too overwhelmed, I screamed at myself.

Whether it was a signal or not, the gods of the Pantheon ran back.

Reminiscent of a game of barrage, several Pantheon gods moved freely and attempted close-quarter combat with me in the midst of long-range attacks that flew in the blindspot of my vision.

Somehow they are working together.

Or maybe someone is commanding them.

All attacks could not be avoided.

The sharp nails of a nearby Pantheon god flew toward the side of my face.

Turning my head and avoiding the hand, I further narrowed the distance.

I leaped to the nearest Pantheon god.

My friend, I don't know if you've ever been attacked by this kind of attack.

At the same time, I made Seregia turn into a dagger and stabbed the opponent's shoulder.

Long-ranged attacks targeting me hit.

I endured this time and time again.

However, the Pantheon god, whose divine power was suppressed by being stabbed by Seregia, could not withstand the aftermath.

[Kyaaa.....]

Surprisingly, the sound that the god made when it died was no different than when a human being was struck and killed.

After killing one, I saw another rushing from the front.

I guess it was aiming at my gap that was hit by attacks consecutively.

It is never a good judgment to hit head-on.

I ran face to face at the rushing Pantheon god, and kicked it away.

The kicked god suddenly crashed into the tsunami wave that was just around the corner.

A huge ripple broke out and the tsunami cracked.

And a huge wave poured over the battlefield.

Shaaa.

The gods of the Pantheon pushed the water away by force.

In an instant, a huge colosseum made of water walls was created.

A huge shadow cast into the Colosseum.

The huge ice giant, who completely obscured the sun's rays, said.

“Is it fashionable to get smaller?”

Grandmother, spitting out a murmur, struck her fist down towards the Colosseum of Water.

The water wall that had been filling the area was pushed away by the shock wave.

“King, it's a little disappointing that you were enjoying yourself without us.”

Suddenly, Grandmother, who had changed into a small form like the gods of the Pantheon, complained.

Starting with Grandmother, new things were added one after another.

500 giants under Grandmother.

Reinforcements arrived.

The gods of the Pantheon stopped attacking whether they were surprised by the sudden appearance of giants or whether they needed to talk among themselves.

I don't care.

“King, what should I do?”

“Annihilate. Here, kill all named gods and do not miss any.”

I didn't even want to think any more about the Hundred Gods Temple or what Kirikiri was trying to gain from this war.

I have to end this damn war here with my own hands.

The God of Hope was showing abnormal symptoms of fear of the aftermath of the war.

But contrary to those worries, the war ended today without any further escalation.

And I won this time too.

Chapter 377

Thanatos (7)

The giants confronted it calmly.

While they were dealing with the Pantheon gods, I was a little behind.

It was not because of a lack of strength, but because of the difference in our roles.

In order to end the war, they should not be allowed to flee.

While I was a little far away, I assisted the giants, while interfering with the Pantheon gods trying to open the portal and flee from Thanatos.

It was my battle with the Pantheon gods who tried to connect the dimensional passages in the midst of a frantic battle against the giants, and I was going all out to sabotage them.

Until now, I had not allowed a single escapee and it was well blocked.

Watching the battle from a distance, I learnt one thing.

The Pantheon gods are not good at group battles.

Their abilities are outstanding.

Wielding all sorts of miracles, they showed really ridiculous appearances.

Some of those abilities have also been applied because of cooperation.

They predicted our behavior using short-term foresight, and showed

the possibility that several gods could move like one body with the ability of telepathy.

But that is the limit.

They have no understanding of groups.

Although one is able to lead, they feel uncomfortable being part of the group and fulfilling said role.

It was natural when I thought about it.

These are the monsters who ate everything visible to them to gain their godhood.

After becoming a god, they wouldn't have had to fight with strength.

This may be the first battle some of them experienced since becoming a god.

It would be unreasonable for them to cooperate when they were a group of over a hundred.

In addition, there was a deep-rooted individualism peculiar to the gods.

In order to suffer less damage to themselves, they were willing to endure the collapse and the death of their colleagues.

It may not even be a risk for them.

They just did what was natural for them.

They are the gods who will be reluctant to put their own safety and comfort on the same scale as others.

On the other hand, the giants moved systematically.

Maintaining the display that I was used to, through long and repeated

training.

They moved according to a clear command system.

It was a battle between two sides that showed excellent ability, but one had an almost perfect organizational power while another was stubborn.

It wasn't an overwhelming battle, but the giants were chasing them step by step without losing their control.

As time passed, the giants' initiative only grew.

Now it was looking more like a kind of mass hunting rather than a battle.

They were putting together the Pantheon gods who were just looking for a chance to escape, and reducing their numbers one by one without taking any damage.

It was then.

[Time Confinement]

Suddenly, a power was used.

The battle was in progress.

The flames fired out in all directions, and the giants calmly defended.

I could see the scattering flames get blocked by the defense.

This power of time confinement, presented by the God of Slowness, is the power to slow down only my time apart from the time in the universe.

In a world that was so slow, I felt puzzled.

I didn't use the power.

No, although what I used is correct.

There was no intention to use it.

It wasn't a good sign.

The power of time confinement had to be used.

Because of the danger I didn't even notice.

The problem was I couldn't find the danger.

The battle was one-sided.

Damn it.

What the hell is coming?

While puzzled, I was preparing for an emergency.

And soon the cause could be found.

Far away.

From very far away, a crack in space occurred.

It was a distance that you would never notice if you didn't foresee that there would be some danger due to the sudden triggering of time containment.

It was a crack that occurred in the vicinity of a star visible from Thanatos, beyond normal range of vision.

It was a very small thing that jumped out of the crack.

Something just the size of a human being moved actively.

It was moving at such a fast pace that I forgot that I was looking at it

in the slowness of time.

When I looked closely, it really had limbs like a human.

God of Light.

There was no basis, but I thought so.

I couldn't think of any other answers.

That was absolutely the God of Light.

The God of Light moved busily, perhaps excitedly.

It also looked similar to a human dancing.

The God of Light suddenly stopped and raised his arm flashingly.

And it burst out.

Light.

And it was light.

I tried to confirm this sudden phenomenon through feelings rather than sight, but the light with strong divine power drove everything away.

When the spreading light touched the edge of Thanatos, a voice was finally heard.

[Shine!!]

And everything was colored with light.

* * *

I couldn't see.

I couldn't even feel.

As if you were trapped in a fantasy world made of only light.

All sensations felt from the outside were paralyzed.

It felt like I was being separated from the world.

The surprise was inevitable.

I didn't expect to experience this kind of thing after becoming a god.

If I hadn't been through the 13th floor in the Tutorial.

Had I not been able to overcome the ordeal there, the time I could not move in surprise would have been longer.

The whole world was engulfed by the power of the God of Light.

I also aggressively used the expansion of my divine power through Zit Pop, but it was very difficult for me to get it to hit.

It was difficult to deal with.

In a hurry, I stretched out my hands.

Even that wasn't easy because of the power of the God of Light.

With the light, I pushed away the divine power of the God of Light that was thickly blocking, and reached out my hands toward the giants.

I felt a sensation at my fingertips.

I dragged them to me.

I opened up my inner space and threw them into the subspace.

Whoo-

Rather than an explosion sound, it was a grotesque sound as if the world was screaming low.

Shuddering, I also went into the subspace.

I fled from a world made of only light to a world made of only darkness.

* * *

All the giants were safe.

This was because after the explosion of light, the giants did not move and remained still.

It seems that they couldn't move because they were overwhelmed by the pouring power rather than believing I would save them.

Thanks to my complete grasp of their location, I was able to evacuate everyone without leaving any behind.

[Five hundred including me. All are safe. There is also a friend from your hometown here.]

Grandmother confirmed their safety.

It was a relief.

It would be better not to go outside right now and stay here.

Now Thanatos is a hell surrounded by light.

When we go out, we will explode together.

[King, where are you?]

I looked around.

I was annoyed by the sloppy darkness.

When I touched it with a sore cheek, a wet, sticky black moisture appeared.

I fell in a bad place.

It wouldn't be good to go back to the giants right now.

"Why were you sitting here?"

I asked the buzzing fly.

I can't believe I found this place in this big subspace.

It is a place where all kinds of bad feelings have been thrown out, unable to endure helplessness on the 61st floor.

It was a huge garbage dump.

I would say it was my dark history memorial.

[Amazing. You turned yourself into a subspace. Built a mental world, coordinated it, and used it as a physical space. Maybe you were the first to develop something like this.]

The God of Hope said nothing else.

There are also many surprises.

Thinking of the time I was trapped on the 61st floor and the things I tried to do there.

These were achievements to be achieved.

"That sounds like a good place to be."

The God of Hope seemed familiar with this place.

It also looked good on him.

A trash can that collects all kinds of bad feelings.

It might be a good environment for the God of Hope.

[Is that sarcastic?]

No. How did you know?

I was thinking inside myself!

[Because it is inside you.]

Why are you so serious and trying to explain?

It's not funny.

So with me too.

The feelings of the God of Hope were flowing into me.

He seemed to be quite assimilated with this space.

The God of Hope was afraid.

"I should have tried a conversation here earlier."

I had a lot of questions.

The grotesque irrationality of this war.

The sudden appearance of the God of Light and his incomprehensible actions.

And.

“I have to listen now. If you don’t say anything, even with your own strength. Tell me. What the hell are you so afraid of?”

The fear of the God of Hope.

Obviously, the God of Hope was reacting abnormally.

The God of Hope welcomed the war and was not opposed to it.

[It’s just reasonable anxiety.]

What are you talking about?

The God of Hope had told me little about war.

There was a war discussion.

But at one point, he suddenly felt terrified and wanted to run away.

[One thing was a problem.]

“What.”

[There is no limit to this war. This is a war in which all the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple participated.]

Before asking again what he meant, the God of Hope began explaining.

[I highly value the Pantheon. If you compare their forces with the Hundred Gods Temple, it’s no match. They themselves are doing the war, but they are not warriors in the first place, but kings. When they mobilize all their capacities, it means that all civilizations in this universe join forces.]

Including both the deities and the non-deities, the God of Hope added.

[Of course, the Hundred Gods Temple is also strong. If the God of Balance and the God of Sky work together, we can guarantee victory. If duel and death go hand in hand, we can guarantee immortality.]

[But if it is a war in which all the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple participate, the story is different. The Hundred Gods Temple itself is not a problem. Some of the gods there are a problem. Some of the ancient gods that existed long before the Cataclysm are not gods capable of war.]

War is impossible.

Doesn't that mean they're harmless?

[The opposite. Haven't you just seen it?]

[The God of Slowness, the God of Light, the God of Devotion, these gods will end everything by themselves. The word war doesn't hold water.]

[This is the intention of the Hundred Gods Temple. They were not interested in disputes or initiatives. From the beginning, they had thought of getting rid of Thanatos by burning it. Like all other planets.]

“...What?”

[The only goal of this war is destruction.]

What is this bullshit again?

[Then do you think that the God of Light came here for war?]

He didn't.

Instead of attacking the gods in the war, the God of Light launched a rampage against the world.

There was a prediction like so.

I thought the purpose of this war was to weaken the God of Order.

The Hundred Gods Temple are out of the limits of the system by themselves, which means that the power of the God of Order is weakened.

[It's soft. It's a soft guess. What they're aiming for isn't confusing the system. They are intending to erase the root of the divine power.]

“...Are you sure?”

[I'm sure.]

I had to ask again.

Because I knew the basis of the divine power and what cancelling it would mean.

“How can you be sure of that?”

[Because it has already happened once before. I remember it clearly because it happened when I was just reborn as a god. When the God of Slowness was approaching transcendence. The God of Adventure destroyed all civilizations in the universe, weakening the gods who followed the God of Slowness.]

* * *

[You are here again]

Said the God of Slowness.

Kirikiri was able to smile triumphantly in front of the voice.

“I didn't come to see you today.”

The God of Slowness smiled widely.

[Yess. I guess so.]

“Weally! (Really!)”

Kirikiri shouted and protested, but the God of Slowness just laughed.

The God of Slowness did not believe her words.

“Hmph!”

Kirikiri ignored the God of Slowness and prepared to open the door.

All the gods’ of the Hundred Gods Temple rooms have been prepared.

The same was true of the room of the God of Slowness.

However, the room of the God of Slowness was special.

It was where the war started.

It was also the reason for the existence of the Hundred Gods Temple.

The entrance and exit of the Hundred Gods Temple.

Kirikiri opened the door to the world.

She was not talking to the God of Slowness near the door as usual.

Kirikiri had someone to meet at a distance from the door.

[It’s been a long time since you’ve been in the world.]

It’s been a long time.

Does the God of Slowness have such a concept?

[I said it according to your standards.]

Kirikiri took a deep breath and stepped into the door.

A little later, she shut the door behind her back.

Once again, the voice of the God of Slowness reached her, as she flew towards her destination with her small hands clenched.

[I hope this will be a fun adventure.]

Chapter 378

Thanatos (8)

This is the story of when I was just born.

The war was prolonged.

The sides of the war had turned.

There were more and more gods who wanted to be one with the great universe.

The opponents began to decline.

And the God of Adventure made a decision.

[That's what happened at the end of the cataclysm. Without some gods who remember the past, it might have been called the Genesis, not the Cataclysm. Everything that existed before that was destroyed.]

There was an existence that suddenly came to mind.

The God of Horror.

That is the god I met when pursuing the God of Hope.

He knew a lot of things, and thanks to him, I was able to collect miscellaneous information.

The God of Horror also recognized Kirikiri, who poked her face out from the quest window.

[He is a god who knows the story of a long time ago. Even those symbolic metaphors that have only been handed down through songs. I don't know

the exact history.]

The destruction of the world.

I never thought about it.

So when the God of Hope first told the story, I thought it was absurd.

I thought that he must be worrying excessively because of the anxiety that he has been showing.

However, the God of Hope gave evidence that it had already happened once before.

“How similar is the situation to that time?”

[The God of Slowness only had a will, but he did not move. In fact, the war was actually a war between its followers and their opponents. The God of Adventure attacked the gods by destroying all civilizations. Killed all those gods, and sealed the God of Slowness that they were admiring.]

The elimination of the fundamental faith.

Destroy the sources of faith that exist at the bottom of the pyramid, and attack the gods above it.

He even went up in turn and sealed the God of Slowness.

[Now that is the God of Order. Although not admired, numerous gods are subordinate to the system and devote their faith to order. Same situation.]

Kill all the gods who are affected by the order of the system, and all the believers who are affected by those gods.

Thus, weakening the power of the God of Order.

It was easy to understand.

It was an unacceptable method.

But I couldn't ignore it.

The gods have continuity in all their actions and judgments.

If they were normal people, they could use a different method each time, and go over it.

The existence of gods, they must make the same judgment in the same situations.

The God of Adventure is not an exception.

[Now let me run away. It's clear they'll come for me.]

I guess so.

If they really intend to destroy the world to weaken the God of Order.

It was unlikely that the God of Hope, the apostle of the God of Order, would be left alone.

[If you don't believe me, look outside.]

The God of Hope said so.

*

[King, are you alright?]

I heard Grandmother's voice.

She seemed to have noticed me coming out.

"It's okay. I'll go back to Earth and take you out later. Wait there."

There was no need to get them out of here right now.

Rather, it was better not to do so.

[What happened to the battle? It's our victory.]

Grandmother's last words weren't asking a question.

As expected, it was more of an assertion.

That's how much Grandmother believed in our victory.

Like me.

I do not know.

In the clash with the Pantheon, we surely won.

The battle ended, however, the winner was us.

In our outnumbered circumstances, we have achieved overwhelming records.

However... I'm not sure either.

It wasn't victory or defeat.

The results weren't even postponed.

As I came back, Thanatos was like a hell of light.

If there is only one difference from my expectations.

It was just that it was worse than I expected.

Everything turned into light.

Thanatos was reconciled with the light and was extinguished by it.

In the distance, I saw the satellite colonies of Thanatos.

Looking at what was happening on the satellite, I was able to guess

exactly what was happening in Thanatos.

The stone that was rolling on the side of the road suddenly started to shine.

It emitted intense light outside, and soon exploded as if it couldn't stand the light.

The body of the person sleeping in the bed began to glow.

Explode.

Light flew out of the dull concrete wall.

Explode.

Everything was flashing and exploding again.

That will be the beginning.

Again, I turned my gaze to Thanatos.

Light was coming up from the ground.

From the asphalt floor, from the dirt floor, and even from the bottom of rivers, lakes, and seas, a strong light was emanating.

The planet of Thanatos was shining.

Like a natural occurrence, this planet will also explode.

The death of a star.

Is there a more effective way to annihilate living things?

...like this?

Do they intend to destroy the world like this?

Some of the Pantheon gods appear to have fled.

A dimensional passage was created that did not exist before I escaped to the subspace

The ability of the God of Light, which was made into a bomb that self-destructed everything in the world, was certainly great, but it was a method that could not be tried against the gods.

Because the divinity of the other gods cannot be ignored.

In a world where everything explodes, the gods will also suffer damage, but at least they would not explode themselves.

Therefore, it meant that the attack of the God of Light was not against the Pantheon gods from the beginning, but against the planet Thanatos and the survivors.

[Isn't that what I said?]

It was just as the God of Hope speculated.

The Pantheon gods were defeated and fled.

Probably scattered to their holy land.

The war is not over.

The gods of the Hundred Gods Temple were able to navigate the entire universe, avoiding system constraints, in the name of war against the Pantheon.

It would be possible to destroy the world with the excuse of attacking the forces of the Pantheon that occupy most of the universe.

As the God of Hope said, the reason why the God of Light and the God of Sacrifice appeared here was not to deal with the gods of the Pantheon, but to scatter them apart.

I looked at the universe in the distance.

The place where the God of Light was, was surrounded by light from a strong explosion.

Thanatos was tough, but it wasn't a match to that.

[Zit Pop!]

[Zit Pop!]

The God of Light was raging with Zit Pops.

The heatwave kept its round shape and spread in all directions.

That technique is very difficult to keep round.

Because it uses friction of force, it was common for the spraying to be more to one side rather than an even circle.

However, the God of Light was showing a Zit Pop, which was close to the perfect prototype.

I could see that he didn't practice and study it just once or twice.

It wasn't as perfect as mine.

[Zit Pop!]

As if boasting, the God of Light was showing the same technique over and over again.

It was clearly to show me.

There was no one who could see that other than me.

The gods of the Pantheon have fled, and all of the humans in Thanatos have become ashes or are in the process of becoming bombs.

[Zit Pop!]

It looked like a flower of fire blooming in outer space.

Like a round and colorful red chrysanthemum.

[Zit-Pop!]

It was artistic.

I was able to understand because I knew the effort and agony necessary to bring out that form.

But it didn't look beautiful.

[Don't do that. Run away.]

The God of Hope whispered.

[Please.]

I ignored that eagerness.

Holding Seregia in my hand, I flew toward the God of Light.

There were still survivors left on the satellite planet of Thanatos.

They too were turning into bio-bombs, but they didn't know there might be a way to save them.

There was no way for me, but the God of Light may have it.

With that thought, I flew toward the God of Light.

Until I met their two eyes.

“Hi?”

They were clearly flying at a fast pace.

In the meantime, our faces appeared close enough to touch each other's nose tips, and I tried to pull back.

But my body didn't move.

Two large round eyes filled my field of view.

Their eyes were unnatural and heterogeneous, as if a child had painted black crayons on a drawing paper.

"Hihing, you must have been surprised."

The eyes slowly moved away.

Only then could I recognize the owner of the eyes.

Kirikiri.

"It's been a long time. Aren't you upset that I didn't contact you?"

*

I couldn't understand.

Given the speed at which I was moving, it was impossible to stop without any reaction.

And the fact that Kirikiri could appear in front of me without any warning.

"Don't think it's too weird. It just felt like I appeared suddenly because I've stopped you for four hours."

That was even stranger.

You got involved in my time?

It was impossible.

It wasn't a matter of Kirikiri's ability.

I was a god.

It was a confirmed fact.

No god could intervene in the realm of another.

There was one thing that came to mind.

Guards were stopped by a time containment in the shrine of the sage who I visited in the realm of the God of the Sky.

The divine power that ignores other's divine power.

There was only one hypothesis that I could think of.

'The God of Slowness.'

Kirikiri read my thoughts and replied.

"Cowwect. I'm using it little by little."

Kirikiri said refreshingly.

Then she showed me the stone she held in her hand.

"Hihing."

It was strangely familiar, but I couldn't figure out what that stone was.

Kirikiri took turns looking at the direction I was moving in and said to me.

"It's not so good to face the God of Light. As I said before, the God of Light is as irrelevant as possible."

Well.

Now Kirikiri felt more dangerous than the God of Light.

The God of Light was very excited that it was causing a series of explosions.

Do you think that I approached so I could watch the explosions up close?

I felt the excitement of the God of Light in the bursting frantic explosions.

However, the God of Light did not care about Kirikiri's existence.

Even though she was blocking my view between the God of Light and the explosions.

There was no change in Kirikiri's appearance.

"I'm sorry, but I want you to wait for a while like this. If you interfere more than this, I'll be in trouble too."

Kirikiri said in a cautious voice, as if asking a really sorry favor.

It was polite for a request to completely suppress the opponent's movement.

My body was completely overpowered, so I had to communicate my intentions through thoughts.

It was very uncomfortable to be able to read my thoughts, but sometimes it was convenient.

"Yes, I will destroy it all. To stop the God of Order."

Kirikiri answered my question calmly.

I was rather fed up with the calmness.

“It’s an unavoidable choice.”

‘No, it’s not.’

I denied it.

If I were in her position, would I have made the same choices as her?

I won’t.

“You speak like the God of the Sky. The God of the Sky said that it is a choice that neither side can be chosen. But I have no intention of putting off my choice and destroying the world.”

It has always been like that.

The God of Adventure has always valued the process.

So there was a time when I thought that the God of Adventure was a god who didn’t care much about the outcome if the process was sufficient.

However, considering how obsessively the gods are bound to their divinity, I can see how ambiguous the word “important” is.

The process was more or less a matter of preference.

Even in retrospect, the God of Adventure always respected and cheered me on whenever I made a painful choice.

Kirikiri really intended to destroy the world.

‘It would be better for the God of Order to become a transcendent god than for the world to perish.’

The perished world and the sanctified world of the God of Order.

It was obvious which side was better.

In the latter, survival is viable

“It’s an illusion. The world where a transcendent god exists is not a world governed by some divine law. In that world, there is only the will of the transcendent god.”

Kirikiri said.

“Both sides are scheduled for destruction. So I just chose to destroy it. At least so that we can rebuild the world.”

Kirikiri curled up her little body, speaking in a similarly small voice.

Chapter 379

Choice (1)

“You don’t seem convinced.”

Kirikiri scratched her ear.

Then she reached out and grabbed my hand and said.

“Shall we move first? This doesn’t seem like a good place to chat.”

I was moved by Kirikiri without a chance to speak my mind.

The red sky and the burning smell pricked my nose.

For a moment, I thought I had come down to the ground again.

But soon, I could see that I had moved to a completely different dimension from where I was.

I looked around.

Before I knew it, my body was suddenly free from the power of the God of Slowness.

I could move freely.

“Even here, it’s not a very good place to talk.”

I pressed the floor hard with my feet.

I didn’t give that much strength, but blood came up, squirming from the floor.

It was disgusting.

It felt like stepping on a body, not on the ground.

Kirikiri picked up a piece of wood from somewhere and squatted on it.

It seemed like she didn't want to put her feet on the ground.

I was puzzled.

It looked like a kind of virtual world.

Similar to what was created by the God of the Sky.

But what an unpleasant place for a conversation.

I didn't understand.

Kirikiri didn't say anything.

I kept looking around.

I could feel a strange feeling of déjà vu.

The horizon seen from the border between the red sky and the red earth was familiar.

Kirikiri explained.

"It's my hometown."

My disgust has doubled.

I took a peek and lifted my feet.

Sticky blood sticking to the soles of my shoes crept.

"Maybe the dirt under your feet is the corpse of my family, which has

been finely ground.”

If your goal was to make me feel upset, I want to tell you that it is extremely effective.

But the words didn’t come out quickly.

Kirikiri, who smiled casually when talking about the destruction of the world or anything, looked solemn.

Regret and distress were evident in her face, muttering by herself.

Kirikiri sometimes had a serious face, but I was a bit surprised because she never showed such a dark appearance.

A little later, I noticed the source of this sense of déjà vu.

This was a place I had been to before.

Several times.

It was a very different landscape, so I couldn’t immediately notice it.

Whenever I cleared the Tutorial, I encountered Kirikiri’s Garden.

It was always the place where she was hopping and rolling around.

“What happened here?”

This place was weird.

The ground spews out blood every time it is pressed, just like a wet sponge.

Even if a war breaks out, Earth is not drowned in blood in this way.

Without killing thousands of people first.

“Destruction. The stupid being who wanted to be part of the God of Slowness wanted to gain a greater godhood through human offerings. She ate all of the land she had ruled, but in the end, when there was no one left to worship her, she lost even her own godhood..... Such a stupid thing happened.”

...It was a crazy story.

“Because there weren’t many gods back then. Most of them were mighty ancient gods and guardians who ruled small areas or tribes. It was when the gods themselves were ignorant of godhood.”

A god who slaughtered their followers.

It was a story that I experienced several times in the Tutorial.

Just thinking about it again caused me to feel reluctant and disgusted.

It wasn’t because it was simply cruel and unfortunate.

I felt displeasure when I witnessed the taboos of what shouldn’t be done and what shouldn’t happen.

“So what’s the reason for bringing me here?”

“...I want you to know that I’m not just talking about it. I chose it not because I was belittling life, but because I really had to.”

I have been with Kirikiri for a long time.

I don’t know how sincerely she treated me, but I think I know her to some degree.

Unlike other gods who think that her existence, let alone the lives of others, are rats on the streets, Kirikiri is a god who values her relationship with others.

She was the most similar to the God of the Sky, to put it bluntly.

She cared about the challengers, and even the beings in the Tutorial.

I could understand just how special that is, now that I know she is a god and what kind of being she is.

When I finished the first floor of the Tutorial and asked about the people who died there, I remembered the sorry face that Kirikiri showed.

So it was more shocking.

She is casually speaking of the destruction of the world.

“Really, I think it’s better to destroy the world once.”

It was still a dark face, but Kirikiri said it clearly.

I guess.

Although she may be sorry for the deaths of the challengers, she does not block the summons of the Tutorial.

“Are you sure?”

Kirikiri nodded her head.

“I’m sure. It is better for the world to perish than for the God of Order to become a transcendent god.”

I thought a world would unfold, perfectly aligned with the will of the God of Order.

That’s why people will be like cogs that disappear after living a perfectly structured life like a machine.

I told Kirikiri my guess.

“In a world where the will of the transcendent god dwells, you would not think that there is anything else left besides that will. Perfect

order will force a world of perfect nothingness.”

Either way, it means destruction.

Things really turned out to be the worst.

“...You should have made a good design in the first place.”

I heard that the God of Order and the system were artificially-designed gods.

This isn't a runaway Skynet, but it should have been designed to prevent such an accident from occurring in the first place.

“...The God of Order is well designed, just.....”

“Just, what.”

“It was a problem that so many more gods were born than expected.”

Excessively many gods came under the system, and as a result, the power of the God of Order exceeded the expected range?

“Because I didn't know that when I spread the power of the God of Slowness all over the world, it would come together so easily.”

Kirikiri mumbled and said to herself.

Listening to her excuses, I could recall what the scattered power of the God of Slowness meant.

“The source.”

“Right.”

The source, oddly enough, originated from ordinary people.

Even on the planet itself.

And when faced with a continental or tribal crisis, the power is concentrated on a hero.

Heroes become monsters because they can't handle the power, and those who came out of Thanatos beat the monsters that endlessly accumulated power and are turned into gods.

In the end, the story of the source was revealed.

The rapid increase of the gods from rulers, and the creation of a Tutorial in the name of protecting the realm from such gods.

I roughly understood the situation.

“It wasn't like that from the beginning. However.....”

“We'll talk about that later.”

I stopped Kirikiri from trying to explain in detail.

There was a lot to talk about before that.

“Is there any way to stop the God of Order?”

I recalled when the God of Order appeared in the realm of the God of the Sky.

The attacks of the giants, as well as the struggles of the God of the Sky, had no effect on the God of Order.

There was no way to do anything when attacks did not even touch it.

“There is.”

“How? I couldn't even touch it like an illusion.”

“There is.”

Kirikiri repeatedly answered my question.

“...So how?”

“You.”

“What?”

“You can touch the God of Order. You could attack it.”

I couldn't.

Like the giants, I tried to attack the God of Order.

And my attacks did not reach the God of Order.

“Because back then, you were outside the rules. The God of Order was preventing the God of the Sky from breaking the rules. You had nothing to do with the God of Order. So you wouldn't have reached it.”

“Is it possible now?”

“If you follow the rules of the God of Order as a challenger.”

* * *

...challenger.

Yes, that damn challenger.

I always wondered why we were called challengers.

At first, I thought it meant challenging an ordeal.

It was an unnatural title when I recall that the place of the trial was a tutorial.

If the purpose was to cultivate an apostle of the gods through a tutorial, it would be right to give a title such as an apprentice or a trainee rather than a challenger.

“In the end, that was the final goal of the Tutorial.”

“Hmm. There was also the purpose of nurturing the apostles of the gods and producing superhumans who would protect the planet by themselves, but the goal was to eventually gather the apostles and to challenge the God of Order.”

That way is too convenient.

The way to stop the transcendental god is to grow and stop the mortals?

“Because the gods couldn’t come forward directly. The same goes for those underlings. Eventually, I had to raise a new one. Originally, I was thinking of gathering more challengers. But because the God of Order has grown faster than I expected, and above all else, you appeared.”

She wasn’t able to clear the Tutorial well, and at the last minute I appeared, who grew up to occupy part of the Tutorial.

“So when you asked to stop the Tutorial, I was able to feel free to do so because the challenger was ready.”

“What are the odds?”

“None. Right now.”

The immediate answer came back.

“To increase the odds.....”

Destroying the world?

The scale of the story was enormous.

To the point of absurdity.

“I can’t help it. Now is your last chance. The God of Order has become too powerful, and there are too few challengers ready.”

Kirikiri spread her two fingers.

“There are two options. Both are destined for destruction, but in one the odds for a future go hand in hand.”

“There is one more.”

There is one option that Kirikiri did not mention.

Maybe it was something I wouldn’t have even thought of.

“You just have to win without destroying the world.”

After all, the destruction of the world is to increase the odds.

But if I could overcome it without destroying the world and weakening the God of Order.

The destruction of the world eventually becomes meaningless.

“It’s impossible. It’s arrogance.”

Kirikiri, who was squatting, got up from her seat and looked straight into my eyes.

Standing on the bloody ground, we were moved back to the Thanatos area.

My body didn’t move again.

I couldn’t even make a sound by moving my lips.

“You being unable to escape from the power of the God of Slowness

right now is proof. You can't resist that power, and there's no chance of winning by challenging the God of Order that is not yet weakened."

Kirikiri looked at me, who couldn't move, with rather sad eyes.

And whispered.

"I believe you will understand. Because the most important thing for you is the result. It's a painful process, but I can't help it because it is to achieve the results."

Kirikiri, who talked about it, grew farther and farther away from me.

"Wait here. By the time you're released, the painful process will all be over. Then you just have to focus on your goals."

Kirikiri, who left with those last words, went away and disappeared again.

* * *

Time confinement.

Apart from the world, it slows down the time flowing through me.

As a result, you experience a world that is almost still, and your mind experiences a long time during a moment.

It was a useful ability for training and for judgment and concentration during battle.

However, Kirikiri transformed this ability and used it on others.

As a prison of time disconnected from the world.

Kirikiri was right.

In the power of the God of Slowness, I couldn't lift a single finger, so I wouldn't be able to win against the God of Order who was

approaching transcendence.

That said, I didn't want to wait for the world to perish, just trapped like this.

No, I couldn't.

My definition of victory is complex.

As a result, even if I achieved victory, if I destroyed the world in the process.

Could I accept the result of that victory?

I felt dizzy.

The God of Light, which had not cared, was approaching.

It was dazzling and annoying just to get closer.

When it came too close to me, it looked like a small human.

I couldn't know exactly because it was painful to look straight ahead.

The God of Light, approaching almost right around the corner, clapped.

Flash.

Every time he clapped, the light scattered loudly.

What are you doing, this crazy guy?

The God of Light lifted his finger and tried to poke me when he approached me and I didn't respond.

Slowly his fingers approached.

A powerful beam of light was swaying around the finger made of light.

It all seemed to be slow in the confinement of time.

Slowly, slowly, his fingers came in front of my face.

It was just before the finger of the God of Light touched my nose.

I was able to get out of the prison of time and hold on to that finger.

“Put it away.”

Chapter 380

Choice (2)

[END]

The prison of time.

It was familiar to me.

It's not just because I often used this power of the God of Slowness for my growth.

Apart from that, there were many experiences of being cut off from the world and being blocked by the wall of time.

The first time I was blocked by the wall, I gave up and abandoned it.

I gave up on the challenge, admitting that my senses became dull and my skills declined as I grew older.

Without any goal, I confined myself in a small room and wasted time.

I would not have been so surprised or sad if I lived like that and then died suddenly because of alcohol.

That much, my attachment to life had disappeared.

The second time I was blocked by the wall, I continued to hit against it.

I was confident that someday I would be able to break through the wall.

I didn't get old in the Tutorial, and I was able to keep growing.

As long as my mental power didn't collapse, I could believe that I would clear the 6th floor someday.

So I was able to keep hitting the wall that looked so high, and eventually broke the wall and headed beyond it.

The third time I was blocked by the wall, I lost my confidence again.

Even though I finally had a goal, I ran into an insurmountable wall on the way towards the goal.

I believed that I could continue to grow, and I also believed that one day I would be able to challenge my goals and achieve them.

However, I couldn't endure the unexpected wait.

Without a companion to clear the 61st floor, it was impossible to cross the wall.

I'd been broken several times in the thirst and impatience that seemed to burn me during every moment.

At that time, it was Hochi and Yong-yong who made my time on the 60th floor bearable.

And it was Lee Yeon-hee who let me know that hope was coming.

Eventually, I gained the ability to get out of there on my own before Lee Yeon-hee reached the 61st floor.

Through the three challenges, I gained complete confidence.

That I will endure, and that I will eventually win.

Even now, when Kirikiri imprisoned me in the prison of time.

I will break down the walls of this prison and escape.

No matter how long it takes, no matter how much trouble and effort it

takes.

And that means that one day I can cross this wall.

That conviction gave me an answer.

The finger of the God of Light came to my face.

It was a finger shining so bright that it was hard to look straight ahead.

A finger approaching my nose, as if it wanted to touch something strange, came slowly and carefully.

That didn't mean it wasn't unpleasant.

I grabbed that finger.

“Put it away.”

The God of Light was surprised and hastily stepped back.

His appearance was very blurred.

After stepping back a little, I was able to see the God of Light again.

The God of Light was shining so naturally.

Because of the light, I couldn't recognize the features of his face.

I could just see that he resembles a human form.

Had I been an ordinary human, my eyesight would have been blinded just by looking straight at his finger.

Not only his finger, but the whole body of the God of Light was shining like that.

The God of Light never stood still for a moment.

He was moving in all directions irregularly, like a firecracker held by a person with a hand tremor.

At an overly fast pace.

The God of Light, who had been doing that for a while, came back towards me.

And he reached out both of his hands.

A very brightly shining sphere emerged in his hand.

I could see that it was a Zit Pop reduced to the size of a palm on his hand.

Making it small, it looked like a pretty little toy.

The problem is.

“...It’s blinding.”

Getting close to it, it was difficult even for me to look straight ahead.

When the God of Light heard me, he thought it was a compliment, so he clapped and flew in all directions.

Every time he clapped, light scattered.

I was annoyed at the sight of the God of Light flying around, obscuring my vision.

No matter how harmless it was, it was annoying.

To hold it for a moment, I reached out my hand as I flew toward the God of Light.

The God of Light was terrified by my sudden movement, so he flew like a blast in the opposite direction from me.

After that, a bunch of bright lights stretched long.

It was an exit that was as raucous and abrupt as when he appeared.

“I can’t catch that.....”

I admitted it calmly.

The gods usually seem to be missing a screw somewhere.

Actually, I myself was like that.

However, it was the first time that I met a god that looked as crazy as this God of Light.

I felt like I’m in a mess for no reason.

I looked back.

The planet was collapsing.

The planet that failed to overcome the explosion that started from deep below the ground was facing death.

The death of a star.

Perhaps this was the most ideal solution that the God of Death wanted.

I can’t stop that.

To do that, I would have to spend too much power.

And even so, it wouldn’t be meaningful.

Because all the people who lived on that planet had already died.

Let's go back.

I had no intention of getting caught up in the explosion of a star that was already dying.

* * *

The God of Order becomes a transcendent god and the world is destroyed.

Kirikiri destroys the world in the name of weakening the God of Order.

All had to be stopped.

[Challenge.]

The voice of the God of Order hovered in my memory.

I knew well where to go for the challenge.

The realm of the God of Order.

The Tutorial.

I had to go there again.

*

The end of the universe.

The end of the world.

There is an end to everything.

Even in this huge universe that you can't even dare to measure.

And even for long journeys that didn't seem to end.

Kirikiri thought about it as she looked at the entrance to the Hundred Gods Temple.

Finally, the end is approaching.

[It was a short adventure.]

Said the God of Slowness.

It was a long adventure.

[Did you get what you wanted?]

Kirikiri nodded her head.

It wasn't the ideal shape she was thinking of, but it was able to fit to some extent.

She sent the God of Light, and she scattered all the gods.

Terrified, they will be scattered throughout the realm and hide.

Under the guise of pursuing them, it was possible to dispatch the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple all over the world.

Challenger Lee Ho-jae finally fully understood the situation.

In fact, when he cleared the Tutorial, she had to tell him everything, but she was concerned that he would challenge the God of Order without any preparation.

The God of the Sky, who was against her opinion until the end, was weakened by the power of the God of Order.

She couldn't even find a trace of the God of Hope since it seems as if he had completely disappeared.

In the Hundred Gods Temple where it was required to maintain one incarnation, he must have been completely destroyed.

For one thing, she suppressed Lee Ho-jae with force, but she couldn't help it right away.

After all the preparations were over, she believed that Lee Ho-jae would also challenge the God of Order according to her plan.

Knowing that his divinity is aligned with the results.

“It can't be helped. Adventures don't always go perfectly as planned.”

[Yes, adventure always comes with unexpected variables.]

Kirikiri felt a little uncomfortable.

Would she overreact if she felt as if he was teasing her at the words of the God of Slowness?

Kirikiri tilted her head for a moment, then flew back to the entrance of the Hundred Gods Temple.

As she moved closer to the entrance, she met the God of Balance.

The God of Balance, in the form of an old man, seemed to have gotten older while she was gone.

Of course, since gods cannot grow old, it would mean that he only looked tired.

To the point that it can be seen in the appearance of his incarnation.

“Did it go well?”

“Huh.”

Kirikiri asked the God of Balance, who was guarding the room of the God of Slowness, about his job.

“Fortunately, the God of Slowness seems to have no intention of moving.”

“I guess so.”

Kirikiri answered briefly and opened the door.

“Then, good work.”

The God of Balance nodded his head without a word.

Kirikiri escaped from the room of the God of Slowness and entered the Hundred Gods Temple.

The door started closing behind her.

Kirikiri, who looked back without thinking, was amazed at the unexpected sight.

Apparently, Lee Ho-jae, who should have been unable to move, was running around in perfect condition.

“...N, no!”

*

“Oh, are you here?”

Hochi asked.

It was a question out of peace and boredom.

“Did you bring Jun-seok?”

Come to think of it, Hochi only knew that I had gone to pick up Lee Jun-seok.

I thought about what I had to do to explain all the things I had

experienced in Thanatos.

I decided not to.

It was too long to explain right away.

Hochi was fiddling with his system window.

He seemed to be looking at the church's situation.

Since the church has grown to a global scale, I had been told that it was difficult to manage.

This is unavoidable because the number of managers was insufficient compared to the sudden growth.

Without the system window, the essence of the church would have been altered.

The sects are divided, and pseudo-religious people who mistake themselves as gods appear.

The system window was a great help not only for the growth of the church but also for its management.

As expected, I thought it was well done.

“Ta-da!”

The neck pillow on Hochi's neck suddenly began to move, and it changed to Yong-yong.

Yong-yong stepped on Hochi's shoulder and jumped into my arms.

I asked while holding Yong-yong.

“Why did you turn into a neck pillow? To get rid of dandruff?”

The words angered Hochi.

“Hey, I don’t have dandruff.”

“I was bored.”

Yong-yong seemed to have been bored a lot while I was gone.

Hochi must have been busy working too.

I hugged and patted Yong-yong, who was whining.

“Let’s go, Yong-yong. There is somewhere you need to go with me.”

I didn’t have much time.

I had to move before any useless disturbances came in.

“Hmm!”

Fortunately, Yong-yong accepted without asking where I was going.

Hochi, who was staring at me and Yong-yong, stood up from his seat.

“...I’ll go too.”

“Okay, then.”

The passage to the 61st floor was opened.

Yong-yong and Hochi passed over first, and I stepped forward to follow.

It was then.

I heard Kirikiri’s voice.

[Stop!]

I looked around to see where I was hearing it from.

Without my knowledge, the quest window opened.

[...Why, why are you doing this!?!]

Why are you doing this?

I had no intention of letting the world perish because you wanted to increase the odds.

[So reckless!]

Kirikiri said I was reckless.

As proof of that, I couldn't move because of the power of the God of Slowness.

"I got out, like this."

I said with open arms.

Kirikiri shouted again, apparently understanding what I was saying.

[Still!]

Whatever, though.

[Can you handle it? If you fail, everything will be over!]

[The world will be completely destroyed without even the last hope. All the futures and possibilities ahead of us will disappear!]

Kirikiri shouted one after another.

Rather than being angry, she seemed desperate.

[Please don't go in. It won't take long. If you try and die like this,

there are no more chances left.]

“I just have to win.”

The odds are low, not none.

Never.

[If you don't win!]

I laughed at her words.

*

I sent Yong-yong and Hochi to Grandmother at the Ice Palace.

I walked towards the volcano alone.

Soon I was able to reach a huge door.

When I opened the door and entered, I saw Old Man lying halfway soaked in the lava.

Giant warriors gathered near Old Man and looked at him with anxious eyes.

Is he in bad condition?

“Are you okay?”

“I'm fine.”

Old Man replied nicely.

However, the answer resembled that of a patient lying in a hospital room.

Old Man wasn't just a little out of steam, he had a fatal inner wound.

The loss of divinity was such a great loss.

It will probably take a long time to settle properly.

If not, it was to regain confidence and divinity and restore health.

“Are we going?”

Old Man asked.

“Everyone noticed. I didn’t say anything.”

“Because I can feel it.”

“What.”

“Your excitement. And tension and determination. I can see it at a glance. Has the time finally come?”

I nodded.

“It’s a shame. We promised to be with you. And I only looked at that promise and came this far.”

Old Man slowly lifted himself up.

As his enormous body stood up, lava poured down like a waterfall.

It was Old Man’s body that always boasted a huge presence, but today it only seemed to be somehow sad.

“In the end, we can’t help with anything.”

I don’t think so.

They won’t be able to come with me at the last minute, but they made it this far.

Their efforts never meant nothing.

“I’m waiting for you. You will win and come back.”

*

A stadium with a strange interior mixed with lava and ice.

It’s a place I’ve been to before.

When I cleared the 61st floor.

It was the arena summoned when clearing both the Lava Palace and the Ice Palace.

“Dad!”

Yong-yong called out to me and eagerly ran towards me.

I thought while holding Yong-yong.

I headed to the Lava Palace, and Yong-yong and Hochi to the Ice Palace.

And that means we met again here.

I was able to clear the 61st floor through Yong-yong.

However, I had given up on exiting the 61st floor using Yong-yong as a challenger.

And that’s probably the best choice I’ve ever made in my life.

I gave a kiss to Yong-yong’s cheek.

Yong-yong laughed at the ticklish feeling.

“Yong-yong, I think Dad should go somewhere for a while.”

“Will it take long?”

“Probably, I guess.”

“Can I come with you?”

It’s a weird thing.

No matter how much I devoted my passion and hard work to Yong-yong’s education, it was surprising that both me and Hochi at the time raised Yong-yong into such a pretty and kind child.

Maybe Yong-yong had grown up well on his own.

He was such a very blessed child for us.

“No.”

So I didn’t want to expose Yong-yong to danger.

Yong-yong was sullen, but he didn’t ask me to take him away.

“I’m sorry.”

Hochi said so.

“What.”

“Just. Because I couldn’t help.”

I felt strange

I didn’t expect to hear this from Hochi.

I was always angry with Hochi for being useless, and Hochi had told me that it was none of his business.

“No, you helped a lot.”

Hochi kept frowning.

I didn't like the worries and anxiety that stood on that face.

"Hey, don't worry. You still can't believe in me."

"I believe in you."

"Then?"

"I'm still worried."

Hochi said so.

"Bye. Don't get hurt."

"Yes."

Thanks.

After swallowing the last words, I stepped back to the portal.

My body was engulfed in a bright light.

The next moment, I was standing in a beautiful garden.

Not a terrible garden that oozed blood from the floor, but a garden filled with the smell of grass and a gentle breeze.

There was an angry rabbit in the garden.

"Kirikiri."

"Hmph!"

*

"I'm not stopping you anymore."

I thought that as soon as Kirikiri saw me, she would try to hold me back again.

“You can’t stop me.”

At my words, Kirikiri said, stepping on the floor with her feet.

Her way of expressing her dissatisfaction was more childish than Yong-yong.

“I can’t stop you on my own!”

I guess so.

If she does, she will be caught by the God of Order like the God of the Sky.

“And Hooooo Jaaeeee is an unconvinced idiot!”

“What a bummer, that’s a bit too much to say.”

“The strange name Hooooo Jaaeeee is worse!”

Hoo, even personal attacks.

“I’ll buy you a cake instead.”

“Won’t eat it!”

This was a little shocking.

Don’t you love cakes?

Kirikiri suddenly sighed, then sat down.

“I’ll give you some helpful information.”

“Can you do that?”

“...That’s my role.”

This way, it felt the same as when I was doing the previous tutorial.

Before entering the stage, I got brief advice and information from Kirikiri.

Kirikiri gave all the details.

At the time of the Tutorial, I could see that she was giving almost all the information for my growth.

I memorized the information Kirikiri told me bit by bit.

I had never lost money by taking her advice.

After her story, Kirikiri bowed her head to her knees in front of me.

“Hing, if you go in alone like this, you will surely die.”

You are still worried.

A portal has already appeared in front of me.

And a faint voice came from the portal.

[Challenge.]

It was a voice I’ve heard several times already.

The voice of the God of Order.

Perhaps it was funny to think that the rush to challenge was encouraging me to challenge before it went according to Kirikiri’s plan.

“I’m going.”

After saying so, I stepped up on the portal.

I left Kirikiri behind, and the familiarity that was felt in the simple actions as I stepped up on the portal.

And the familiar tension.

“Don’t die!”

Listening to Kirikiri’s farewell, I was moved.

[Welcome, challenger Lee Ho-jae.]

The message that appeared before my eyes greeted me.

It was a narrow and dark passage.

It was an atmosphere reminiscent of the first floor of the Tutorial.

I checked my condition.

There was nothing wrong.

My clothes were the same as what I was wearing, and the swords on my waist were the same.

[Mayday, Mayday.]

I’m with Seregia, who speaks erratic words without end.

[Wa, warrior...? Why am I here?]

Ahbooboo is confused.

I comforted Ahbooboo’s whining of his resentment, by saying that I would return him to the God of the Sky when this was over.

And I looked ahead again.

As if until now it was just a tutorial.

As if this was the true game, I felt the ominous and dangerous energy from the walls of the narrow passage.

And from afar, the God of Order was felt.

I spoke towards that place.

“I said it. The power that you stole, I’ll go back someday to get it back.”

The God of Order did not respond to my words.

One step forward.

And I paused for a moment at the chills that I felt.

The hideous energy felt on the other side of the dark passage felt just as dangerous.

But I took another step forward.

There were long and long steps I had walked before, so I was able to walk one step at a time during this moment without hesitation.

It was a long tutorial.

And it was a very difficult tutorial.

That’s why I was sure.

Now that I have finally finished all preparations and put my goals in front of me.

I will not be defeated, nor will I give up.

-END-



PDF by: traitor/SEN



THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

- 튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다 -

- VOLUME 12 -

**-AUTHOR-
Gandara**

[Nocturne Translations]

Side Story 1

Iddy (1)

[Round 11, Day 4. 6:22]

[The 6th floor gate begins.]

Description: It has already been 50 years since the cursed priests of the Bahar Church were marked by the continent and pursued to gain merit. As you know, the Bahar Church is a society that seeks to resurrect the dead, turn their souls into demons, and harvest more lives.

Their leader, Quezas, and 16 priests succeeded in escaping the pursuit of the Knights Order and reached the heart of the White Mountains.

The heart of the White Mountain range is also called the New Heaven and Earth, the place where the gods came in the past.

The cursed social priests are trying to cover the continent with nightmares using the fragments of divinity remaining in New Heaven and Earth.

Warriors, you are the only ones who can stop them until the Knights arrive here.

[Success conditions]

1. Stop the Death Army from advancing outside the White Mountains until the arrival of the Knights Order.
2. Destroy the Death Army and defeat 16 priests.

[Current party member (1/5)]

1. Lee Ho-jae

“Have a great death!”

Shouted the skeleton knight.

It had a daunting appearance, unlike skeleton soldiers, befitting the grand dialogue.

A larger body, somehow glossy skeleton bones, and a large, heavy sword.

At first, I was excited and thought that he was the final boss on the 6th floor.

It had high intelligence and I could even have a conversation with it, so it was not unreasonable for me to be mistaken.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 14th floor: Hey, are you listening to me?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 6th floor: Uh-huh.]

“Uwooo!”

The skeleton knight shouted and swung his heavy sword.

I answered Kim Min-hyuk’s message roughly, and deflected the skeleton knight’s sword with a shield.

Perhaps because the large sword was too heavy for a skeleton knight without muscles to swing, the skeleton knight was swayed by the weight of the sword.

With my shield at the forefront, I bashed into the skull knight.

The skeleton knight fell back and rolled around.

The sound of bone bumping against the stone floor sounded ugly.

It was unbelievable that just a few months ago, everytime a skeleton knight attacked me, I was brought to the edge of the underworld.

[Lee Ho-jae, 6th floor: What's going on?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 14th floor: The next day of dialogue agreement (*) has been announced.]

Is it another day of dialogue agreement?

It is the second day of conversation since being trapped on the 6th floor.

It is already the third day of the dialogue agreement.

[Lee Ho-jae, 6th floor: It will be noisy again.]

I sent a message again, kicking the leg joints of the skeleton knight trying to raise its body.

The skeleton knight once again rolled on the floor.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 14th floor: It's already raging. It's been a few days since the dialogue agreement day was announced. Soon, information will begin to circulate to the community.]

Kim Min-hyuk regularly informed me of important information that had not spread to the community.

Since I was trapped on the 6th floor for 8 months, I couldn't gain any information except from Kim Min-hyuk and the community.

I ended the conversation after hearing some more news from Kim Min-hyuk.

“Kaaak! Come to me! Power of death!”

The skeleton knight who was being beaten by me shouted wildly.

Then the heavy sword that the skeleton knight was holding began to turn dark.

It looked pretty grand, but in fact it was just a signal to call the skeleton soldiers.

“Warrior! Death be upon you! I, Asde, the death knight will give you rest...!”

Kuak!

I rushed to the shouting skeleton knight and swung my shield toward its head.

Although it was a soft wooden shield, it became a more powerful weapon than a decent blunt weapon when it was infused with magical power.

When its head, its only weakness, was smashed, the skeleton knight became powder and began to disappear.

I picked up the heavy sword dropped by the skeleton knight.

I needed this.

[Kyaaaak~!]

I heard the sound of skeleton soldiers running after being called.

Two crossroads were seen behind the remains of the skeleton knight.

That crossroad was a problem.

The primary goal of the sixth floor is defense.

Until the arrival of the Knights, it is to stop the skeleton soldiers from exiting this cave.

However, no matter how much I waited and waited, the Knights did

not come.

It was 26 days.

That was my record for how long I endured against the skeleton soldiers.

From then on, I couldn't really stop the skeleton soldiers.

As if being pushed by a wave, I was pushed by the quantity and weight of the skeleton soldiers and was sent to the exit.

I had to revise the plan.

Instead of waiting for the Knights, I decided to first target the final goal of the mission, the 16 Priests.

It was the crossroads that became a problem here.

When you enter one of the forked roads, skeleton soldiers protruding from the other road will run to the exit.

I couldn't go to the heart of the cave, blocking both paths, unless I was using an alter ego to block both paths.

And the solution I found was this skeleton knight's sword.

When a skeleton knight is rushing to the defensive, he calls the skeleton soldiers around him.

The effect remains on the sword even after the skeleton knight dies.

In other words, as long as you are holding the skeleton knight's heavy sword, all skeleton soldiers in the vicinity will run towards you, not the exit.

[Ahhhhhhh!]

[Kyaaaaa-!]

The voices of the skeleton soldiers are now close enough to be heard clearly.

The sharp footsteps knocking on the stone floor resonate like a quick drum.

Because of the reverberation of the floor, the hard cave floor rocked like I was on a bed.

Now, here comes the next problem.

There is the skeleton knight's heavy sword with a wide-area aggro effect, so the problem of the skeleton soldiers ignoring me and running to the exit disappeared.

However, a new issue has arisen that requires me to face the skeleton soldiers flocking from all directions.

Suddenly, the appearance of skeleton soldiers running toward me came into view.

I have seen the skeleton soldiers many, many, many, many times, but every time I see them, I get sick.

“How many days will it take this time?”

At first, I was really excited about this fight, but now I'm really tired of it.

The battle that continued without a break was really hard work.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

“Keaaahhh!”

Skeleton soldiers who had come around the corner rushed in screaming.

Hundreds and thousands of skeletons screamed at once.

In order not to be overwhelmed, I also responded to them.

“Aaaaahhh! Don’t open your mouths because they smell rotten! You sons of bitches!”

[Soul Cry]

Not long ago, the skeleton soldiers in the line became stiff for an instant as they shouted along with their new soul cry skill.

I didn’t miss that gap and jumped towards the skeleton soldiers.

A heavy sword struck, and the remains of the smashed bones scattered frantically.

[The God of Adventure is watching you.]

* * *

[Round 11th, Day 19. 2:02.]

I’m dying

Really.

After fighting for more than 15 days, I was able to reach the end of the stage on the 6th floor.

The final goal of the 6th floor stage is the 16 priests, right in front of the common where they live. Now, a little further, I could face them.

The result was just around the corner, but I had to stop.

My feet couldn’t step forward.

I forced my creaky legs to move. Leaning against the wall, I took the jerky out of my inventory and put it in my mouth.

It wasn't the usual jerky.

Like the Senzu Beans in Dragon Ball, it was a jerky that made the body full and healthy even if you ate a little bit.

It was very expensive, but it was worth it.

When I chewed the salty jerky, saliva gathered in my mouth little by little.

As soon as I felt the moisture in my mouth, which had been as dry as a rice field cracked by drought, I spit out in surprise.

I spit out the jerky along with it.

I smelled rotten corpses in my mouth.

It was a natural result.

I've been fighting skeletons without time to rinse my mouth, let alone wash my body.

There must have been a lot of dirt in my mouth.

In fact, the saliva I spit out was black like filthy water.

I rinsed my mouth with water, took out a new jerky and put it in my mouth.

Fortunately, there was no sign of skeleton soldiers approaching.

Perhaps the priests have noticed my approach.

Rather than sending out the skeleton soldiers, it was clear that they were gathering them.

It was the limit.

It is not the first time I have been here.

But it was like this every time I came.

I had to push myself to the limit every time.

I put the back of my head on the wall.

The cold wall touched my feverish head.

I just closed my eyes.

I couldn't afford to sit or lie down.

I was worried that if I fell down like this, I would not be able to get up again.

'You went too far. You always do.'

In the midst of becoming dazed, a quiet voice passed by my ears.

That is what I heard one day.

Who said it?

I didn't remember.

'I'd rather just rest. Give up. Please stop.'

It was when I was nine years old.

I pushed my friend off the stairs.

It's questionable if I can call the child I pushed off the stairs a friend, but let's just skip past it.

In elementary school, everyone in the same class was a friend.

I didn't feel particularly guilty after pushing my friend off the stairs.

It wasn't because I was a psychopath.

It's a problem I'm unsure about now, but I certainly wasn't back then.

It was an unavoidable fight against a friend who had been picking on a group of children.

I didn't even push hard.

When the uproar broke out, I thought the teacher would notice that there was discord in the class, and it would work out.

It was a shallow thought.

My friend wasn't badly hurt.

His knee was a little injured.

Of course, I was called to the teacher's office, and they called my house.

I thought I was a victim but I became a perpetrator.

I had to kneel and pray with my sister who came to elementary school in a school uniform.

It was 5 o'clock when I left school like that.

That was the case for a second grader in elementary school.

It was awkward to leave the quiet school gate while looking at the sunset sky.

It was like seeing a friend's smile reflected through the window of the car passing by us.

My sister, who I thought would punish me by picking up a tree branch that fell on the way home, only walked without saying anything.

When we were almost home, my sister said,

“Why didn’t you break his knee?”

That wasn’t supposed to be said.

It wasn’t an educational and emotionally desirable thing for an older sister to say to her nine-year-old brother.

But it was warm to me.

It was such great comfort that there was one person who sided with me regardless of right or wrong.

The next day, I broke my friend’s leg, and my sister had to be called back to school.

Since then, nothing like my sister getting called to school happened again.

My sister said it one time.

She said she regretted saying that to me at that time.

I did not regret it.

I opened my eyes.

[Round 11, Day 19. 2:36.]

I just opened and closed my eyes for a while, but a fairly long time had passed.

In the distance a little farther away, I heard the rattling sound of skeleton soldiers.

I quietly listened to the sound and tried to guess the number of skeleton soldiers.

I was now on the verge of getting the number of skeleton soldiers just by hearing the sound of the snapping of their bones.

During only 15 minutes of rest, the number of skeleton soldiers increased considerably.

Now it was time to move again.

The more you delay, the more dangerous it will be.

Slowly I took my back off the wall.

I felt a heavy tiredness in my back where I had no place to lean on.

(*) Editor Note: The dialogue agreement refers to the challengers meeting and making agreements during a large summoning by the managers.

Side Story 2

Iddy (2)

“You are brave but that is foolish courage! You have taken the wrong path! I, Quezas, will lead you to your death!”

“Servant of the false god! Face the great power of the abyss! Only one absolute good that exists will be the salvation of this absurd world!”

The final goal of the 6th floor stage, Tutorial Hell difficulty:

Quezas, the head of the 16 priests, is a very talkative guy.

He says a lot of weird nonsense, and the problem is that the nonsense causes a very serious level of irritation.

I’m tired in both body and mind, and he’s been dragging his time with drivel; who would possibly enjoy this?

“Fool, beguiled by the delusion of eternal life! Behold, this is the true image of me, Quezas!”

He even transformed into a giant squid at the last minute.

I hate the boss fights that suddenly transform and enter a second phase right when I kill them.

The hell.

They should just come out like this from the beginning. By the time I have killed them, they transform and heal all damage.

So mean.

The annoying Quezas is now spitting black blood out of his mouth, with his chest pierced by the skeleton knight's heavy sword.

What is it, ink?

After transforming into a squid-like thing, it seems that his species has become a squid too.

“Wa, warrior.....!”

Pookh!

This guy is going to talk about nonsense again.

He can speak even though he has a huge heavy sword in his chest like a vampire pierced by a stake.

His tenacity for chatting is surprising.

I picked up the heavy sword embedded in Quezas's chest and stabbed it into him again.

Quezas had a seizure, then again vomited black blood.

“...In my life, I've never seen a man who was as brave and strong as you...”

I guess so.

I haven't seen one either.

“Warrior. Please do not be deceived by the deceptions of false gods... The only good that exists in this world is... Keuhaak!”

It's called death.

I've had enough of that damn death admiration.

I even got to memorize some lines.

Pukh! Pukh! Pukh!

Again, I punctured Quezas's chest and made him pay the price for this annoying nonsense.

Even at this point, Quezas did not die.

Rather, I should say that he cannot die.

When I looked at Quezas's face distorted in pain, it seemed right.

I spent some time torturing Quezas like that for a while.

Leaning on a heavy sword holding a cane.

When only the black blood bubbles on Quezas's mouth came out, and no sound was heard.

When my trembling knees got closer to the floor.

[Acquired Curse Resistance Lv.7.]

The message I was waiting for appeared.

The reason why I remained here even though I had beaten all the stages on the 6th floor.

It was a message informing that the curse resistance skill had risen by one level and reached level 7.

It was a message letting me know that I had nothing left to get from this stage on the 6th floor.

It was also a message to let me know that I was ready to move on again.

Finally.

It's time to leave this place.

I stepped on Quezas's head and smashed it.

He was tough and able to hold on to his life, but even he couldn't live after his head had been smashed.

Immediately a message appeared.

[You have cleared the 6th floor of Tutorial Hell difficulty.]

[All conditions and injuries are recovered.]

It was a clear message.

Immediately, the healing effect was activated.

The wounds that had been inscribed on my body healed, and the feeling of fatigue that had covered my whole body disappeared.

It was weird.

After clearing the 6th floor, I thought I would be very happy.

I wondered if I would run around excited and cheer like a child.

When I was training alone, I sometimes imagined that.

The appearance of myself who cleared the 6th floor.

But contrary to my imagination, my mood was calm.

I shook my head.

The feeling was also strange.

My fatigue was gone.

In fact, there was no discomfort when moving my body.

But it wasn't refreshing.

There was no difference from a little while ago when I was crushed by fatigue.

It was just that my body moved much more smoothly.

It was strange.

[The God of Slowness is paying attention to you.]

Paying attention.

Immediately after clearing the stage, a message appeared asking if I would try to become an apostle of the God of Slowness.

[The God of Adventure is also paying attention to you!]

[The God of Adventure pays attention to you eagerly.]

In addition, the God of Adventure.

It seemed that the God of Adventure was just imitating the God of Slowness.

The concept of an apostle appeared, which made me quite embarrassed.

As I attacked the 6th floor, I knew that the interests of the gods were increasing day by day, but I didn't know that something like this would appear.

I thought about it for a while and came to a conclusion.

Let's ask Kirikiri.

Thinking that way, I tried to step up on the portal that appeared right in front of me.

Then I realized that I had forgotten one thing, and I was flabbergasted.

8 months, it has been too long.

Thanks to that, I forgot.

Kirikiri hates when I come into her fields with blood on.

She hates it so much.

When I cleared the 4th floor with blood on my body, Kirikri even backed away to avoid me.

I took a towel out of my inventory and wiped the blood off my body.

It was easy to clean because my wounds had already healed and the bleeding had stopped.

But it couldn't be completely wiped off.

The blood that was too old had already dried up on my skin and was not easily cleaned.

After trying to clean, I was able to get on the portal.

The portal started to glow brightly.

My eyes, which had been accustomed to the dark cave for such a long time, frowned due to the sudden light.

I felt a brief dizziness, and soon I could notice that I was standing somewhere other than a cave.

Instead of the bloody scent and rotten odor that had been in the cave, I smelled the scent of grass.

The sunlight from the sky was mild, unlike the light of the portal that hurt my eyes, and brought warmth to my cold frozen body.

It was so beautiful and peaceful.

It looked even more so when contrasted to where I was before.

In the middle of a bright, open field, I cried unconsciously.

Had it not been for the rabbit girl who shook her arms and ran, I may have been doing that for a long time.

* * *

“Ahahang.”

Kirikiri, who quietly ate the cake, laughed briefly as if she had thought of something.

Soon she started to scoop the cake again.

And.

“Ehahahang. Hooooo-jaaaeeee was crying!”

“Noisy.”

“Crybaby!”

I can’t.

I took the fork from Kirikiri’s hand.

Although I was thinking of taking the fork I had taken as a hostage, Kirikiri didn’t stick to the fork and began to scoop the cake with her

bare hands.

Oh, she eats anything with her bare hands.

The triumphant smile on Kirikiri's face was extraordinarily disgusting.

On the side, I watched Kirikiri suck her finger loudly, and I thought about the need to take away the plate.

I decided to stop.

As long as it's been a long time, Kirikiri probably hasn't had a cake in a long time.

I returned the fork to Kirikiri.

"Hihing."

Kirikiri turned her head round and round and smiled.

It is unusual for Kirikiri to turn to something that isn't on a plate while eating a cake.

"Why."

"Hi-hing, do you have anything you want to ask me?"

Kirikiri asked.

Of course there was something I wanted to ask.

"It's okay to ask now!"

Kirikiri exclaimed exultingly, pushing her chest out.

I knew how great the decision in that statement was.

Kirikiri is putting off the cake.

Kirikiri, who is proud of her role as a manager and advisor, seems to want to tell me this and that after a long time.

I couldn't make that decision go away.

I asked what I was most curious about.

"The Knights Order."

"Eing?"

"What day does the Knight Order arrive?"

The primary goal of the 6th floor was to hold on until the arrival of the Knights.

However, in the cave on the 6th floor, I have never seen a grave robber, let alone the Knights.

"Is that what you're curious about?"

Then what should I be curious about?

Until I finally gave up on waiting, it was my biggest concern as to when the damn Knights would come.

I even wrote a journal alone.

This time it lasted a long time.

The Knights did not come.

Let's endure ten more days next time.

Probably, the Knights will come on the tenth day.

Well, like this.

Every time I updated the record like that, I didn't know how crazy I was.

No way, don't tell me the Knight Order came-

“Day 30!”

Yeah, so it's the last day 30.

Damn it.

Do they really come on the last day?

Who the hell designed this tutorial?

You have to be moderately absurd and irrational to...ahaha...I see...
I'll just move on.

It was designed so that it would not be possible to exhaust them without being very crazy.

* * *

I asked Kirikiri for some information.

As the 6th floor was so difficult, I thought I could hear a lot of information.

The information that can be heard was limited again this time.

“Because it's very expensive information.”

First, it was information on the soul exploitation skill obtained as a reward for clearing the 6th floor.

You can go to the waiting room and check the details.

Next was information on the ‘Apostle Proposal’ of the God of

Adventure and the God of Slowness that appeared immediately after clearing.

Kirikiri did not explain in detail, saying that information about gods was expensive.

But I could hear a minimal explanation for basic understanding.

It was the information that if you accepted the offer, you could get one more power skill and that even if you accepted the offer, nothing would change immediately.

Accepting the offer means you must meet the conditions for becoming an apostle.

The conditions vary greatly depending on the individuality of each god.

That is all the information I heard from Kirikiri

Let's think about it a little.

Choosing a god or religion to worship, and gaining some abilities in return is a common setting in many games.

Nevertheless, in many ways, I was reluctant to become an apostle of a god, but Kirikiri advised that it would not hurt.

If Kirikiri said that, then there would be nothing wrong with being an apostle.

I believed so.

After all, in this crazy tutorial that forces people to come and challenge the stage and die out in succession as a result, Kirikiri was the one who felt guilty and regretful about the fact.

I knew the humanity she had.

It was unlikely that Kirikiri would give any advice that would really hurt the challenger.

Let's say I accept the offer.

So now the question remains as to whether to choose between the God of Adventure and the God of Slowness.

The basis of judgment was about two things: the god's personality and the power skill as a reward.

Then,

[The God of Adventure looks at you.]

Kirikiri was also sitting across from me wondering which god I would choose, watching with deep eyes.

In fact, there was nothing to worry about for long.

If you compare the two gods, the answer is already decided.

I will choose the God of Adventure and the God of Slowness.

[The God of Adventure was shocked.]

What do you mean 'shocked'?

It was an obvious choice.

There was a clear difference in performance between the blink skills presented by the God of Slowness and Talaria's Wing Skills presented by the God of Adventure.

Talaria's Wing skill is definitely a good power skill, but blink is too overpowered.

Even when I thought about the gods' personalities, it was so

Why would I choose a god that seems to be staring at me all day, without doing anything?

[The God of Adventure is embarrassed.]

[The God of Adventure pleads that that is not true.]

Since then, the message of the God of Adventure continued to appear, but I decided to ignore it.

What to do?

Should I make a choice here right now?

I can also choose after learning more about the gods.

If I choose right away, there is an advantage that I can get one more power skill right now.

However, due to lack of information, there is also the downside of choosing a god that does not fit me.

“What shall we do?”

When there was something I didn’t know, it was most comfortable to ask Kirikiri.

Kirikiri replied, as if waiting for me to ask.

“Of course, it’s better to learn more about the gods and choose! The best thing in the world is to be safe!”

Kirikiri even hopped while preaching her opinion.

They say that the fast guy always has the fastest way to go; you have to look at life for a long time.

Well, it wasn’t wrong.

Should I postpone the choice too?

“Yep!”

But there was one disturbing matter.

It was the next floor, the 7th floor stage.

Like the 6th floor, the 7th floor was a stage requiring party play.

It took 8 months to clear the 6th floor alone.

It would be really difficult if it took a similar amount of time to clear the 7th floor.

At this speed, I will grow old and die before completing the 100-floor tutorial.

I thought it might be better to get one more power right away for clearing the next stage.

“No!”

Kirikiri screamed.

“Hooooo-jaaaaeee has to trust himself more! He will be able to clear the 7th floor in no time! Now! Go ahead! Go ahead!”

Kirikiri grabbed my hand and forcibly lifted it above my head and waved it, telling me to do my best.

It was arbitrary support.

I answered that I knew and got up from my seat.

Now it was time to go back to the stage.

I thought as I approached the portal.

Is it really okay for me to become an apostle?

It was a bit uncomfortable.

Of course, Kirikiri said there would be no harm.

Maybe I should live like a monk.

If you have to live by being a devout religious person and obeying hard doctrines.

I really don't think that's right.

While contemplating that, I tried to step up on the portal, but Kirikiri spoke abruptly.

"The gods know that much."

"...What?"

I asked a little belatedly as I was startled.

Sometimes I was surprised to know that Kirikiri could read my thoughts.

"You can't stand a quiet, peaceful, monotonous life."

It was true, but it strangely sounded like a curse.

"And it's okay, you don't have to worry that the gods will force you to fit."

"What does that mean?"

Kirikiri said, staring at my face.

"The position of the apostles of the gods that you have proposed will fit well with your disposition.

“With my disposition?”

“There’s no way a god would want to make a human their apostle who doesn’t fit their disposition. The suggestion means that the appearance of Hooooo-jaaaaeee that they’ve seen so far and his future actions match what the gods want.”

I paused and spent time understanding Kirikiri’s words.

My appearance and my actions matched what the gods wanted and liked.

I thought about what I’ve been through and what I’ve done since I entered the Tutorial.

I soon realized one thing.

Both the God of Slowness and the God of Adventure are not sane gods.

Side Story 3

Iddy (3)

[Round 11, Day 29. 4:20.]

[Waiting room on the 7th floor]

Something was awkward.

This ticklish feeling in my chest.

Is it because the waiting room on the 6th floor had become too familiar?

The scenery of the waiting room on the 7th floor felt strange.

I felt uneasy.

I'm not an elementary school student on a picnic.

I took a jerky out of my inventory.

It wasn't a high-efficiency emergency food jerky, usually eaten on stages.

It was a jerky made specifically for meals.

The liver wasn't too salty and its aroma was rich.

It was well cooked, so even if you only ate a meal of jerky without other foods, you wouldn't feel sick.

I opened the community window while munching on beef jerky.

It was a habit.

Like sitting on the toilet seat and reading a comic book, I checked out the community window whenever I had a leisurely meal.

This is comforting in its own way.

Watching people talk in the comment window.

When you roll around to death with skeletons that say ‘kyaak, I often feel a strange impression of humanity, even one that is as small as a rat’s shit.

It was comforting to see people just chatting.

From my point of view, the current community atmosphere is very uncomfortable.

The atmosphere in the community is very chaotic.

As Kim Min-hyuk predicted.

The jerky in my mouth suddenly felt salty.

It was unavoidable.

Information spread that the third day of the dialogue meeting will be held soon.

Until now, there was only one condition for the meeting to be held.

When there is a conflict between challengers within the Tutorial and how to solve it.

The system punishes neither party of the dispute.

It just puts all the challengers in one place.

It seems like you have to solve it yourself.

The fact that the dialogue meeting day is announced means that there is a serious level of conflict between the challengers somewhere in the Tutorial.

Each other's nerves were bound to sharpen.

Moreover, the dialogue agreement was not a place for friendly dialogue.

It was close to the Colosseum, where two opposing forces clashed to win and survive.

The first day of dialogue was held because of a private organization called the Representative Association.

It was an organization that tried to create a structure to intimidate and exploit newbies in the waiting room, aiming to expand to the entire Tutorial.

When the first day of dialogue agreement was held, the Representative Association and opposing forces clashed, and the Representative Association was defeated.

The second day of dialogue agreement was caused by the internal strife of the Vigilante Group, which was created by destroying the Representative Association.

The aim of the Vigilante Group was to prevent criminal activity as well as protect and support the remaining challengers on the lower floors.

However, at some point, the top rankers, who were the main forces of the Vigilante Group, began to have different ideas.

They were displeased with the selfless use of their abilities and knowledge for others.

They wanted to be privileged, not volunteers.

The Vigilante Group thus became the new ruling class.

It was a natural flow.

They were the ones who had more abilities and information, and they were the ones leading the other challengers at the highest level.

However, there was one variable that no one thought of.

That variable was Park Jung-ah, who was the Vigilante Group's face madam*, exceeding everyone's expectations.

Suddenly, a clash between the challengers began.

Bloodshed occurred in several waiting rooms, and the community was flooded with agitation.

The war went beyond a small conflict, and thus another day of dialogue agreement was held.

The war ended poorly.

With countless bodies left behind.

And the third day of dialogue agreement was announced.

Everyone was thinking the same thing.

Another war is coming.

With a sigh, I turned off the community window.

I was chewing the jerky in my mouth blankly, and I suddenly felt stuffy.

It was impatience.

I felt sorry for having a comfortable meal and resting.

I whisked the remaining jerky into my mouth at once and swallowed it whole.

Fortunately, it didn't get caught in my throat.

However, when I forcibly swallowed the piece of jerky that was not chewed properly, I felt uncomfortable in my stomach.

The stuffiness got worse.

I felt a pressure, as if something were going to happen right away.

I drank water in a hurry, rinsed my mouth, and opened my inventory.

It was difficult to breathe.

There was no problem with my respiratory rate.

My lungs were also functioning properly.

But, like when you are diving in water and just get out, my brain felt like it wanted more oxygen.

I'm losing my mind.

In this case, just sitting still and breathing hard does not help.

I am already breathing abundantly.

I opened up my inventory and checked to see if there were any items that could help.

There was a scarf I knitted on the 6th floor.

It was a scarf that had already been completed.

I urgently looked to see if there were any missing parts on the scarf.

There weren't.

No, looking closely, the scarf seemed a little short.

I quickly pulled out the end of the shawl and started knitting.

It was only then that my breathing began to subside little by little.

* * *

[Round 11, Day 29. 4:30.]

Instead of going straight to the 7th floor, I decided to take some time to train.

There were two reasons.

The first was the Soul Exploitation skill obtained as a reward for clearing the 6th floor.

[Soul Exploitation (Lv. Max)]

Description: A power gifted to you by an unnamed god.

It is the ability to directly interfere with the soul of an enemy.

Subjects within the range of soul exploitation are bound by the path of the soul, feeling fatigued and pressured for unknown reasons.

The caster can gain a small amount of life by killing a target within the range of soul exploitation.

It was an interesting skill.

But I couldn't try it right away.

In order to use soul exploitation, a target enemy has to exist.

The second reason for delaying the attack on the 7th floor was to continue my recent training.

In the past, training was easy.

It wasn't a matter of difficulty, it was just that simple.

You just swung your sword to train your strength and sword skills and hurt yourself to increase your tolerance.

But at some point, I hit a wall.

The relevant skills were not rising.

I had to find another way of training.

The method I found on the 6th floor was meditation.

I learned how to operate on magic alone, meditated to become more proficient, and gradually moved the magic of my body little by little.

I don't know if it's the right way.

There was no one to teach me.

However, I managed to produce results.

For up to 10 minutes, the magic could be used on my arms, hands, feets and limbs.

At some point, even this stalled as if it had hit a wall too.

Recently, I have been focusing on imagery training.

It is to battle alone while imagining that you have an enemy.

But isn't it fun if you just do it?

I applied magic to my sword.

Magic adds strength to the blade and increases the durability of the weapon.

Stronger, sharper.

The effect was quite simple for dealing with the mysterious power of magic, but there was nothing as effective as this from the standpoint of dealing with weapons.

I swung the magic sword toward my left leg.

The underside of my thigh was cut very neatly.

Blood spewed out like a waterfall.

I quickly attached a bandage to the cut surface of my leg.

And I wrapped it tightly and tied it up.

The bandage was meticulously tied, but the blood from the wound was dripping on the floor.

It didn't matter because the bandage wasn't tied to stop bleeding in the first place.

I leaned against my sword like a cane and stood up from my seat.

My leg wasn't broken or fractured, but it was cut.

This greatly destroyed my sense of balance.

Standing still by itself made me uncomfortable.

For ordinary humans, the loss of their legs will lead to a loss of mobility.

That was a loss of combat power.

But not for me.

If you had muscle strength and a sense of balance beyond human limits, and Talaria's wings and Blink, you could somehow continue to battle.

The training I'm doing now is training to get more used to the situation of losing my limbs.

The waiting room is dark.

A small light on the high ceiling.

Far from the window, it is a weak light to illuminate a closed, gapless room.

In the corner of the waiting room immersed in darkness, skeletons began to rise slowly.

There were also skeleton knights and priests from the end of the 6th floor.

It was a familiar sight.

So it was easy to imagine.

[Kyaaaakk!]

Skulls screamed.

It was too lively to be the illusion I had imagined.

Even the vibrations transmitted through the sound seemed to be felt.

I've seen it too many times.

How many times did I see it? I was able to reproduce in detail even a piece of the skulls.

It was familiar because of the countless experiences.

[Kyaaaak!]

[Kyaaa-]

With only one leg left, I kicked strongly against the floor.

So I screamed and rushed face to face toward the skeletons that ran.

* * *

My heart pounding in my chest fluttered.

New stages, new enemies, new hardships!

I was like a pervert, I was even feeling a strange sense of pleasure.

What kind of hardships and adversity will the new stage present to me?

I moved to the 7th floor full of anticipation.

[You have entered the 7th floor stage.]

The 7th floor stage was a small room.

It was amazing.

Like the 6th floor, the 7th floor was a stage requiring party play.

Of course I thought it would be spread out in a large area like the sixth floor.

However, when I came in, it was a small, sealed cavity of about 30

pyeong.

(T/N: pyeong = 3.30508 square meter. Used to measure real estate in Korea.)

It was even empty.

Empty.

What.

You want me to do yoga in an empty space?

You want me to do a million push-ups?

I asked Kirikiri for advice on attacking the 7th floor.

She said that the training I'm doing recently would be of great help on the 7th floor.

The training is, of course, the imagery training with one leg cut.

This is the stage where such training will be helpful.

I had no idea.

Is there a landmine on the floor?

I looked closely at the cavity.

I noticed geometric paintings engraved on the wall.

Its shape looked similar to the Tutorial portal.

[The 7th floor gateway begins.]

Description: The Trial on the 7th floor consists of three stages.

Each level contains 2, 3, and 9 rooms.

Each room can be traversed through a magic circle engraved on the wall.

Each room contains a number of Izaaku's Disaster Dombas and one of their mother bodies.

Clear the first trial to learn more about the 7th floor.

1. Clear all rooms and defeat all enemies.

1. Clear stage 2.7-1.

1. ?

1. ?

Unlike the 6th floor, there was no explanation of the setting such as the worldview behind it.

Can I just kill the enemies and clear the stage?

It's okay.

That's neat.

Well, there were no Knights to wait for so I touched the wall with the pattern of the portal.

Then, a faint light leaked out of the wall.

[Would you like to move?]

It really is a portal.

As soon as you cross this portal, a dangerous situation will unfold.

I took out a weapon from my inventory, tied it to my waist, and checked the joints of my armor.

Okay, I'm ready to go.

“Yes.”

The place I moved to was exactly the same shape as the dark cavity I had just stood in.

There was one difference.

Unlike the previous room, which was empty without anything, in this room now.

Thump, thump.

There were monsters wandering around.

They looked like short, naked humans.

There was no hair at all, of course, on their bodies.

They looked like newborn rats.

They were strangely human-like, but unpleasant to look at.

These are probably the monsters in the message called Dombas.

The monsters didn't rush right away, even though I was moved into the room.

They didn't seem to notice my existence in the first place.

I held my breath and did not move.

There were no eyes on the faces of the monsters.

They may be a species that has deteriorated vision as they are in a dark cavity.

If so, they'll use their hearing or smell.

If they had developed a sense of smell, they would have already noticed my existence, which means that they depend on hearing.

I carefully observed the monsters.

The monsters were moving slowly.

With a constant flow line.

They went back and forth in the same place as if they were units that issued patrol orders for reconnaissance in the game.

Their number is thirty-one.

Thirty of the same-looking monsters were mixed with a slightly unusual one.

The peculiar one stood still in the center of the cavity.

Unlike the other guys who are moving smoothly, this one didn't move at all.

That's probably the 'mother body' mentioned in the message.

What I had to do was simple and clear.

It was enough to catch all of them and kill them.

I slowly moved my hand to my waist to pull out my sword.

Shing.

That was the sound.

It wasn't the sound of a sword being pulled out, and it wasn't the sound of my feet moving.

There was a slight sound of my leather armor rubbing as I moved my hand to my waist.

The monsters were walking around, so the sound didn't even feel that loud.

However,

The monsters did not miss that small, foreign sound.

All the monsters in the room stopped moving and turned to me.

Eyeless faces turned to me.

They flashed with life.

The monsters' bare arms swung from the side.

I put magic in the shield on my left arm and swung it.

In the center of the shield was an iron hemisphere.

I thought I would hit the monster's arm and break the arm in reverse.

Bang!

My body was pushed back.

It was an unexpected shock, so I almost rolled back because I didn't give enough strength to my waist.

That was unexpected.

As I cleared the 6th floor, I gained some confidence.

Although I struggled on the 6th floor, it was overwhelming in number.

My confidence rose even more after defeating Priest Quezas, the most difficult enemy.

So it was embarrassing to see the situation in which the stupid eyeless monster that looked like that had absurdly pushed me back with a swinging arm.

The skinny arm of the monster that pushed me looked fine even though it collided with the magical shield.

The monster started running straight at me.

Huh, oh dear.

It's really ridiculous.

How much more difficult does this crazy tutorial have to be in order to get the job done?

I pulled out my sword.

The running monster's movement was simple.

This was good news.

They seem to have superior strength compared to skeleton soldiers and knights, but their movements are no different from those of wild animals.

I swung the sword at the speed of the monster running.

No, I was trying to swing it.

My right arm holding the sword was rigid.

It did not move.

Stiffness began from my shoulder, and the stiffness spread to the tips of my fingers.

I lifted it halfway, but my hand loosened, and the sword fell to the floor.

My arm was also completely weak and drooped.

Our eyes met in embarrassment.

The mother body that stood still in the center of the cavity.

The mother body was looking straight at me with shining, bright green eyes.

Intuitively, I guessed that those strange eyeballs caused the stiffness in my arms.

Thud.

Eventually, I couldn't cope with the monster that was running.

I had to hit it with my body as it was.

I rolled to the floor.

[Blink]

Using Blink in place, I erased the rolling kinetic energy and stopped in place.

The monster that hit me hadn't stopped yet.

That wasn't the problem.

The common monster wasn't the only one.

The monsters didn't scream at all, they didn't even have eyes, but the

hostility they were sending me was so clearly felt.

They could see that I was crouching and tense like a cat and they were beasts on the verge of running forward.

Unsurprisingly, the monsters started running towards me almost at the same time.

The monsters attacked me from all sides, the mother body's green eyes were still shining, and my right arm was still motionless.

Wow.

That's true.

"It's exciting?"

Notes:

*) Face Madam: it is slang and literally it is sort of a bad word. but it can be used in a not bad way though. It represents someone who has an outstandingly beautiful face (every other person in his/her group is not beautiful or handsome like him or her) for instance.

Side Story 4

Iddy (4)

I stepped on the head of a monster that fell on the floor.

The head burst with the sound of a fruit popping.

Blood and brain fluid spewed out of the head, and bone fragments and brains could be found in the crushed debris.

It was a strangely reassuring sight.

It wasn't the crazy sound that calmed my mind at the grotesque sight.

At least, it was nice to see that these eyeless monsters are normal creatures.

These monsters were bizarre.

They were in appearance, but even more so with their physical ability.

Certainly, they seemed scrawny, thin arms and lacking muscle mass, but the force that came out of their arms surpassed the level of a skeleton soldier as well as a skeleton knight on the 6th floor.

If thirty of these guys were released on the day of the dialogue agreement, most of the challengers would probably be wiped out without being able to resist properly.

But that wasn't the only reason these guys made me feel terrible.

It isn't their physical ability, but it's creepy to hear those babbling words.

[It's exciting?]

[It's exciting.]

They were talking.

These guys who didn't even make a scream or cheer at first ran into me while talking.

[Exciting!]

[It's exciting?]

They were imitating the words I muttered unconsciously.

As if there was only one word, 'excitement' as a language in this world.

It didn't hurt me directly, but I felt uncomfortable.

Truly.

[Exciting!]

The monsters even looked excited.

Oh crazy.

Rolling around with fresh skeletons that seemed to have just crawled out of the grave, I thought that there would be no other enemies more disgusting and unpleasant.

I was mistaken.

I only went up one floor, but I encountered things that were twice as eerie as the skeletons.

[Exciting...!]

Cried a monster who had been kicked in the side by me.

[...Excite! Excite! Excite!!]

The monster in a mounting position cried out every time my fist hit its face.

Oh crazy.

It screamed 'excite, excite' every time it was hit, so it's more like a freaky pervert bastard than a bad feeling.

Obviously, I'm beating them, but why do they make me feel bad every time I hit them.

At that time, a monster climbed behind my back.

As if the monster would not let me go, it squeezed my neck with both arms.

The disgusting smell of the monster's breath came out.

And with a voice almost sobbing.

[Excite.....]

"Stop it! These crazy eyeless idiots!"

I shouted, holding back the creepy sensations.

[Talaria's Wings]

I used Talaria's Wings.

Huge wings appeared behind my back, and the monster hanging on my back bounced off with sharp wings stabbed through its chest.

Its heart was pierced, and the monster fell on the floor and could not

stand up again.

One of the monsters died in vain, but the other monsters weren't a wink saddened by it.

The monsters were mad at the new words they heard.

[Eyeless idiots! Excite! Stop!]

[Stop! Excite! Crazy eyeless idiots!]

[Eyeless idiots! Exciting!]

[Exciting eyeless idiots! Crazy! stop!]

...Wah, this is driving me crazy.

* * *

They were monsters that hit the spot.

From appearance to behavior, they were nasty monsters that felt unpleasant from the beginning to the end.

They were monsters that showed me how displeasure can make a person go mad.

As I struck down the monsters without hesitation, there was only one body left: the mother's.

The mother's body was still shining its green eyes.

[Excite.]

Unlike the other monsters, the mother wasn't an eyesore.

But it had the same speech impairment.

[Eyeless idiot...]

As the mother body said so, it looked at its monster kin who had fallen at its feet.

Those green eyes look strangely faint.

Its voice is also low.

As if talking to a fallen fellow.

What bullshit is this?

[Crazy eyeless idiot. Exciting.]

The mother body raised its hand and touched its chest.

Like introducing itself.

Then moved its hand again and said, pointing towards me.

[This crazy eyeless idiot stop?]

...What is it saying now?

The mother body didn't try to resist, and I could easily burst its head to kill it.

After killing the mothers body, my stiff right arm began to move again.

[The 7th floor gateway begins.]

Description: The Trial on the 7th floor consists of three stages.

Each level contains 2, 3 and 9 rooms.

Each room can be traversed through a magic circle engraved on the

wall.

Each room contains a number of Izaaku's Disaster Dombas and one of their mother bodies.

You have cleared stage 7-1.

Some information on the 7th floor stage will be released.

The Izaaku Dungeon is made up of hundreds of cavities connected by short-range portals.

The Izaaku Dungeon, which is complicatedly structured like a maze, has been attacked a long time ago, and a safe route has been revealed.

However, somewhere in the Izaaku Dungeon there is an unknown cavity that no one has ever been to.

Among those unknown cavities, there was also a pit inhabited by a group of Dombas.

Izaaku's Disaster Dombas are foreign entities.

Some claim that they are new creatures created through experimentation by a madly obsessed warlock, while others say they may be demons summoned from Hell.

Their origin is not exactly known.

Early Dombas are characterized by imitating the words spoken by the other party.

The mother body can stiffen their opponent's limbs through their eyes.

Clear the second trial to learn more about the 7th floor gateway.

1. Clear all rooms and defeat all enemies

1. Clear stage 7-1. [Complete]

1. Clear stage 7-2.

1. ?

I learned a little about the origins and backgrounds of the monsters, but I wasn't happy at all.

What good would it be to know that these monsters existed?

It only adds to the discomfort.

I know a little about the stage mission with question marks on it.

That fourth goal would be to clear stage 7-3 anyway.

It was a worrisome stage in many ways, but clearing it was easy.

If the difficulty remained the same, it seemed that stage 7-2 and stage 7-3 could be cleared soon.

It didn't seem like a stage like the 6th floor that took months to clear.

The newly acquired Soul Exploitation Skill was very satisfying.

Small recovery every time you use the wide-area debuff and kill an enemy.

It looked good just by reading the skill description, but when I used it in practice, it was better than that.

The monsters affected by the debuff were noticeably unnatural in movement, and the amount of recovery was more than expected.

If I had acquired this skill earlier and applied it to the 6th floor skeleton soldiers as well.

It would have been much easier to clear the 6th floor.

A portal appeared on the floor.

A portal appeared from the floor, not from the wall.

I climbed on the portal.

After a while, I was moved to another cavity.

[You have entered stage 7-2.]

I was moved.

The newly entered cavity was about three or four times wider than the previous one.

And there were three or four times as many monsters.

I held my breath reflexively.

Again, the monsters did not notice my position.

It wasn't because vision does not exist for the monsters named Dombas.

The monsters were engrossed in something.

The monsters were facing their mother's body, squatting in the middle of the cavity.

Just as when a celebrity appeared on the streets of Myeongdong, all the monsters faced the mother body.

As if they wanted to be close at least a little, they stuck together.

The monsters at the end seemed to try to look at the mother body by getting on the shoulders of other monsters.

No, what's it for, for creatures who don't have vision?

There were dozens of monsters crowding, but no noise was heard.

The mother body, who was getting everyone's attention, narrowed its green eyes and was scratching the floor with a piece of stone in its hand.

Scratch, scratch.

I could only hear the mother body scrawling something on the floor.

I wondered what the hell it was doing, so I watched them quietly.

After a while, the mother body's voice rang out in a quiet cavity.

[Excite.]

The mother body pointed to the figure she drew on the floor and speared it.

And.

[Excite.]

[Excite.]

[Excite.]

[Excite.]

[Excite.]

All the monsters followed the word.

Those crazy things are doing that here too.

Stages 7-1 and 7-2 are clearly separate stages, but the words the monsters heard and remembered seemed to be the same.

[Eyeless idiot.]

The mother body pointed to the figure next to it and speared it again.

[Eyeless idiot.]

[Eyeless idiot.]

[Eyeless idiot.]

[Eyeless idiot.]

[Eyeless idiot.]

Again, the monsters imitated their mother body's words.

Only then could I see what the monsters were doing.

I got goosebumps momentarily.

Language.

Those monsters were now building a language among themselves.

[Stop...]

The mother body who was trying to spear the figure again suddenly stopped speaking.

Then it lifted its green eyes off the floor and looked at me.

Following that gaze, the faces of the monsters turned towards me.

* * *

As the mother body's eyes turned to me, my right leg stiffened.

I was holding a sword earlier, but this time it's my right leg.

What are the laws here?

I didn't know.

[Crazy eyeless idiot!]

[This eyeless idiot!]

I think my guess is correct that these monsters were studying language.

In the first stage, the monsters who spoke randomly combined words came to me with a somewhat unified vocabulary.

[Soul Exploitation]

As soon as I used Soul Exploitation, the movement of the monsters was disrupted.

The more I used it, the better it was.

Wide area debuff.

Their words stop, and suddenly their body gets tired and loses energy in the battle for no reason.

It will be embarrassing to the person who is on the other end.

If they don't know that it's a skill, they might be afraid of the unknown power.

It was effective enough against monsters, but it seemed more intimidating when used against intelligent enemies.

One leg hit the ground and bounced.

I swung my sword towards the monster that was running at the forefront.

[Eyeless idiot exci...!]

The body of the black monster was cut in half.

[Talaria's Wings]

There is also a minor buff effect, but it has a glide effect on Talaria's Wings.

If the body is in the air even a little, it is applied unconditionally.

It was only about 30 centimeters, but there was a monster flying towards me like a bullet.

I swung my sword again.

The sword slit the monster's neck.

The head was cut off, but the torso flew away and collided with me.

[Blink]

I had no intention of falling and getting tangled up with the corpse.

Blink was a highly valuable skill in mobility itself, but it was a highly utilized skill in that it removes the kinetic energy currently applied and moves it to a stationary state at the target point.

I grabbed the monster's head right in front where I moved with Blink.

The heads of the monsters were a little smaller than that of a normal adult human.

Like playing with children's basketballs.

It was just that size.

I put the head down on the floor, like dropping it into the hoop.

The monster's head broke and blood splattered.

It was enough to reach the bodies and faces of the monsters right in front of me.

[Crazy!]

[Stop! Crazy!]

Indeed, the use of the monster's vocabulary was appropriate.

Did they give it meaning according to the situation when they spoke?

After the battle began, there were several things I learned.

The monsters on the 7-1 floor and the monsters on the 7-2 floor were the same but different.

They shared what they heard from me and the external features were the same.

The behavior was subtly different.

First of all, the monsters were wearing pieces of raw leather.

The mother body who can see over there wore a decent piece of clothes on its shoulder like a muffler.

I wondered if it was a by-product of adventurers appearing.

The other difference was that unlike the monsters on the 7-1 floor, who were talking without knowing any meaning, the monsters on the 7-2 floor seemed to think and spit out the meaning of words properly.

They just seemed a little higher in intelligence itself.

Finally, there was a difference in the aggressiveness of the monsters.

The monsters on the 7-1 floor ran wildly like beasts who knew no pain.

However, the monsters here were relatively less active.

[Stop. Stop.]

[Eyeless idiot. Stop.]

The evidence was the monsters crept out of their places and hid themselves.

Several monsters attacked aggressively, but it was limited to a small number of individuals.

After picking and killing the worst ones, the monsters quickly lost their fighting spirit.

I was sure.

These monsters learned fear.

Side Story 5

Iddy (5)

[Stage 7-2]

“Do you want to live?”

It looks like that.

The monsters on the 7-1 floor rushed blindly without even thinking about their own lives.

These guys here were obviously scared of getting hurt and dying.

It was interesting.

The acquisition of language led to the development of intelligence, and the developed intelligence led to the improvement of self-consciousness.

[Want to live.]

[Want to live.]

The monsters also imitated my words.

I’m not saying they know what they mean.

They began to withdraw little by little, as if they didn’t want to fight with me anymore.

Rather than the community’s will to kill a common enemy, it was the individual ‘I’s will to live.

How do I deal with enemies who are lingering in fear?

How can I kill more efficiently, using less power?

It would be nice if communication worked.

These monsters imitated my words, but it was unlikely that a conversation would be possible.

I approached the monsters one step at a time.

The monsters stepped back just as much as I approached.

They pulled their butts back and maintained the gap.

They didn't turn around and run away toward the wall at all.

Even though they were terrified, they maintained order.

I didn't see them fighting from behind other monsters or pushing their own people toward me.

They are a disordered crowd.

I don't know if this is what they know

Well... This is difficult.

My legs are still not moving.

It was easier to fight against enemies who were aggressively tackling me rather than enemies that were tightly united and responding defensively.

I can't.

Even by using more blinks, I have to squeeze back into the middle of the monsters and force them into a melee.

When my legs were stiff, each flash was precious, but it seemed unavoidable.

It was then.

The mother body, who was watching the situation after falling away from the fight, suddenly turned around and started running.

Wondering what it was doing, I stared at it blankly.

It was the first time I had ever seen the mother body who had been standing still without constantly participating in battles, actively moving its body like that

The mother body touched the portals magic circle, and went to the next room.

I was fascinated by the unexpected movement of the mother body.

No, did it run away from here?

While its people were still fighting?

Perhaps because the mother body disappeared, even the stiffness of my leg was relieved.

It was embarrassing.

The monsters who were holding the line while surrounding me were more embarrassed than I was.

The murmur of a few words filled the cavity.

And, as if a lightning bolt suddenly fell from the sky full of dark clouds, a scream burst out.

[Stop! Stop!]

[Crazy... Stop.]

[Stop! Stop! Stop!]

Once the scream burst out, all the monsters began to scream and scream.

It felt as if they were howling.

They didn't have eyes, so they couldn't shed tears.

However, I felt a deep sense of loss and betrayal in the voices of the monsters.

Huh, yeah.

I knew that the mother body was a special entity compared to other monsters.

It was the only unique entity in the group.

It alone had eyes, and through those eyes, it even had the ability to stiffen the limbs of the enemy.

Besides, it had been shown to have higher intelligence than the other monsters.

From the attitude of teaching something to the monsters.

Even more plausible word combinations.

But I never thought that it would leave the community and run away alone.

In the first place, I didn't expect the monsters to be able to use the portal, and I didn't think that the mother body, who seemed to be the center and leader of the monster group, would abandon its people.

The monsters kept wailing.

The battle line they had maintained while they were frightened

collapsed.

The monsters roared and cried, paced around, and fell to the floor, as if they had been more shocked by the betrayal of their mother body than by my existence.

There seemed to be no intention of running away with the mother body.

It's a bit of a drag, but I have to finish the job here.

[Stop. Stop...]

The monsters completely lost their spirit.

But I couldn't just leave them alone.

“Come here.”

[Soul Cry.]

It was one of the skills I got on the 6th floor.

It is a skill that has replaced the Battle Cry skill.

When used, it slightly increases my combat power and gives the opponent a weak sense of intimidation.

And it prevents the enemy who is fighting with me from fleeing.

Unlike the sword of the skeleton knight on the 6th floor, it didn't have a strong aggro ability to call in enemies in the distance.

It was just enough to prevent the enemies fighting with me from retreating and running away.

Even so, the effect depends on the situation and my condition.

However,

[Stop.]

The monsters whose mental states had been blown away approached me, dragging their feet while weeping as if they never wanted to fight.

[Stop!]

[Want to live!]

[Eyeless idiots want to live.]

[Crazy. Want to stop]

I was able to deal with enemies who had lost their former intentions but could not escape without any danger.

Only five minutes after the battle resumed, the noisy monsters fell asleep in silence.

I thought the stage was easier than I thought.

I thought I could clear the 7th floor within the day.

It was a brief illusion for a moment.

* * *

The stage on the 7-2 floor consisted of three rooms.

In this room, a portal magic circle was drawn on the left wall from the front and on the right wall.

Without thinking, the moment when I tried to reach out to the left magic circle where the mother body ran away.

I realized my mistake.

Damn it.

My thoughts were short.

I shouldn't have let the mother body run away.

Originally, there was one mother body in every room.

But in the room on the left where the mother just ran away, there will now be two mother bodies.

Two mother bodies.

If both mother bodies can exert a stiffening effect.

I have to fight with two of my limbs sealed.

The difficulty level that I'll be having.

In the worst case, both of my legs may become stiff.

Damn it.

I haven't trained for this.

No, who would prepare for a battle with both legs lost?

If you lost both legs in battle, you're just dead.

Of course, there is only one mother body in the room on the right.

The problem is that when this mother body runs away again, three mother bodies will remain in the third room.

I would have to fight with only one limb.

Oh God.

It doesn't make sense.

The risk was too great to even try recklessly.

[Information on the Dombas is updated.]

– Dombas are special creatures.

They have high intelligence and learning ability, excellent physical ability, dungeon magic, and even a special condition that can maintain their physical health without a supply of nutrition for a long time.

But what's most special about them is that they have leaders in their groups.

The mother body paralyzes one of the enemy's limbs through their special eyeballs.

It is certainly a powerful effect, but an adventurer party of more than five or six people would be able to deal with the Dombas without problems.

However, at one point, a mother body began to escape the crisis and fled to a room where other Dombas lived.

Adventurers had to deal with a group of Dombas that included more and more mother bodies as they went on.

Due to these characteristics, the Dombas' realm has begun to be avoided by all adventurers.

Until Dombas multiplied over and over again, and took up most of the depths of the Izaaku Dungeon, no clear strategy was found.

A message appeared and explained Dombas and the mother body.

I was very thankful for the explanation.

When I read it diligently wondering if it could tell me how to fix it, there was an explanation that ended with ‘There is no strategy, haha’.

Why did you explain it, then?

You want me to feel how difficult it is in advance?

Do you want me to scratch my head and make it a little bit more intense?

* * *

It’s messy.

I looked around the cavity.

Unlike the 7-1 floor, the rooms on the 7-2 floors had this and that.

There was one thing after another.

It was difficult to pinpoint something.

There was a structure in which a rag blanket was placed on a wooden stick and made like the ceiling of a tent.

It is presumed to be the bedroom used by the mother body.

It was evidence that clearly stated that their intelligence was more developed compared to the Dombas on the 7-1 floor.

I searched for any clues.

Usually, games hide important clues or items in these places.

When I searched the tent, I found a good thing.

It was a picture painted on leather.

It was painted in red dye.

Three squares were arranged in a triangular shape.

It looked like a map.

It didn't seem very useful.

I decided to quit the trash search.

There were two portals in this room.

One on the left wall from the front and one on the right wall.

It was the portal on the left wall that the mother body ran away to.

First, let's go to the room connected to the right wall.

There will be only one mother body there.

And before the mother body tries to run away, kill it first.

After that, it's better to think slowly about the strategy for the left room.

* * *

"Ah, come on! Please!"

Damn it.

What the hell are the guys who designed the Hell difficulty stage thinking?

What do you usually think about, and to create a weird stage like this?

[Want to live.]

[Stop. Eyeless idiot stop.]

“Shut up, you bastards!”

I cried out, smashing the back of the head of the monster crawling on the floor.

The monsters whined without even thinking of resisting.

Somehow, these monsters must be connected by a sacred connection to share each other's thoughts and feelings.

Even when I saw the monsters imitating what I said in the first room.

The mother body's reaction was more shocking.

As soon as I entered the second room, the mother of this room turned around and ran away.

I tried using the skill Soul Cry in a hurry, but even that didn't work.

I was completely ignored as if not treated as an enemy.

“Ruined.”

[Ruined. Ruined.]

[Want to ruined.]

[Shut up...]

The monsters crawling around repeated my words again.

They were monsters who were very specialized in scratching people's nerves.

Ugh.

Let's organize my thoughts

The 7-2 floor consists of three rooms.

And I missed both the mother bodies I encountered while settling the two rooms.

In other words, in the last room on the 7-2 floor.

There are three mother bodies.

Suppose three mother bodies each seal a different limb.

When that happens, I'll have to fight with only my head and torso with one of my remaining limbs.

I roughly pictured the battle situation in my head.

Relying on a single arm or leg to move, I can only hit the torso and bite the enemy with my teeth.

Fuck, what am I, an eel?

This couldn't be answered.

“Ha.”

If this happens, I have no choice but to listen to Kirikiri's second advice.

Kirikiri gave me two tips for the 7th floor.

One was advice that my recent training would be very effective, and the other.

[Summon Envoy (Lv.???)]

Description: This is the power of an unknown god who refused to

reveal his name to the challenger.

It is possible to summon an envoy for a certain period of time using an item engraved with a part of the envoy's soul as a medium.

It is a power with God's constraint in it.

Number of casts (5/5)

It was advised to use this lion summoning skill.

[Lizardman Idaltar's* Soul Stone]

Description: A soulstone of Idaltar, the strongest and most sinister warrior among the Lizardmen living in the Aydin Swamp.

It is available for sale at the shop window.

“Hmm...”

I wonder if this is really the right decision?

Notes:

*) Previously translated as Idaltaru and Idy by another group.

Side Story 6

Iddy (6)

No matter how much I thought about it, it wasn't quite right.

It was suicide to charge into a room with three mother bodies.

Waiting for the round to end like this should be the way to go.

And I could try again in the next round.

However, in the next round, if the mother bodies ran away as they are now, I would only face the same situation again.

How about taking some time and devoting myself to training?

Until all my limbs can be completely sealed, and I can crawl around with my torso and bite and kill the monsters with my mouth.

Damn it.

It was nonsense.

Crawling with my torso, biting monsters and killing them?

Would I even be a human? An African snake in the mask of a Homo sapiens.

It wasn't training, it was evolution.

Damn it.

The 7th floor was said to be easier than the 6th floor, but in the end, I still got stuck again.

It was not a stage that required more than 5 people for nothing.

It seems like a stage that can be easily cleared even if there were only five or two people in the group, but it was a problem that could not be solved alone.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty (4/7)]

I tried accessing the community on Hell difficulty.

The community was cluttered because of the dialogue meeting day, but this was different.

[Kim Mi-young (1st floor): It's been more than 10 hours since Hyung-jin entered, right?]

[Park Chun-su (1st floor): Yes. It's been 10 hours and 21 minutes now.]

[Oh Hye-ri (1st floor): Oh, then he must have crossed the rope trap. Unless he passed out in the middle.]

Challengers on Hell difficulty are, as always, chattering in the community.

The theme was the attack on the first floor by a challenger named Lee Hyung-jin.

It seems that it has already been 10 hours since he entered the stage.

10 hours.

If you were caught by an arrow trap, it is time to return to the waiting room or die from excessive blood loss.

The challengers are excited about whether Lee Hyung-jin will come out of the 1st floor.

There was no particular atmosphere.

They just sit down in the waiting room or at the entrance of the first floor and chat about it all day long.

I don't know what is so enjoyable.

They sometimes said this from time to time.

[Park Chun-su (1st floor): Biscuits are really cost-effective honey. You can buy five bags of biscuits just by passing through the first trap. I bought it once and am eating it for the third time. It's good to eat with salty jerky, and it's good to feel full, and it's good to eat one by one while being in the community.]

[Oh Hye-ri (1st floor): Oh, great tip.]

Damn...

How the hell do they think about living, if they just sit still and eat biscuits?

I couldn't understand.

Apart from me, there were a total of 6 living Hell difficulty challengers.

Five of them gave up on challenging stages.

They are focusing on finding food and surviving with small points given at the end of the round.

Their only hope was the delusion that someone would clear the Tutorial and send everyone back home.

The challenger named Lee Hyung-jin was trying hard to attack by himself, but his speed was too slow.

How long until he will be able to clear the first floor?

I wanted to urge the community to stop talking and challenge the

arrow trap once more.

I did not put it into action.

If I rushed to drive them away, they would all die in the midst of an accident.

Huh.

I sighed once and turned off the community window.

I felt it on the 6th floor, but it's impossible to raise them and use them as party members.

At least it wouldn't be possible until I got old and died.

If this happens, I have no choice but to listen to Kirikiri's second advice.

Kirikiri mentioned my skill to summon envoys while advising me on the 7th floor strategy.

[Summon Envoy (Lv.???)]

Description: This is the power of an unknown god who refused to reveal his name to the challenger.

It is possible to summon an envoy for a certain period of time using an item engraved with a part of the envoy's soul as a medium.

It is a power with God's constraint in it.

Number of casts (5/5)

Kirikiri said that this skill can be used to summon temporary companions.

And even saying that that colleague will surely be of great help

Well.

It was not convincing.

Of course, Kirikiri's advice was always valuable and valid.

This time it was not so clear.

Summon Envoy is a skill that summons dead enemies.

And nowhere in this skill description did it say that the summoned deceased could be used as an ally.

Even when I asked Kirikiri, she said they are summoned just as they were before.

There was a limit to the number of times, so it was a waste to use it as a test.

It was a skill with great variables and risk.

I thought it was a skill that was useful only when trying to revive the enemy and find out information through interrogation.

Even in the midst of a hellish attack on the 6th floor, I didn't use this skill.

No matter how difficult it is, it was because I had the belief that if I grew up like this, I would be able to clear the 6th floor someday.

But now I needed a variable.

Unlike the 6th floor, I was not easily convinced that even if I grew through training, I would be able to clear the 7th floor.

After a while, I stopped worrying and opened my inventory.

Let's do it.

I needed a colleague so desperately now.

A companion and meat shield who will meet the mother body's stiffness for even a single blow.

If it doesn't work, let's knock them out.

[Lizardman Idaltar's Soul Stone]

Description: A soulstone of Idaltar, the strongest and most sinister warrior among the Lizardmen living in the Aydin Swamp.

It is available for sale at the shop window.

The target to be resurrected was a Lizardman, who appeared as a boss mob on the 5th floor.

She was the only one who could survive the Dombas crowd during the melee.

[Would you like to use Summon Envoy on this Soul Stone?]

A message appeared as I was holding the soul stone in my hand.

Sigh, is this really the right decision?

This Lizardman was a real idiot.

“Yes.”

No matter how much I thought about it, there was no other way.

At the same time as my answer, the soul stone was broken and shattered into powder.

While watching the strange powder that was flying in the closed room without any wind, a strong light emanated from the front.

A very short flash passed, and the body of a Lizardman, facing me, appeared in the middle of the closed room.

“Croak.”

The Lizardman looked around as if embarrassed to find me.

“Croak, Warrior, what’s going on here?”

The Lizardman recognized me.

Fortunately she didn’t jump on me.

I thought she might attack right away.

How should I explain it?

“I brought you back.”

It was easy to understand and concise.

First of all, she had to understand this situation.

The Lizardman tilted her head.

The Lizardman, who had been agonizing about it for a while, nodded as if she understood now.

Then she laid flat on the floor and said to me,

“As expected, you had me in mind. I know that you couldn’t help it because we were enemies of each other before. Accepting a battle is a true warrior’s attitude. I will forget about the mean numbers you made. Get on.”

It was good news that she had no resentment at me for deceiving and killing the Lizardmen in previous battles, but the last words didn’t make sense.

“...Get on?”

“*Croak, Croak*, don’t be shy and get on. I’m very excited. *Croak.*”

Breathing out, sniffing the floor, the tip of her tail smacking the floor, and a voice trembling with excitement.

With the ability of the pre-Babel knowledge skills to perfectly translate not only language but also body language, I soon understood the meaning of what the Lizardman was saying.

“*Croak*, you wanted to revive me. I heard that human sexual desire was strong, but I didn’t know it was this much. *Croak, Croak.*”

“No! That’s not it!”

* * *

“I have no intention of mating!”

I talked bluntly.

To put it a little mildly, this libido-mad lizard distorts or ignores my words.

“Why!”

The lizard seemed astonished as to how it could be.

I was rather astonished at that attitude.

“Why!? I wonder why you came to the conclusion that you and I have to mate!”

“*Croak...* That, how do I say that with my mouth? I already noticed it when I saw you the last time. You have a bit of a nasty personality, *Croak.*”

Ah... Ah...!

The Lizardman, burning with the race's desire to breed, couldn't make any sense.

Eventually I had to put on a serious face and explain to her the reasons for over thirty minutes to convince her.

I don't like the Lizardmen; I have no intention of breeding; and I have no intention of sexual intercourse.

She was too heated to speak seriously, so I continued to explain it angrily without realizing.

“...*Croak.*”

As a result, the Lizardman was noticeably depressed.

What is this?

Why am I feeling guilty?

What did I do wrong?

“I understood..... *Croak.*”

The Lizardman Idaltar, squatting with her knees together, swept the floor, moving her tail from side to side like a windshield wiper.

Even though she was sitting on the floor, her head came up to my chest.

She was a surprisingly good conversation partner after calming down.

It was a relief.

I decided to ask her one question first before I spoke about my purpose in summoning her.

Lizardman Idaltar was a boss mob met on the 5th floor.

At that time, she was burning with desire to breed with me, and when I refused, she went crazy and raged.

But this time, she quietly accepted my refusal.

The difference in attitude was a little puzzling.

“*Croak*, isn’t it natural? I was stronger then.”

Idaltar said, breathing out with excitement.

Of course, I did not take it for granted.

What is this nonsense again?

I was stronger then?

It was me who eventually won.

“*Croak, croak*, whatever the fact is, let’s just move on.”

Whatever the fact is and move on?

The fact that I was stronger was the fact.

Why just move on?

“*Croak*, anyway, I thought I was stronger. Courtship is the right of the stronger person. You didn’t seem to accept my abilities, so I had to show my strength.”

I understood it roughly.

About Lizardmen’s notion of sex.

In their notion that they became insane because they were intoxicated with the existence of the strong, courtship is the privilege of the strong, and it is natural to accept the courtship of the strong.

So Idaltar, who thought she was stronger than me, couldn't accept my refusal.

Idaltar, who thought that I was underestimating her power, went straight to exercising her skills.

I saw it as an attempt of rape.

Actually it was.

"Then now?"

"*Croak*, at a glance you look stronger than me. I can't help it."

Idaltar was so coolly convinced.

Of course, she did not completely give up her desire to reproduce.

"*Croak*, if you don't like me that much, I'll have to work harder. So you want to welcome me as a bride."

No, don't bother trying.

I won't be willing to do that forever.

"If you watch my skills, you will change your mind little by little.
Croak. It is natural for a strong male to be paired with a strong female.
Croak."

It was a reason I hadn't heard of before.

Side Story 7

Iddy (7)

After explaining to Idaltar, I immediately tried to enter the last room.

“Wait!”

“Why?”

“*Croak*, are you just going like this?”

Idaltar asked as if she didn’t understand.

Then let’s just try and challenge it.

Should I put money in the pig’s mouth* and go through it?

(T/N: It’s part of a ritual where foods were arranged as an offering to the spirits. The main focus was a pig’s head and people would put money in the pig’s mouth to wish for success.)

“*Croak*, how about having a meal first?”

“Meal?”

“Haven’t I just been resurrected? I need a meal. *Croak, Croak.*”

It was a reasonable statement.

I took drinking water and jerky out of my inventory, but Idaltar refused.

Idaltar insisted that she wanted a proper “meal”.

Meals are frozen meals.

It looks like what a frog would eat in a swamp.

I thought about it for a while.

How about ignoring Idaltar's opinion and forcibly dragging her away?

I decided to stop.

At best, she's already coming cooperatively, so there was no need to twist the situation.

It was a waste of time.

"What's wrong with jerky?"

"There are not enough nutrients. *Croak*. A person must eat vegetables and fruits as well as meat."

I was a little surprised.

First, I was surprised that Lizardmen had the concept of balanced nutrition.

Second, I was amazed at her calling me a person.

It seems that the range of 'person' translated through pre-Babel knowledge skills is wider than I thought.

"*Croak*, I want a meal with more nutrients."

Idaltar insisted strongly.

I refuted the claim.

"This is a comprehensive nutritional jerky."

“*Croak*, where the hell is that from?”

It’s real.

This is a jerky made to provide all the nutrients you really need.

When asked where such jerky came from, it was in the shop window of the Tutorial system.

Actually, day in and day out I have only been eating jerky, but I did not experience any problems such as lack of nutrition.

“*Croak.*”

As I explained the nutritional content of the jerky, Idaltar began to eat the jerky quietly, whispering.

She looked sad somehow.

“*Croak, Croak.*”

Idaltar chewed and stuffed the jerky in her mouth.

You don’t like beef jerky?

“Then would you like to eat this?”

Looking through my inventory, there was a whipped cream cake I bought for Kirikiri.

I took it out.

“*Croak*, I don’t know what it is, but I’ll try it first.”

Idaltar said so and hurriedly removed the jerky from her hand and accepted the plate.

“*Croak*, what is this?”

“Cake.”

“What about this?”

“Fresh cream. It’s just fruit on top.”

By the way, that’s dairy, is it okay?

Wouldn’t lizards get sick when they eat dairy products?

I was worried and asked.

“*Croak*, it’s okay to eat.”

Glad it was.

I thought they couldn’t eat cake because there was a lot of milk in it.

Idaltar ate the cake little by little with her fingers.

She looked happy.

It seems that what Idaltar wanted was not to replenish nutrition before the battle, but to take a little more time off like this.

“*Croak*, what is this bread made of?”

“Wheat flour, milk, eggs, butter. Something like that.”

“*Croak!* The bread made from wheat is so soft!”

Idaltar was amazed as she shuddered.

“It’s great. *Croak, Croak.*”

Watching Idaltar praise it as delicious.

I was oddly proud.

Is this the charm of a different world?

“You gave me jerky over something so delicious!”

No, what’s wrong with jerky.

I hope you will refrain from making derogatory remarks towards beef jerky.

“*Croak*, no matter how nutritious it was, it’s not good to eat jerky every time.”

“It’s not good, but it’s simple.”

“Then your taste may deteriorate. *Croak, Croak.*”

My taste is deteriorating.

Does that make sense?

It was a minor problem.

When was the last time I used my taste buds?

Perhaps the last time was when I licked the poison on the arrowheads on the third floor and said, ‘Oh, this is neurotoxin’.

I’d rather have my taste deteriorate.

All the time, it wasn’t once or twice that I was disgusted by pieces of the enemy’s flesh, and blood entering my mouth.

“*Croak*, in the past, I also ate a lot of jerky.”

In the past?

“Because I was expelled from the tribe and always had insufficient food to eat, I made jerky every time I succeeded in hunting and ate it.

Croak.”

Suddenly, a tragic past has emerged.

It was more unexpected than that.

That was the story of the past, especially the story of hunting.

“Do you remember that time?”

“Croak, of course.”

If so, do you remember how you got into the Tutorial?

I quickly asked questions because of the excitement that I might have learned the secret of the Tutorial by accident.

“Croak, I don’t know.”

* * *

Unfortunately, I couldn’t uncover the secrets of the Tutorial through Iddy’s past.

She tried to recall the time when she came into the Tutorial, but even that was impossible.

Idaltar couldn’t remember the moment.

She said that the memory at the time was not erased, but if she tries to recall the memory in connection with the Tutorial, it seems that she cannot recall the memory regardless of the time.

It seemed to be a system constraint.

Somehow, the system limits anything about the past.

I quit in the end.

From some point, it seemed to me that Idaltar was distressed from her inability to recall.

It was such a weird tutorial.

It was like that for every single thing,

The Idaltar I'm seeing right now is the 5th floor boss.

Then, when a challenger challenges the boss room on the 5th floor, which Idaltar are they facing?

Can this Idaltar and that Idaltar be called the same Idaltar?

The settings in the past have changed, but the present is different, and the future will be changed.

What happens to Idaltar when the duration of Summon Envoy is over?

After eating, I was finally ready to enter the third room.

I touched the portal and asked Idaltar.

“Are you ready?”

“*Croak.*”

Idaltar nodded and giggled.

I was very fortunate in many ways.

So far, I didn't think that Idaltar would be this cooperative.

[Would you like to move?]

“Yes.”

I entered the third room through the portal.

Unlike the monsters belatedly noticing my entry in the previous two rooms, the Dombas in the third room reacted immediately as soon as I entered.

As if they were waiting for me to come in.

[This crazy eyeless idiot!]

[Come here! Do you want to live?]

[Damn it! Damn it!]

Using the newly added vocabulary, they screamed loudly.

I could see that the atmosphere of the monsters was completely upset.

They did not see me as a mere intruder.

Their hostility roared.

I was not seen as repulsive, but as an enemy that must be captured and killed.

In the meantime, they don't rush, but they stick to each other and keep their positions.

Now, they're positioning themselves very properly.

It was easy to see what caused the changes the monsters showed.

Three mother bodies standing at the back.

Their eyes were shining green.

"Croak, my tail is paralyzed."

Iddy told me of the stiff area.

Her tail.

That's really good.

Why do humans not have tails or anything like that?

"I am on both arms."

I have both arms stiff.

"Are you okay?"

Then it's okay.

Compared to both stiff legs, it is much better.

Although my attack power has been greatly reduced.

"*Croak, Croak*. Maybe this body should step out."

Idaltar came forward, holding her spear firmly.

As I remembered, Idaltar was a prudent spearhead.

While I secured defense, she was stabbing the enemies, aiming at their gaps.

It was very tricky in the interpersonal battle, but it was questionable how she was trying to deal with a number of enemies who were organized.

The monsters have no weapons.

Probably, using the length of the spear, cut them off one by one from the end, and lead the monsters to release their position and drag them out...

Shaa!

I don't think so, Idaltar threw the spear.

[Excite!]

Idaltar's large spear pierced the two narrowly cramped monsters at the same time.

The two monsters pierced by the spear shook, and even the surrounding monsters pushed by their bodies shook their postures.

And Idaltar ran towards that point.

Kaoooo!

Red light hovered in Idaltar's eyes, and the muscles of her already huge limbs became more tight.

There was no such thing as a small Lizardman.

Ah, I found that ability too.

I was also greatly affected by that ability.

In addition to the false desire to rape me, glowing eyes were added, so it was quite frightening from the standpoint of the receiving end.

Kuang!

When Idaltar hit the floor, the floor cracked with a loud roar.

The monsters shook greatly again.

Idaltar picked up the spear skewered through the two monsters and swung it.

Every time she swung the spear, the limbs of the monsters stuck in the spear fluttered.

The monsters collapsed.

I ran forward too.

The line at the point where Iddy charged was completely destroyed.

It seemed better to focus on that point without having to go back to another place.

[Talaria's Wings]

[Blink]

Talaria's wings were used to protect the body and head, and then blink towards the monsters.

Now I'm much better at handling swords, and in addition to that, I mix in and use magical power.

The strength and quickness of my body have already exceeded the limits of humans, but still could not surpass the impact force using the speed of blinking.

It meant that the blinking body hit I had been using since the beginning of the 4th floor was still my special move.

[Excite!]

[Stop it! Excite.]

The monsters that hit against me screamed and rolled around.

The shock has been conveyed to me too, but I haven't developed pain tolerance and faint tolerance for nothing.

I straightened my stance right away.

“*Croak!* It's my turn again!”

Idaltar shouted and jumped back to the battle line that had collapsed from my body hitting them.

The monsters flew like a baseball struck by a baseball bat as Iddy swung the spear taller than the height of an adult man.

Fighting like Sauron from the beginning of The Lord of the Rings.

Anyway, thanks to that, a gap was created once again.

I continued digging in a straight line, alternating the gap that began with Iddy's assault, me and proceeded forward.

I dug into the middle of the formation of the monsters.

This was enough distance to reach the mother bodies at the very back.

"My turn again! Good work, Lizard!"

"*Croak!* I'm not a lizard!"

What are you not?

I beat Iddy again and I ran out.

The monsters covered the shoulders of their people on either side and formed a wall.

They showed a will that aimed not to kill me, but to prevent me from reaching mother bodies behind them.

Clearly, their intelligence is increasing.

However,

[Blink]

The blink was used at a 45 degree angle toward the front ceiling.

And again while floating in the air.

[Blink]

I used blink once again at a 45 degree angle towards the front floor.

When using blink towards a floor or wall, I pay close attention to the distance.

If I made a mistake, I could hit a wall or floor at the rate of blink and pass out.

However, after constant training and practice, I achieved perfect proficiency.

I moved right in front of one of the mother bodies.

My left foot landed exactly on the ground.

I kicked with my left leg straight on the axis.

The kick hit the mother body's chin exactly.

The mother body's neck turned around like a top, and its head slumped over its shoulder.

One mother body died.

I felt the stiffness of my right arm relieved.

[Stop it! Crazy eyeless bastards]

The monsters screamed out, but I ignored them.

[Inventory]

I held a single-edged sword in my right hand.

I swung it towards another mother body next to me.

[Stop...!]

With that said, the mother body's head was cut vertically.

While blood was spewing out endlessly, the last mother body turned away from me and tried to run away, but it was pierced by the spear that Idaltar threw and died instantly.

With this, the three mother bodies were annihilated.

“Kao!”

Idaltar roared.

The monsters hanging from her spear seemed to have no concerns, and it was an exhilarating roar.

The monsters paused under the roar.

It was a bold cry to break even the enemy...

“Kaoooooooo!”

Idaltar roared once again.

The pre-Babel knowledge is a great skill.

It does not stop at just making you understand other languages, but also lets you know the meaning of intonation and nuance, as well as the signs of gestures and facial expressions.

Thanks to it, I was able to recognize it.

“Kyaaaaaaaa!”

That was a roar with the meaning of courtship.

The terrified monsters laid on the floor, and in the middle of them, Idaltar, standing like a giant stone statue, slowly turned her head to me.

“*Croak*, won’t you?”

“I will not.”

Side Story 8

Iddy (8)

“I will not.”

“*Croak*, okay, okay. Humans also need a bed...”

I picked up a stone from the floor and threw it.

Idaltar did not avoid it, and the stone hit her snout and fell down.

“*Croak, Croak*, why are you doing this? Didn’t you see my performance? It was even better than yours.”

“Better than what? I took care of all the mother bodies.”

“*Croak*, I also caught one.”

It’s like a slap in the face from what I’ve got.

And since I caught two mother bodies and Idaltar took one mother body, my performance was better.

Idaltar protested that she had killed more monsters, but I ignored her.

Monsters without the mother body were just scarecrows.

It does not count as performance.

[Excite. Croak. Excite.]

[Both arms. tail. Won’t you?]

[Mother body. Performance. Mother body.]

[Crazy-eyeless bastard stop.]

[Stop. Stop it.....]

Look at them.

As soon as the mother bodies died, the monsters went crazy and crawled on the floor.

I looked at the monsters and found a stone in the hand of the monsters crawling on the floor.

I cut off the head of the monster holding the stone, and took the stone from its hand.

Well... This could be a bit of a problem.

It wasn't just a stone rolling in a dungeon.

It was a pebble.

The surfaces were cracked and cut for use as tools and weapons.

I was told that there were a lot of stones rolling around.

I could see at a glance that their intelligence was developing.

The problem was the speed.

How long did it take for early humans to use stone tools?

In stage 7-3, you may have to face monsters with spears or swords.

[You have cleared the second gate on the 7th floor.]

Description: The Trial on the 7th floor consists of three stages.

Each level contains 2, 3 and 9 rooms.

Each room can be traversed through a magic circle engraved on the wall.

Each room contains a number of Izaaku's Disaster Dombas and one of their mother bodies.

You have cleared stage 7-2.

Some information on the 7th floor stage will be released.

Having secured an area in the deepest part of Izaaku Dungeon, the group of Dombas succeeded in protecting their mother body from adventurers.

Dombas were blind and strong monsters, and the mysterious abilities of the mother bodies made adventurers reluctant to deal with them.

But some adventurers have said that the real strength of Dombas is their intelligence.

Dombas were rated as having a low level of intelligence that was not much different from that of monkeys, so their opinions were ignored.

After that, as adventurers completely gave up on sweeping the Dombas, interest in Dombas ceased for a long time, and people forgot about them.

During this time, Dombas began to learn and use the words spoken by other people.

They started using primitive level tools.

Their mother body can stiffen the limbs of their opponents through their eyes.

Take the third ordeal to learn more about the 7th floor gate.

1. Clear all rooms and defeat all enemies.

1. Clear stage 7-1. [Complete]

1. Clear stage 7-2. [Complete]

1. *Clear stage 7-3.*

Completed stage 7-2.

In addition, information about the Dombas has been slightly updated.

There was no information worthy to pay attention to.

It was information that I could find out on my own without them telling me.

It didn't matter to me whether I knew the background settings or not.

Next is the 7-3 stage with nine rooms.

A mobile portal appeared on the floor.

There were still monsters left in the room.

The mother body was annihilated, and some monsters were thrown into the corner of the room in fear.

The rest were crawling on the floor, crying quietly, as if paralyzed by fear and unable to even feel reason.

[Excite! Won't you...]

A monster crawling on the floor sobbing a strange combination of words put a hand on my shoe.

I shook my foot, slapped its hands, and kicked the monster's temple.

The monster stopped sobbing and moving.

"What are you doing, let's finish it."

"Croak."

I said let the monsters be dealt with, but Idaltar did not move.

“*Croak*, there, is that a portal? Do I have to go to it?”

I nodded in affirmation.

“Then we can just move on? There’s no need to kill these monsters one by one.”

But there’s no reason not to kill them.

“Until now, you’ve been stabbing them with a spear.”

“They were enemies back then.”

“Not now?”

“No. Not even prey. *Croak*.”

Huh...

What do you mean not enemies?

I looked at the monsters crawling on the floor again.

They are still enemies.

They are just enemies who can’t resist.

“Then I’ll take care of them myself.”

It doesn’t matter if you don’t help.

[Soul Cry]

The monsters started to react when I used the soul cry skill with an aggro effect.

The monsters crawling on the floor and the monsters hiding in the corner of the room began to slowly approach me.

[Stop.]

[Won't you stop?]

The remaining Dombas came to me one after the other as if they were receiving rations and died like that.

* * *

[Round 11, Day 29. 23:52]

I was thinking about going straight to the 7-3 stage, but I decided to go to bed after a while.

I often skip sleep when in battle or in the waiting room, but it is good to rest when I have time to rest.

Thanks to the experience of continuing battles without sleeping or resting for several days on the 6th floor, I knew how dangerous battles in a sleep-deprived situation could be.

I needed to give my body and head a little rest to stay focused.

Normally, I would have just sat down, closed my eyes and slept like that.

“Croak.”

The bodies of the Dombas were pushed against the wall and the floor was cleared.

There was quite a bit of space.

“Croak.”

“Well, do you want me to clean the floor with water?”

The bodies were moved, but the blood could not be removed.

The fishy smell and stench were the same.

But I'm not a janitor, and I couldn't clean here in this situation.

"No, if you're going to take a break, shouldn't you eat something?
Croak, I'm hungry."

You ate the cake before.

No, you must be hungry because you ate the cake.

Just by looking at Idaltar's size, it was predictable that she would eat much more than a normal human.

Besides, the cake is not very filling.

"That's why I told you to eat jerky."

It is a magical jerky that will keep you from feeling hungry for two days even if you eat just a few pieces.

Even the taste isn't bad, so it's okay

There was no food.

I took out a jerky from my inventory.

"*Croak*, if possible, not jerky..."

"If you don't like it, don't eat it."

"Thank you for the food. *Croak*."

Idaltar hurriedly stretched out her hand towards the jerky.

"Thank you, husband."

I threw the jerky at her.

Idaltar skillfully caught the flying jerky and ate it.

“Don’t do it when I tell you not to. I will destroy you. Really.”

From a while ago, I only talked to her in a good way, but she continues to cross the line.

“*Croak*, but I don’t even know your name. There is no specific title to call you.”

This is how Idaltar protested.

She did.

“I thought you were a warrior, but you weren’t a warrior either. *Croak*, I don’t have the right words to call you.”

Not a warrior

Are you saying that because I killed the monsters that didn’t resist earlier?

I didn’t even think to argue.

“Then husb...”

“Captain, call me Captain. Now you’re my subordinate.”

“*Croak*? Weren’t we friends?”

No.

You were just summoned to share the rigidity from the Dombas mother bodies.

It’s also a lot of work.

“*Croak*, then call me Iddy.”

“Iddy?”

“My nickname. *Croak*.”

It was creepy.

Seriously, what about nicknames?

“Actually, it’s my nickname.”

I was silent, Iddy explained.

“When a Lizardman is called by their family and close friends, they use their childhood name. It’s a familiar name, not a tribal, or social name.”

It’s a familiar name.

People also call family members by their childhood names or nicknames.

“Then you were called Iddy when you were young?”

“*Croak*, no.”

Idaltar shook her head.

What again?

“I was banished from the tribe and never called by any other name. The nickname Iddy was created by myself.”

...Another dark story suddenly appeared.

She was banished from the tribe and never called by her nickname.

“How old were you when you were expelled from the tribe?”

“*Croak*, maybe around five years old.”

It was when she was young.

But she was young enough to have a nickname.

Usually, a nickname is given by parents as soon as their child is born.

“Okay, I’ll call you Iddy.”

“*Croak, Croak.*”

Iddy liked it.

I was a little surprised by that candid expression.

I thought you weren’t that different from me.

I was certain, though.

“*Croak.*”

Iddy, who had just chewed and swallowed all the jerky, asked.

“But are we just sleeping like this?”

“Huh.”

Again, in fear of making a silly joke, I said it seriously.

She luckily didn’t say anything about coming closer.

“*Croak*, do you have any camping gear... or at least a blanket?”

“No.”

It was strange that the Lizardman, who looked like she could fall asleep in a swamp with mud on her body, mentioned a blanket.

“*Croak*, that’s strange.”

Iddy said so and laid down on the floor.

She curled her body and wrapped her long tail around her body.

She looked like a cat.

Although she was too large to be called a cat.

I saw Iddy lying down completely.

And after checking the distance between Iddy and I, I quietly closed my eyes.

This was enough distance for me to react when Iddy got up.

“*Croak*, are you just sleeping like that?”

“Huh.”

Anyway, I don’t sleep deeply.

From the first floor, there were already signs of it, and on the sixth floor, it completely hardened.

I am always awake even while sleeping.

I respond immediately to even the slightest sound or presence.

After waking up like that, I wonder if I really fell asleep.

The only time I could be very sure that I slept was when I woke up from a dream.

“Isn’t it uncomfortable? It’s better to lie down.”

“It’s not uncomfortable.”

I cut off Iddy’s words.

She’s been talking a lot ever since.

I even felt like she was trying to somehow create a topic for conversation.

I soon found out why.

“*Croak*, this is the first time I’ve slept with someone else. I always had to sleep alone. Nights in the jungle are dangerous. Have to be prepared for attacks by nocturnal beasts. It’s too painful to always fall asleep ready for attacks. *Croak*.”

Iddy was chatting alone even when I didn’t answer.

Iddy was excited about sleeping with someone.

She acts like an elementary school student on a picnic for the first time.

“*Croak, Croak*. Once, I caught a leopard cat and tied it to my hut. When something attacked, I thought that the leopard cat would make a noise and I would be able to wake up by hearing the sound. But when I woke up the next day, the leopard cat was dead... With a half-eaten stomach. *Croak, Croak*. Maybe I would have died if it hadn’t been for the leopard cat that day.”

The chatter continued.

Iddy didn’t seem to want to sleep at all.

It was hard to accept it...

No, I haven’t accepted it yet.

Still, I wish she was a little quieter.

Unconsciously, I fumbled on the floor to see if there were any stones to throw at her.

“*Croak*, Captain, tell me the name of Captain.”

“Name?”

“Didn’t I tell you mine too? It’s right for Captain to tell me yours too.”

What is this nonsense?

Iddy was looking at me with bright eyes.

It was strange.

I remembered the look in my nephew’s eyes as he looked at me with the Children’s Day gift hidden behind my back.

“Then, in return for telling my name, sleep quietly. The rest of the story will be told after I sleep.”

“Okay. *Croak!*”

Like a nephew who promised to do his homework well in the future in hope of receiving a gift, Iddy answered with vigor.

“Lee Ho-jae.”

“...*Croak?*”

I wondered if Iddy didn’t hear it, so I said it again.

“Lee Ho-jae. That’s my name.”

“*Croak croak?*”

However, Iddy's reaction was a little strange.

Side Story 9

Iddy (9)

“It’s nothing. *Croak.*”

“What, why?”

“*Croak.*”

Iddy rolled her eyes, avoiding answering.

As she was doing that, she looked like a lizard again.

“Why? Does it mean something?”

Sometimes when I listen to a foreign language, there are words that sound similar to Korean.

And if those words have the wrong meaning or sound like a swear word, they can be used as funny jokes.

I thought that might be the case.

“*Croak?* I don’t know.”

“I don’t know, I don’t know. Why don’t you answer quickly?”

“*Croak.* I can’t remember... Suddenly I can’t think of anything!”

You’re talking nonsense.

Die.

Approaching Iddy, I took her spear and swung it.

I poked Iddy on her side that was lying on the spear.

“Croak!”

I stabbed her pretty hard, but for Iddy it tickled rather than hurt.

I was able to realize once again that there was a difference in the durability of her basic body itself from that of a human.

I swung a little harder.

“Croak! It hurts, Captain! It really hurts!”

I’m hitting you because you’re sick!

Iddy got up and started running away, and I followed her.

I played tag for a while and beat Iddy, but in the end I couldn’t figure out the meaning of my name.

Iddy repeated the lie that she really didn’t remember.

“Croak, Croak!”

Iddy was excited, panting for breath.

She was like a dog going out for a walk.

There was no sign of pain in the place where she was beaten.

She has a needlessly strong body.

In the end, I decided to give up asking for the meaning of my name.

She was so happy, it was embarrassing to be honest and ask her questions.

I thought it would be better not to know.

“Now sleep. The meaning of rest is gone now. Time is wasted.”

I decided to go back to sleep.

I closed my eyes sitting a little away from Iddy.

I closed my eyes altogether, so Iddy was sad for a while, then laid back down.

Iddy tried to grab my attention by waving her tail and sniffing the floor; perhaps she wanted to chat more, but I pretended to be asleep and ignored her.

After a while, Iddy seemed to have given up, so she stopped trying to catch my attention and went quiet.

After that, she tossed and turned a little, but did not get up.

After waiting for another 15 minutes, Iddy's breathing became more even, and a hoarse snort began to come out.

After I opened my eyes and made sure that Iddy was asleep, I went to sleep too.

* * *

“Wake up!”

“*Croak!*?”

I woke Iddy from her sleep.

As soon as Iddy woke up, she had a bewildered expression on her face.

“*Croak?* Captain, how long have we slept?”

“Six hours.”

“*Croak!*”

Iddy said she was sleeping really deeply.

It was amazing.

She was just amazing.

In fact, I slept for about an hour and a half.

I can't sleep more than two hours a day because of insomnia.

However, I couldn't wait for Iddy to sleep and wake up without doing anything.

“*Croak*. I've slept for six hours and I'm still tired.”

“You're not awake enough. You'll wake up if I spear you.”

After getting ready with Iddy, we moved on to stage 7-3.

[You have entered Stage 7-3.]

“The room is empty. *Croak*.”

“Yeah.”

The first room on stage 7-3 was empty.

Stage 7-2 started in a room full of monsters.

What's the difference

Actually, it wasn't completely empty.

In this room, I could see the huts of the monsters I saw on stage 7-2.

They were bigger and more numerous than before.

There were just no monsters.

Anyway, the level of completion of the huts has improved considerably.

In a place where wood and mud could not be obtained, I wondered how well it was built with stones, leather, and bones.

I looked around the hut, and this time, I found a map.

As described on stage 7-3, it was a map with 9 rooms drawn.

The nine rooms were organized like a numeric keypad in a 3×3 arrangement.

And this room marked with a highlight line is the middle of the nine rooms.

Judging from the number pad, it was room number 5 in the center.

When I checked the wall, mobile portals were drawn on all four sides of the square room.

According to the map, I think it's right to think this is the middle room.

"I'm glad it's not a straight line configuration though."

If the mother bodies continued to run away from the dungeon with a straight line configuration, in the last room, you would have to deal with a group of Dombas including nine mother bodies.

Even with me and Iddy combined, there will be no limbs left.

The middle room was also a plus.

"What are you going to do? *Croak.*"

I showed Iddy the map and explained.

“You’re going to the upper room, I’m going to the left room. And.”

We are in room 5.

From here, attack rooms 8 and 4 at the same time.

Naturally, the mother bodies will run away.

The mother body of room 4 flees to room 1 or 7.

A maximum of 3 mother bodies can be gathered in room 7.

3 mother bodies.

It was a number that Iddy and I could handle.

“*Croak*. What if the mother of room 4 escapes to room 1?”

“You just have to attack Room 2, block the escape route, and attack Room 1. Even then, the maximum number of mothers to gather in Room 1 is three. You can handle it with ease.”

Then, the remaining rooms are rooms 3, 6, and 9.

If two mother bodies are gathered in Room 9, you can attack Room 6 first, then attack Room 9 and 3 separately.

Up to three mothers are not intimidating, so we should be able to finish them with ease.

“*Croak*. It seems like a good plan.”

The remaining variable was the difference between stage 7-2 and 7-3.

I waited for a message explaining something to appear, but no message appeared.

They don’t show up when you need them anyway.

“Enter.”

I touched the portal on the left wall and said.

When I turned my head, Iddy had already reached the portal on the northern wall.

We exchanged glances with each other and activated the portals.

It was a strange feeling.

Cooperating with someone. No, there was no such thing as cooperation.

It was a little strange to be part of a team.

It was a really weird feeling.

Without a moment to be confused by the uncomfortable feeling, I was moved to the 4th room.

As soon as I moved into the room, I saw the monsters.

The difference, the biggest variable, was confirmed with the monsters on the 7th and 2nd floors.

There was a clear difference that could be seen at a glance.

The first was that the monsters were already forming a square, as if they were waiting for me to enter.

Second, the monsters had clothes and weapons.

There were crude clothes made of leather and stones, long stone spears and stone axes carved out of whole stones.

For a stone spear, it would be difficult for a human to lift it, let alone swing it, but it would be just the right weight for those monsters.

The third difference was this.

[Come here. Hello. It's crazy-eyeless bastard.]

All the monsters were talking.

Unlike stage 7-1 and 7-2, the monsters here were silent.

Only one monster has spoken to me.

Is it the commander?

Also, their intelligence has improved a lot.

“Right, hi, you crazy-eyeless bastards?”

I approached them pretending to accept their words.

The last difference.

The mother body of this room was aware of my intrusion, but neither stiffened me nor ran away.

Yet.

[Blink]

I approached the mother body with the surprise Blink.

[Stop! Die!]

The commander screamed and screamed.

[Stop! Excite! Excite!]

[Excite! Exciting!]

The monsters around me clashed together and clinged to me.

Apparently, these guys have adopted strange words as their cheering voice.

[Talaria's Wings]

Huge wings spread out from behind my back, and the monsters that were clinging to me were hit by the wings and flew away.

A spear pierced from the front.

I pushed my forearm forward and blocked it.

My arm with magical powers is no different than a shield in itself.

I moved forward

The sharpened spear blade scraped past my forearm.

Unfortunately, the monster did not even have a shield.

As the gap narrowed, the spear became powerless.

Their spear skills aren't even that high yet.

With my free hand, I gripped the monster's neck.

I could feel the sensation of a broken neck bone in my hand.

I threw the corpse of the monster with its strength lost head-on.

My front is open.

Through the collapsed display, the mother body could be seen.

The mother body was running towards the wall.

I picked up a stone spear that had fallen to the floor and threw it.

A spear that flew straight should pierce right into the mother's back.

[Excite!]

However, one monster threw itself and was struck by the stone spear instead of its mother.

[Good job! Excite!]

[Excite!]

One fellow was killed instantly by the stone spear, but the monsters cheered.

Meanwhile, the mother body ran away to another room beyond the wall.

Oh my, the monsters were more desperate than I thought.

They were monsters who did their best to protect the mother body in the previous stage, but they did not sacrifice their lives to help the mother escape the room.

Rather, as soon as the mother body tried to escape, they quickly lost their courage.

[Excite! Excite! Crazy-eyeless bastard!]

[Kill! Stop it, stop it!]

Surprisingly, the monsters were still fighting even after their mother body had fled.

The monsters surrounded me, who had dug into the middle of the camp, and formed a formation again.

Monsters with long spears in front, monsters with stone axes in the rear.

It's fun.

I thought it would be easier to deal with the monsters after the mother body had left, causing them to feel frustrated.

I can't believe they were so active

I was just grateful.

I took out a single-edged sword and shield from my inventory.

"Come on, run!"

[Soul Cry]

[Soul Cry]

Unlike the monsters of the previous stage, who were drawn to the soul cry and shuffled to their feet.

[Excite! Excite!]

[Excite! Excite!]

With a loud unified slogan the fiercely attacking monsters swung their shields and swords.

"Ha!"

I felt refreshed as I hit the monster's neck.

Yes, the battle should be this passionate.

Every time the mother body dies or runs away, it is not enough to only deal with those who babble.

However, it is impossible not to aim for the mother body first.

But now that the monsters are aggressively attacking me, I feel like fighting a little bit.

I reduced the number of monsters surrounding me one by one.

Around the time when all the monsters with spears in the line had died, leaving only the monsters with axes.

An extraordinary event occurred.

The portal carved into the wall hummed.

For a moment, I wondered if Iddy was coming, but soon I knew it wasn't.

There were a total of two rooms connected to room 4 where I am now.

Room 5, which is safe, and Room 7, which will contain the monsters.

The portal that is currently running is the one connected to Room 7 where the mother body escaped.

And

Suddenly, one leg and one arm became stiff.

Bang!

A monster slammed its shoulder into my side.

I was pushed by the force and fell to the floor with my face down.

My face smashed the floor, and blood gushed out of my forehead.

I forced my head to look up.

The blood dripping from my forehead was annoying, but I could see

what I wanted.

The monsters that came from room 7.

3 mother bodies.

I could understand the situation.

The mother of room 4, who escaped, returned with the mothers of the other room.

[Excite! Excite! Excite]

[Excite! Excite! Excite]

[Excite! Excite! Excite]

The monsters cheered and screamed.

A message appeared in front of me.

[Information about Dombas is updated.]

– The reason Dombas, who had been forgotten for a while, started to gain attention again was their socialization.

– They originally had a small society of one Dombas mother body and several Dombas, but as their intelligence rapidly increased, they expanded the boundaries of society.

– While leading and managing her own pack, the mother body began to form social and political relationships with the mother body of other groups.

– When they felt grave threat by an intruder, they went beyond entrusting themselves to the mother body of another group, actively traveling between each other's realms, interfering with or cooperating with commerce, alliances, and expansion, and even waging war with each other.

– In the process, the Dombas mother bodies began to expand beyond the depths of the Izaaku Dungeon to lead more realms and more hordes.

– The adventurers who had already given up on subjugating the Dombas could not stop the Dombas trying to expand due to a sudden increase in number.

– Belatedly, they joined forces to try to stop the Dombas, but they were defeated by the united Dombas group and were eventually kicked out of the Izaaku Dungeon, and the Dombas were reborn as the true owners of the Izaaku Dungeon.

A message appeared.

Again, this message is of no help.

“This... this...!”

Son of a bitch!

Real bitch stuff!

How far do you have to push people to get rid of their intuition?

By creating a pattern for the behavior of the Dombas mother body.

All of a sudden, ‘Ta-da. Our Dombas have evolved that much. In the future, the pattern will be different. Haha.’ Does this make sense!

They’re not telling you in advance, but after you’re done!

[Excite!]

A monster flew at me as I fell.

Damn it

If it falls on me, I’ll die.

One arm and both legs were already paralyzed.

[Blink]

I used Blink up in the air.

As I floated up to the ceiling, I could see the condition of the room at a glance.

Three mother bodies joined the group of Dombas, which had shrunk to half their original number.

The Dombas swarm began to encircle the mother bodies in haste as soon as I floated into the air using Blink.

The portal on the wall was still running.

Another mother did not appear, but ordinary Dombas armed with spears and axes continued to come in.

They must have been the Dombas from Room 7 and Room 8 that the mother bodies brought.

In the meantime, all I have left is a right arm, a head, and two blinks.

Fuck. Let's do it.

I don't think it's a good idea.

I had no choice but to do it.

Side Story 10

Iddy (10)

Blink is not an all-around invincible skill.

Oh, of course, I agree that it's a versatile skill.

The downside of Blink is simple.

I'm limited to five uses.

It fills up again after a while, but with limited time, five uses was all I had.

It would have been really nice to save a Blink.

I was judging that I had almost cleared the room before, so I didn't even care about the limit on the number of blinks.

Now the remaining number of uses is 2.

Even if I only used one for each of the three mother bodies, it was not enough.

My body parts that are not rigid are an arm, my head, and my torso.

[Excite! Excite!]

[Excite! Excite!]

I looked at the monsters while floating in the air. The three mother bodies were desperately surrounded by them.

The mother bodies were not gathered in one place as before, but they

were dispersed in all directions under the protection of the monsters.

Damn it

It is really evident at a glance that their intelligence is increasing.

[Blink]

I approached one mother body.

Immediately, the monsters surrounding the mother body reacted.

They must have been waiting for me to appear close to the mother body after seeing me use Blink.

[Combat Focus]

There was a monster that ran and threw its own body towards me.

I was able to hit it with one arm.

The monsters reacted to me right away, but not fast enough.

I fell straight down towards the mother body.

As I fell, my gaze was fixed on the nape of the mother body's neck.

It didn't matter that I would fall defenseless in the middle of the monsters, or that I wasn't prepared for the fall at all.

If I bite that mother body and kill it, it wouldn't take my breath away.

If I can't kill it, I will die.

I aimed at the nape of the mother body's neck, but what I bit off was the mother's collarbone.

I could feel the bones in my mouth along with the flesh.

A counterattack came immediately.

I felt a strong shock on my back.

A stinging pain that started in the back spread down my spine.

I got it wrong.

I could feel the hands of monsters grabbing me here and there.

Stone axes were falling all over the place.

“Ahhhhh!”

[Soul Cry]

[Talaria's Wings]

I smashed the monsters around me.

The mother body was escorted away from me.

It wasn't far away yet.

I hit the floor hard with my right arm.

With that shock, I flew toward the mother body once again.

Damn, does it make sense for someone to punch the ground to try to move?

Moving without using your legs.

Damn it

The more I think about it, the angrier I get.

“You bastaaaarrrddssss!”

Once again, I was disgusted to bite the mother body's neck and the monsters ran trying to protect the mother body.

* * *

“Sigh.”

I leaned my back against the wall.

I used up all my blinks.

At a time when movement was impossible, it was necessary to secure even the safety of my back.

I lifted the body in my hand.

To be exact, the mother body.

The neck was torn and she was already dead.

“Hooo...”

With my right hand, I covered the wounds on the mother body, which were bleeding profusely.

What should I do with this

“Hey! Back off! If you come close, this guy will die!”

I shouted while holding the corpse of the mother body in my hand.

The monsters were puzzled for a while, but soon an answer came back.

[Why!? That monster is already dead!]

It was a strange combination of words, but the meaning was understandable.

‘Don’t gossip. I know he’s already dead.’ It should be about that.

Damn things.

Now, they have reached a level where communication is very smooth.

The words were a bit strange, but better than the original situation when they faced several adventurers, and could only imitate what I said, leading them to have limited vocabulary.

My efforts were not in vain.

I ended up killing two mother bodies.

I crawled on the floor with one arm, eventually biting it to death.

But in the process, too much was lost.

My spine creaked with every twist.

It wasn’t just a squeak, but the bone was brittle and the tip of my toe was tingling.

Considering my pain tolerance skills. This is really serious pain.

My body is like, ‘You, if you move more there, you’ll die! Really die! This is a serious warning!’

One of my arms was broken at the elbow.

In addition to spinal problems, both of my legs were unable to move due to broken bones and stabbed muscles.

In the end, I killed both mother bodies, but the only thing I could move was my right arm and head, which had moved from the beginning.

Oh, it’s actually one less.

Now it's hard to even move my torso.

It would be nice if I could drink a potion.

Unlike games, the enemies in reality do not let others drink potions leisurely.

I don't know if they will understand and block the potion, or if they are just preventing abnormal behavior during battle.

My heart was beating so fast that I thought my heart was going to explode, but on the contrary, my head started to cool down.

I have one right arm.

One corpse of a mother body to be used as a shield to cover my body.

Fortunately, my location is close to the wall.

I'm not afraid of being attacked behind my back, so let's stop the monsters attacking me one by one

It seems so damn impossible.

As soon as I finished speaking, a stone spear came.

I reflexively grabbed the spear and pulled it to my side.

The monster with the spear was about to fall forward.

So, when swinging a weapon, do not place your center of gravity too far forward.

When the attack misses, your stance collapses.

I placed the spear down and grabbed the monster's neck and twisted it.

And finished by biting its throat with my mouth.

Blood gushed out of the monster's neck like a fountain.

There were two corpse shields to cover my body.

The monsters froze at that sight.

These monsters overcame their fears with discipline and a sense of community, but their emotions were not gone.

Rather, they would be richer.

Good news for me.

I shook my head and leaned my back against the wall.

How long will I be able to last?

How many more can I kill?

It was questionable.

But I'll see what I can do.

* * *

“Uhh...”

A thin breath escaped from my mouth.

I bled too much.

I became extremely sensitive, and was aware of every movement of my body.

My mind is becoming hazy.

Chills creeping up.

Split and torn right arm.

The monsters eventually gave up on stabbing me to death.

Instead, they kept their distance and aimed at my hand.

My hands and wrists were torn and cracked and very tattered.

It was helpful to have them sticking together without being cut off yet.

The floor was lined with the corpses of monsters.

They remained even after completely covering my torso and lower body, and they were piled up low like a barricade at least around me.

“Ha ha ha ha ha”

Laughter came out.

It was me who was dying, but it was the monsters that were crushed by fear.

“Only six left.”

All those monsters died.

There is only one mother body left.

The last mother body was shaking and trembling every time she made eye contact with me.

The monsters that have survived so far are not cowards.

Rather, they were the best.

Those who commanded other monsters.

They were afraid of me, but they were very vigilant.

Now I know I'm dying

I completely gave up the battle and waited for my death

It's almost over.

I'm almost there, but my body doesn't move anymore.

I'm pretty sure it's almost there.

My eyes kept closing.

Blurred vision.

Bang!

A sudden roar.

I opened my eyes.

Spear.

A spear appeared.

A huge spear that pierced through the head of the one remaining mother body.

“Captain! I'm here!”

Iddy is here

* * *

“Croak.”

Iddy groaned.

“I’m just trying to help.”

Iddy said.

“Hey, here’s the spear.”

Iddy grabbed my attention and pulled out the spear, and rolled it away.

“*Croak*, it’s okay, it’s okay.”

Iddy slowly pulled her foot towards me.

My nerves sharpened as the distance decreased.

“It’s okay. I’m trying to help. *Croak*.”

Iddy moved forward little by little despite my nervous reaction.

It was a pity that I couldn’t even throw something.

“Do not come.”

“*Croak*, it’s fine.”

Iddy kept coming.

I was anxious.

In my mind, the worst thing I could imagine unfolded.

I was too weak.

I wish you would leave me like this.

If only I had recovered, a little bit, just a little.

“*Croak.*”

I am losing my mind again.

Iddy was slowly approaching me in this situation where it was hard for me to even react.

Thoughts filled my mind that I had to stop Iddy.

When I came to my senses, Iddy was one step closer, and when I woke up again, she was two steps closer.

“*Croak*, I’ll borrow this.”

Iddy picked up a potion bottle that had fallen on the floor.

She opened the potion bottle and came closer to me.

The moment Iddy touched my body, I grabbed her by the neck.

No, I didn’t grab it.

Her neck was too big and thick for my hands to hold.

Damn it

“It’s okay, it’s okay. It’s over. *Croak.*”

Iddy removed the corpses from my body and started applying potions to the wounds.

I thought I would be able to resist when the bodies were removed, but my body still didn’t feel strong.

I tried to move, but my body couldn’t even struggle.

And so I fell asleep.

[The God of Adventure is thrilled.]

* * *

The next day, I was able to clear the last room on the 7th floor stage.

[You have cleared the 7th floor stage.]

[You are the first to clear the 7th floor stage.]

[Obtained additional points.]

[You have cleared the 7th floor of Tutorial Hell difficulty.]

[All status ailments and injuries are healed]

[Many gods are watching you.]

[Acquired additional rewards according to stage progress.]

[Favorable: 81, Unfavorable: 4]

Seeing the message, I roughly brushed my hair.

Damn it.

Too many votes were favorable.

Even when I cleared the 6th floor, there weren't that many.

In other words, after all, the gods liked my clearing of the 7th floor.

Damn it, damn it!

“*Croak*, are you done?”

“Noisy!”

“Why are you so angry?”

Iddy was sullen.

I looked at her figure for a moment and then said,

“Let’s go. We’re going through this portal.”

It was questionable whether Iddy, who was summoned, could advance to the next stage.

Let’s go.

I used the portal with Iddy.

I was moved to Kirikiri’s garden, and Iddy was still by my side.

She can come here too?

“Hello! Hello!”

Kirikiri came running, waving her hand vigorously.

She was more excited than usual.

The height of her jump was about 1.5 times higher than usual.

She seemed to jump almost to my chest.

Kirikiri ran hard and ignored me and clinged to Iddy next to me.

She grabbed Iddy’s hand and started spinning around.

Iddy was perplexed.

Kirikiri went round and round without paying any attention.

“Good job, good job. Thanks to you, Ho-jae survived.”

“No it’s not!”

“No, it’s not what!?”

I would have survived in the end even without Iddy.

I have super regeneration skills.

Survival was tight, but in the end I would have survived.

If I had recovered enough to drink the potion, I would have survived.

“Hi-hing, I know everything. It’s because you’re shy.”

“No!”

I screamed, but Kirikiri and Iddy ignored me.

They didn’t listen to me at all.

The two started talking about the 7th floor.

How Iddy was able to come to my room on time on that stage.

Kirikiri knew my movements on the stage, but didn’t know Iddy’s movements.

Iddy explained diligently.

She seemed to adapt well to the absurd situation of the Tutorial where the environment suddenly changed.

After watching them for a while, I bought a cake from the shop window.

“Talk while eating. I need to rest.”

I said so and laid down.

Kirikiri was excited and started eating her cake.

Iddy just stared blankly.

“What are you doing, you eat too.”

“*Croak.*”

Iddy chuckled and laughed.

“Thank you, Captain.”

I was silent for a while before I could say thank you.

Then I answered.

“...Yes, thank you too.”

Side Story 11

Iddy (11)

“Nyooooo!”

Kirikiri screamed loudly.

What do you mean no? You’re screaming without even thinking twice.

“This is miney.”

Kirikiri said as she wrapped her body around the cake plate.

Hey, that’s what I bought for you.

“Hing, this cake already belongs to me.”

“Umm, no.”

Kirikiri was hiding the cake plate on the ground like a chicken incubating an egg.

Her arms and head were blocking in front of her.

Unfortunately, she had a hole on the side.

I shoved my hand in and took the cake plate.

“Aaangg, it’s mine!”

Kirikiri grasped and tried to take back the plate in my hand.

“Would you like to eat together or alone?”

“I’ll eat alone!”

When it came to her cake, Kirikiri knew no compromise.

I tried to persuade her in a kind way, but at some point, the persuasion itself felt annoying.

I just returned the plate to Kirikiri and bought Iddy a separate plate of cake.

“Eat.”

“Thank you, *Croak*.”

Kirikiri talked to Iddy with a friendly attitude, perhaps because she had preserved her own cake.

She was asking what happened on the 7th floor stage.

“*Croak*, I was dealing with the monsters there after the mother body in Room 8 escaped. Then suddenly a monster entered Room 8 and took the monsters from Room 8 to Room 7.”

Iddy mumbled with the cake.

Since she has a big mouth, she didn’t seem to have any trouble talking while eating.

The monsters in Room 8 moved to Room 7.

The monsters from room 7 and 8 gathered and flocked to room 4.

No wonder there were so many.

“*Croak*, after killing the remnants, I felt uneasy about the monsters moving freely around the room. If they gathered in one place and launched an offensive, it would be a big deal. So, I went into the 4th room where Captain was.”

“Good judgment!”

Kirikiri exclaimed vigorously as she said that Iddy’s decision was correct!

Well, it would be better if she wiped the cake cream on her face and spoke.

Kirikiri quickly ate up the cake and began to look at Iddy’s plate with bitter eyes, and I had to buy another plate of cake to give it to her.

* * *

“Then you’re saying that the same monsters on the 7th floor appear on the 8th floor stage?”

“Yep!”

It’s unique.

Kirikiri said, the enemies on the 8th floor are also the Dombas that appeared on the 7th floor.

Two stages in the same place and targeting the same enemies.

I think it’s the first time

“Any more questions?”

Kirikiri asked.

Of course there are.

“The 7th floor stage. How were you supposed to clear that usually?

“Hehe, it would be better not to be curious about the previous stages.”

Kirikiri always wants to save information and have me ask about

future stages rather than ask about a stage that has passed.

However, now I'll get to fulfill my curiosity and collect information on this past stage so I can aid the challengers coming up from below.

Of course, it is unclear whether the challengers behind me will be able to climb to the 7th floor.

"First of all, the best way is to match up five party members and challenge it."

But I can't do that

Anyway, there must be a way to clear it solo without a party member.

On the 6th floor, there was a simple way.

It was to be strong enough to fight all those skeletons alone.

It's simple, and it's damn hard.

But on the 7th floor, there was really no way.

If there were no party members, it was designed to be unbeatable in the first place.

"...hi-hing."

Kirikiri laughed softly.

...It was a strangely disturbing laugh.

"Is it really designed to be unbeatable?"

"It, it's not?"

It's not.

The attitude was a little bit unsettling, though.

She said no.

Is there going to be a stage with a level of difficulty that you can never clear by yourself?

Like a stage with 100 party members.

I'm anxious.

“Uuuuummmm?”

I tried to make Kirikiri confess with a cake.

Kirikiri insisted that she should not give information about that stage that will appear later.

“So there is no way to beat the 7th floor by yourself?”

“Of course, there is a way. If the mother body runs away from the 7-2 floor, the Dombas will be frustrated.”

Kirikiri explained.

I nodded.

“You can take those Dombas with you as subordinates.”

What is that?

That's unexpected.

“Of course it won't be easy. Anything else? Any other questions?”

There wasn't much.

I've already heard the advice for the 8th floor stage.

“Did you know that the first day of the dialogue meeting will be held soon?”

I nodded at Kirikiri’s question.

The day of the next dialogue meeting was approaching in a few days.

Kim Min-hyuk delivered the news once a day.

The mood of the community was now becoming more chaotic.

In the end, no compromise was reached until the day of the dialogue agreement.

It was war again.

* * *

[You have entered the 8th floor stage.]

Kirikiri’s mood was unprecedented, so I wasted more time than I expected in Kirikiri’s field.

I didn’t even need to rest in the waiting room, so I went straight to the eighth floor.

The eighth floor was engulfed in darkness.

The floor was obviously similar to the 7th floor, but neither the ceiling nor the walls were visible.

It was a bewildering darkness.

There doesn’t even seem to be a single ray of light at all.

Although vague outlines could be seen through the use of skills, there was nothing clearly visible.

“*Croak.*”

“Iddy, what do you see?”

“I can’t see. My eyes at night are rather bright, but I can’t see anything. *Croak.*”

Iddy couldn’t look beyond the darkness either.

The lizard can’t see it.

It’s only natural that people don’t see it.

I removed the heating stone and cloth from my inventory.

Had I known this would happen, I would have bought a glowstone.

Kirikiri gives some really useful advice, but not advice that only guarantees convenience.

If she had given me some advice to prepare a glowstone or at least a torch...

As usual, I lit the cloth with the heating stone.

It was then that I saw Iddy’s face right next to me.

“*Croak.*”

I looked around.

The wall was still invisible.

The ceiling was so high that it was difficult to reach even by using all my blinks.

[The 8th floor stage begins.]

Description: Occupying the Izaaku Dungeon, the Dombas hordes have succeeded in uniting their society through decades of development, cooperation, and warfare.

After that, it was decided that the biggest factor that made their development and life uncomfortable was none other than the structure of the Izaaku Dungeon.

The structure of the Izaaku Dungeon, linked by thousands of tiny rooms and mobile portals, once allowed the Dombas to defend themselves.

But after driving out all the enemies, they were nothing more than obstacles to each other's traffic.

The Dombas broke down the walls through a major expansion project, and succeeded in making the Izaaku Dungeon into a huge joint.

So time passed.

The Dombas were then starting to feel cramped in Izaaku Dungeon.

They were able to act without discomfort even in the sun, and they began to go out and gather information about their surroundings.

The area around the dungeon was afraid of the invasion of the Dombas, and once again asked the adventurers to clear them up.

The Dombas' mother bodies became very few in number as their society consolidated.

However, the mother bodies are still the center of Dombas society and their spiritual pillar.

If the mother bodies were gone, the Dombas would not even think of uniting to invade the outside world.

Defeat the mother bodies of the Dombas and bring peace to the area around the dungeon.

1. Defeat the Dombas' mother bodies (0/36)

Come on

This time, it was a very kind explanation.

It was different from the 7th floor, where the information given to me was very little and then explained later with a message whenever I realized the difference through my own body.

From the very beginning, from the setting of the background to the goal, it told me everything.

If you read the description of the message, the location of the 8th floor stage is the Izaaku Dungeon that is the background of the 7th floor stage.

But it seemed like a lot of time had passed.

“Not bad?”

“What do you mean? *Croak*.”

The kindness of the message.

And the monsters running over there.

The Dombas were running, probably because they saw that we had made a fire.

It was in the dark, so the light was clearly visible.

By the way, why couldn't these guys who have developed for hundreds of years not be able to make a single lamp?

I was able to understand the situation by seeing the Dombas running towards us.

Oh, those, they don't have eyes.

Of course, there would be no need for a light.

It seemed that it was not because of the lights that they came to us, but the sound of our words.

One Dombas running in front shouted.

“Stop! You have trespassed into the Izaaku Kingdom!”

Oh boy.

It speaks well

“Since you broke in without going through the entry point, if you resist, you will be shot dead on the spot! Accept arrest silently and you will be escorted to the entrance office...”

The group of Dombas that came running was about five.

It's not enough.

The guy in the front is a little flashy

The Dombas in the back are dressed in uniform.

The level of clothing is quite high.

The mother body was not included.

“What to do, Captain?”

“What to do?”

The mission of the 8th floor stage is to assassinate the leaders.

Ultimately, the goal is to kill their leader and disintegrate the group.

I wondered if it was necessary to follow them and get them through conversation.

All you have to do is grab it from the start and get into it.

“*Croak*, you’re the captain.”

“Isn’t that a good plan?”

“No, you’re the captain because you say crazy things. *Croak*.”

This brat?

“*Croak, Croak*.”

Iddy laughed loudly and grabbed her spear.

No matter what, Iddy does not refuse or shy away from battles.

What a good subordinate.

I also took out my sword and shield from my inventory.

“Stop! Stop...! Kaaaaa!”

A scream echoed across the quiet city outskirts.

* * *

I got a map.

The map was drawn quite accurately.

However, it had to be checked by touching the surface, not by color, but by touch like a braille code.

I think the Dombas checked it not by looking at it, but by touch.

I don't know how to see things without eyes.

Will it look like an ultrasound?

I don't know yet.

Next time I catch a Dombas, I'll have to ask that too.

“*Croak*, unfortunately, the mother bodies are scattered all over the place.”

It was as Iddy said.

In the Dombas society of the Izaaku Dungeon that had become a kingdom, the mother bodies were literally noblemen.

Rather than gathering in one place, they were wandering around for various purposes.

Rather than directly attacking the city head-on, Iddy and I infiltrated and hid inside the city.

Dombas as well as a small number of other races had entered the city.

It wasn't for nothing that the Dombas I met on the 8th floor were talking about the entry office.

Thanks to this, it was easy to hide in the city.

We were looking for an empty house and using this as our hiding place.

We first decided to target individual roaming mother bodies.

If more than ten mother bodies were gathered in one place, it was clear that we would be defeated without doing anything.

Because the paralysis ability of the mother bodies is still there.

So the plan was to hide in the city and assassinate the mother bodies one by one and reduce their number.

“*Croak*, each one a day. It will be over in 15 days.”

What 15 days?

Ten days will be fine.

“*Croak*, do you have any plans?”

“Yes.”

There is one most important point in our assassination.

I asked Iddy if she knew what it was.

“I don’t know. *Croak*.”

“The enemy should not know that we’re only killing the mother bodies.”

When the mother bodies start to gather in one place, there is no solution.

“*Croak*, then what do we do?”

There was one very useful method.

“Terror.”

Side Story 12

Iddy (12)

The buildings of this city usually have no ceilings or walls.

Maybe it was because there is no need to cover from snow, rain, wind, or the sun.

Maybe it's because wood and mud are precious.

In any case, buildings with walls and ceilings are rare in this city.

If you think of it as a home, it is your personal space.

It was nothing more than a low stone wall.

But it wasn't that there weren't a lot of buildings in the right style.

It was the highest tower in the center of the city where the mother bodies of the highest rank lived.

The same was true of the (relatively) luxurious residential area that was centered around the tower.

Finally, there was the gigantic theater located in the heart of the city.

Apparently, in this city, walls and ceilings are regarded as symbols of wealth.

"Croak, it's a big theater."

"Yeah."

A play was in full swing in the theater.

Because it was such a large theater, anyone with an interest could come in and watch the play at will.

Anyway, their level of civilization was considerably high.

There is popular culture, and the infrastructure for it has gained a high enough level for theatre.

After looking around for a while, I found a place where the mother bodies were gathered.

It was confirmed that several mother bodies were watching the play with their green eyes twinkling in the front row, which is the best place to watch the play.

I also found the target.

I should start working.

“*Croak*. Captain, that sounds like the story of Captain.”

“Huh?”

As Iddy pointed, I looked up at the stage of the theater.

On the stage, several Dombas were fighting bravely against a Dombas disguised as a human being.

Red and black, sinister patterns of wings hung on the back of their enemy, a ferocious human.

From gigantic sizes to jagged, sharp shapes.

It was an exaggerated version of Talaria’s wings.

“*Croak*.”

“Don’t laugh.”

On the stage, you could see the Dombas defeating the human and comically depicting that human's defeat.

They are missing the point of course.

They're making up a story that doesn't exist, fabricating it.

"Let's go."

I led Iddy, who wanted to see more, and headed towards the theater exit.

"*Croak*, this was the first play I've ever seen. It was fun."

It's not fun.

Forget about that scam play.

It's time to slowly rise.

As I was thinking about it, smoke began to rise from inside the theater.

Okay, now it's time for the smoke to start.

These Dombas have no eyes and have a poor sense of smell.

So, even though I put a pile of oil-soaked cloth in the corner of the theater, no one really noticed.

Heaps of cloth were easy to obtain.

Clothing, including cloth and leather, was the representative item that the Dombas traded with the outside world.

Clothing seemed to be a popular and precious luxury to these monsters, who appear to be unable to eat, drink, or even reproduce properly.

I was able to find a warehouse with a large amount of fabric, and it was easy to steal using the inventory.

There was some oil I had bought on the 6th floor to burn down the dungeon.

Bang!

While the Dombas were confused after recognizing the heat and smoke belatedly, they knocked down the exit of the theater.

The pillars of the building built entirely of stone were really easy to break.

It wasn't a poorly crafted pillar, but if they had the power to break a stone, it could be broken down.

A large pillar blocked the exit.

“*Croak*. It's not completely blocked.”

“It's okay.”

This building is made of solid stone.

It does not catch fire

The only heat and smoke now was from the burning oiled cloth.

In the meantime, rather than blocking the exit.

It would have been better if there was a hole that was difficult for one person to pass through.

There will be more deaths from monsters trying to get out through that hole than deaths from monsters burning.

“*Croak*, as expected, Captain is mean. “

Iddy said.

She said it as if it were a compliment.

In fact, for the Lizardman, being mean was never a good thing.

Rather, it was used in a more negative sense than humans.

It doesn't matter if I'm mean.

The results are coming now.

It's enough to win!

Is it so wrong to use a cheese rush* for a rookie who was about to debut?

Did I win?!

“Even shameless. *Croak*. It's so shameless and mean, I think I'm going to fall in love with it. *Croak*.”

Noisy.

I won't fall for that.

The confusion was growing.

The mother bodies and actors who were in the innermost part of the theater were rolling their feet in the place where the heat was felt the most.

They shouted over and over, but there were no Dombas to clear the way for them.

Everyone wanted to leave as quickly as possible.

Also, they are too well socialized.

If they were the Dombas on the 7th floor, of course, they would have evacuated the mothers first.

However, the Dombas on the 8th floor gave priority to living.

Individuals become wiser, but as a group they become duller.

“Go and come back.”

Multiple mothers were isolated in the panic.

Could there be better targets for this surprise attack?

“*Croak*. Are you okay?”

Iddy was worried.

Unfortunately, Iddy couldn't get close to the heat.

It was a limitation of amphibians.

“It's fine. I'm better than they are.”

It has already been confirmed through experiments how vulnerable the Dombas are to heat.

On the 6th floor, it was the opposite.

The skeleton soldiers were better than me,

I was about to die while trying to burn the entire dungeon.

“*Croak*, as expected, Captain seems a bit crazy.”

I screamed and hid among the chaos.

Hiding in the crowd, I slowly approached the mother bodies.

If all those mother bodies' eyes were on me,

Then all of my limbs would probably be stiffened and I would be immediately subdued.

However,

“Kyaak!”

A sword was stabbed in the chest of a mother body who had been buried in the crowd.

Unfortunately, no one cared about the death.

I reentered the crowd

There was a mother body who bravely tried to put out the fire.

Dombas basically lacked the concept of extinguishment.

It was not a race that needed water, and it was not a sandy or earthy environment.

For them, fire was just something to avoid.

But that mother body was trying hard to put out even the slightest bit of flames, wielding its clothes.

I smashed its knee with a low kick and pushed it into the flames.

There was a mother body pushing another Dombas.

It didn't seem to care that the Dombas were crammed back and forth.

I kicked the mother body's hamstring.

Its legs were broken, and I grabbed the head of the mother body who had come down to its chest and twisted it.

It was so easy.

Dombas distinguish objects by hearing.

They have neither sight nor smell.

They are literally blind in this enclosed space, distracted by screams.

The exit of the theater was noisy.

Looks like a rescue team came from outside.

The Dombas are running the city's security forces.

There is also a border guard belonging to the entry office, so it was natural that there are soldiers for security.

And there were mother bodies among those soldiers.

Because the mother bodies themselves are powerful weapons.

Even among the soldiers who rushed to the front of the theater, the mother body could have been mixed in.

I had to quickly organize the remaining mother bodies in the theater and take care of the outside as well.

I hurriedly moved on.

* * *

“Found it! This way!”

We escaped the soldiers pursuing us and returned to our hideout.

As soon as I returned to the hideout, I found a wriggling Dombas.

The original owner of this house.

It is also our informant.

It was obviously tied to a pole, wriggling to see if the bindings were loose and trying to escape out of the house.

I'm sorry.

If we had arrived ten minutes late, it might have escaped.

The Dombas, who found me and Iddy, sighed.

"These... bad guys. Humans like you shouldn't even be allowed to enter the city...! You crazy-eyeless bastards!"

I hadn't seen its face for half a day, and its mouth got rough.

I want to treat you kindly.

By the way, why are you using 'crazy-eyeless bastard' as a swear word?

They don't have eyes.

My eyes are fine.

"Wicked bastards! You!"

The Dombas groaned.

This Dombas is a guy I'm personally grateful for.

It taught me a lot.

About the position of the mothers.

About the number of soldiers.

Locations of major buildings, including theaters.

Locations of clothing warehouses.

The map.

It even showed how vulnerable to fire Dombas' bodies are.

Anyone could tell that I was gathering information for the purpose of harming his people, but this poor monster confided everything before torture.

I suddenly had a thought.

The monsters on the 7th floor were primitive and savage.

But they wouldn't have given me this information.

It was pitiful.

The ropes on its limbs were released.

“Ugh...!”

The Dombas trembled with a gust of wind as the ropes that had been fastened to its bones were released.

After a brief refreshment, the pain will come.

Before that, I stabbed the Dombas in the temple.

I clasped my fingers with magical power.

My fingers went in and out of his temple like an awl.

That ended the Dombas' life.

The physical abilities of the Dombas were also incomparably weaker than those on the 7th floor.

As soon as I killed the Dombas, I heard footsteps outside.

I stopped breathing.

All you have to do is to not make a sound.

They have no eyes, and no sense of smell.

They simply perceive objects around them with their superhuman hearing.

The Dombas soldiers, who had been looking around for a long time, eventually returned without finding us.

Didn't they think that instead of running away along the road, I would go into a house and hide?

"Croak."

Iddy was close by.

We were close.

Iddy doesn't look too uncomfortable

It was.

It was definitely something to be concerned about.

The gap was.

This gap was to my advantage.

Probably because my limbs are shorter.

Weapons are also shorter.

It was quite a dangerous gap for Iddy who has long limbs and uses a

spear.

It is a position that I would never have given up if I were Iddy.

“*Croak*, it was a tiring day.”

As Iddy said, I was busy all day.

However, it was in a day that I could achieve all this.

[Number of mother bodies remaining: 17/36]

Killed nineteen mothers in one day.

They didn't seem to even realize that our goal was not indiscriminate terrorism, but the assassination of the mother bodies.

Rather, the Dombas tried to find us by densely mixing the mother body among the soldiers.

Along with that, we also escaped against the soldiers with one or two mothers.

I wanted them to continue to misunderstand that using the mother bodies would be enough to deal with us.

Iddy was tired, but she looked happy.

Iddy knew that fighting fair and just like a warrior was a virtue.

But Iddy enthusiastically joined my plan without any complaints.

“Hey.”

I suddenly wondered.

Actually, I've been curious about it for a long time.

I just thought of asking.

“*Croak?*”

“Why do you like me?”

“Are you curious about that?”

Iddy chuckled and laughed.

“I like you because you’re handsome. *Croak.*”

“Bullshit.”

Lizardmen and humans are so different in appearance, so to like them because they are handsome.

It was nonsense.

Iddy insisted it was real, but I ignored it.

“The handsome one is the biggest, but there are other reasons as well. Captain isn’t afraid of me. You’ve been like that since the first time I saw you. You were weaker than me back then, but still, you weren’t afraid of me.”

That is bullshit again

I was stronger back then too.

“For us Lizardmen, strength is a virtue. But in the eyes of my people, I am not a strong warrior, but an abomination and was feared.”

Iddy looked me in the eye and said.

“They saw me as a monster that they couldn’t handle because I was too strong. After wandering around the tribe, I got used to those kinds of eyes at some point. Being treated as a monster. Everyone was like that. But Captain was different.”

When I first met Iddy on the 5th floor.

I remember the conversation we had back then.

When I praised her for being a strong warrior, seeing Iddy who was remarkably pleased, I thought that she was a very simple Lizardman.

“*Croak*, of course, Captain was only looking at me as an enemy to kill. Even that was comforting to me. *Croak*. It’s something I said, but it’s strange. Do you understand?”

I understood.

I could sympathize a little bit.

Maybe it’s because I’ve had a similar experience.

The second day of the dialogue meeting was war.

At the time, I was stuck on the 6th floor, and I did not interfere with the complicated commotion in the community.

Because I didn’t have time or space for that.

It was they themselves who decided.

I do not know.

Why did they make that choice despite seeing my strength in the first meeting?

Did they think that they had grown up and caught up with me?

Did they think that I was isolated on the 6th floor and stagnated?

Or did they just think that they could win with a difference in numbers?

I was not taken aback by their misunderstanding.

I wasn't even angry.

Rather, it seemed a little refreshing.

To use my power against a human, not a skeleton.

Just like a person who ate only rice every day, finally eating noodles and feeling like it was a special meal.

It just felt so refreshing and enjoyable.

When I came to my senses,

The people who stood by and watched the war from afar.

It was time to meet their eyes.

After meeting those eyes, I was like, 'Oh, smashing the head doesn't make the skulls fragment, but the brain explodes?' As I was ecstatic, I thought that something was wrong with this.

From then on, I felt that gaze.

I thought that it wasn't that I made any mistakes or wrongdoings, but that I had changed in a strange and terrifying way.

Am I wrong?

Could it be that I am going the wrong way?

I thought so.

But I could only see one way.

I couldn't see any other way than the one I'm walking on to survive and to be strong.

“*Croak*, the eyes of others are always dangerous to an isolated person.”

Iddy replied.

What did I say?

Ah, yes, I must have muttered my heart out again.

I am aware that I mutter to myself.

Sometimes my mouth is moving alone, so I realize later that if I want something, I’m just muttering my thoughts.

What did I say to Iddy?

I do not know.

“You said that the eyes of people you’ve met before follow you.
Croak.”

.

.

.

It was silent.

By the time the silence lasted as long as my average sleep duration, Iddy spoke again.

“Thank you, Captain.”

It was out of the blue.

“What?”

“*Croak*, I’ve always been alone. My memories of the past are erased, but maybe I was alone even when I didn’t remember. So I’m happy now. So thank you.”

I thought quietly.

Although Iddy didn’t remember.

I thought that there must have been someone by Iddy’s side.

If it’s for Iddy, who is laughing at her embarrassing words.

Even if she doesn’t remember.

There must have been someone, I thought there was.

* * *

I looked at the tower that stood tall over the city.

When I first saw it, I thought it was a fairly high tower, but the view of the tower I see now has a very different atmosphere.

Probably because everything in the city has collapsed except for the tower.

“*Croak, croak*, the city has collapsed. It’s awful, Captain.”

That’s my strength too.

When I do things, I do it very well.

“*Croak*, are there now four remaining mother bodies left?”

“Five.”

[Number of mother bodies remaining: 5/36]

All the remaining mother bodies were on that tower.

Five.

In the worst case, I thought that more than ten mothers could gather in one place and fight.

Five was a very good result.

“*Croak*, what now?”

“What now, what? You have to do it with your body.”

Including the limbs and tails of me and Iddy, there were nine in total.

There are five mothers to deal with.

It is a fight by sealing 5/9 of the limbs and tail.

It was incredibly difficult

Shit, I'm the one who picked the Hell difficulty, and I have to do something about it.

What can i do

As I was about to run towards the tower, a portal suddenly opened.

[The Day of Dialogue has begun. Please enter.]

[Time remaining until forced entry: 23:59:59]

Uh, was today the day of the dialogue agreement?

I knew there wasn't much time left.

When I checked the message window, Kim Min-hyuk's messages were pushed behind a lot.

No wonder.

I was able to clear the 8th floor by attacking the tower within 24 hours and participating in the conversation, and I was able to easily go to the conversation and clear the 8th floor.

There was no problem because the stage time was stopped while participating in the conversation.

“*Croak*, I think you must go.”

I had to go.

On the day of the dialogue agreement, there is a forced entry function.

Over time, everyone would come back if they were called in.

No wonder.

[Lee Ho-jae, 8th floor: Hey, are you busy?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 16th floor: Brother! Why are you contacting me now!]

My title was changed to Brother.

[Lee Ho-jae, 8th floor: Why.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 16th floor: Hurry up! it's really over when you come. Right now, we're evenly matched, so if you come, they will immediately surrender.]

It seemed that it would be better to go quickly.

Unlike last time, Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jung-ah did a good job, so I thought it would be less troublesome.

If you try to attack that tower, and 24 hours have passed and you are forced to enter, you will lose steam.

I looked to the side and saw Iddy gurgling and fiddling with her tail.

Her tail is so long that it comes up to the chest of that giant.

“Let’s go together.”

“*Croak.*”

Iddy widened her eyes.

“Didn’t you say it was a place of harmony where humans gather. If you take a monster like me, everyone will be afraid.”

She was worrying about everything

I could tell with a smile.

“It’s okay, actually, it still is.”

I thought that adding one monster would make two monsters, but there would be no difference.

Iddy groaned.

It was a lively *Croak* quite different from the dull *Croak* before.

“If Captain is okay, I’m okay.”

I climbed onto the portal with Iddy.

The portal was activated, and a bright light flashed from the dark underground city that had fallen into ruins.

[The God of Adventure is moved to tears.]

[The God of Dedication is happy.]

[The God of Light is bored.]

[The God of Duel looks at you with displeased eyes.]

[The God of the Sky watches over you.]

[The God of Slowness.....]

Note:

*) Cheese Rush, a Starcraft strategy term.

Side Story 13

Two years ago

“Hey, cut some slack and get in.”

I looked back.

There was a person standing in front of the practice room door, looking at me.

They had their hand on the light switch in the practice room, planning to turn the lights off, so I would come out.

“Let’s go to sleep. All the kids are uncomfortable.”

They don’t seem to be uncomfortable.

It looks like they’re all in the dorm and sleeping.

I was the only one left in the practice room.

“It’s our monthly free time. Do you have to stay in the practice room and make other people uncomfortable?”

Apart from holidays, the club gives players free time once a month.

They have to stay in the dormitory, but we are considerate of each other, so they can spend their time as they please.

And even if I practiced during that time, there should be no problem.

“Don’t you think that other people are being harmed because of you? No, you didn’t lose today, so why are you making a fuss even though you won. You can just rest today. Hey, are you ignoring me? Do you

think that your seniors are funny?”

Such a long talker.

“Hey, don’t be rude; get lost.”

“...What?”

The senior was furious, but unfortunately there was nothing more he could do.

He was active in the past, but now he’s on the bench where he can’t even play.

There will be disciplinary action at the club level if a player who eats only salaries at the club dormitory every day interferes with my practice and causes friction.

The senior cussed for a while and then left.

The practice room was quiet again.

I wanted to resume practice right away, but I couldn’t.

I lost my concentration for a moment.

The pain I had forgotten during practice began to appear again.

I took the eye drops next to the mouse and put them into my eyes.

It feels like my dry cornea is torn.

Pain flows through the nerve membrane and into my eyeball.

The headache I felt in the middle of my head ran down the back of my head to my spine.

Neck, shoulders, back, and pelvis.

My wrists were tingling.

I felt a stabbing pain from time to time.

From the tips of my fingers to my knuckles, down my wrists to my elbows.

There was no place that didn't hurt.

Although there were no major problems with my daily life.

By the standards of a pro gamer, I was close to half a corpse.

It's been quite a while since my debut.

There was only one reason why I won the title right in my debut year and didn't miss it throughout my playing career.

I practiced that much.

I was able to win championships by my skills without any variability.

It doesn't cost money to practice, and if I just put in my effort, I'm guaranteed to improve my skills.

That's what I thought, but the cost wasn't as low as I thought it was.

My body couldn't stand the years of abuse.

A year at most.

If I have to forcefully drag it out for a long time, it will last about two or three more years.

And for that extended period of time, I could be a waste and I wouldn't even see the championship.

So this year was the last.

There is a trophy display case behind the practice room.

Tournament trophies awarded to the club and its players.

Most of the showcases were occupied by the prizes I had won.

All of them were trophies.

The most recent trophy was a runner-up trophy.

My gaze was fixed.

It may be an honor to some, but to me, that was just a joke that had to be removed as soon as possible.

“Hooo.”

I grabbed the mouse again.

If this is really the last year.

I should wash away that disgrace and retire.

I continued to practice.

Until the phone lit up.

Normally, I would have ignored anyone calling and focused on practicing.

[Father]

It was a call from my father.

It's been months since my father called me.

What have you been up to?

I quickly picked up the phone.

* * *

One day in the hospital room.

After going through the pain that comes from time to time and the ominous feeling that strikes him every time he sees the doctors and nurses, he feels tired and exhausted even after lying in bed all day.

When he was lying on the bed with no energy, the only entertainment that comforted him was the TV in the hospital room.

“Why are you looking at something like that again?”

That’s why...

When his daughter picked up the remote control and switched TV channels, he unwittingly got angry.

His daughter sighed and returned to the original channel.

It was a gaming channel.

The channel broadcasted game competitions.

After waiting for a while, his youngest’s name was called on the TV.

“Ugh, was there a match today?”

His daughter looked at the TV reluctantly, and said.

She is his eldest daughter who hates his youngest playing games more than anyone else.

So he tried not to turn on the game channel in front of his daughter as much as possible, but today was an important match day.

Aside from the game, it was also a really important day.

The surgery was scheduled for tomorrow afternoon.

The doctor said the surgery had a high chance of success, but that didn't mean there was no chance of death during the operation.

So he had to watch today's match.

After waiting a little longer, the host introduced the match and players to be broadcasted today.

His youngest's profile was captured on the screen.

"That's great. I worked hard in a factory and sent him to college."

His daughter bit her tongue and ran out of the room.

His youngest dropped out of college and became a pro gamer.

He thought his youngest wanted to show that he has that much will and potential.

He didn't think it was a good way to persuade others of that.

He knew that his youngest was more passionate about his job as a professional gamer than anyone else, and that he had the ability to earn enough money.

It was only because of the sacrifices that were forced on his eldest since childhood.

He couldn't help but feel the regret and disappointment that was caused because of it.

She can be comforted, though.

The time had already passed, and his daughter's lost time could not be regained.

He was even more apologetic to know that his daughter's resentment for leaving the hospital room was something her father, not her brother, deserved.

The first match started.

His youngest's match was second.

[Okay, the game has started. The first to meet at 9 o'clock is Blue Jin-young, Park Seong-hwa.]

The comments of the game casters and commentators began.

He pulled out a thick notebook that he had left under his pillow.

He turned the pages and listened to the commentators.

[Park Seong-hwa is a good starter. Contrary to his opponent who chose a build to start relatively well, is it a strong build in the early to mid-range?

[Hey, I'm done with this build.]

Build.

Actually he didn't understand the build.

However, he checked the comments of the commentators and the description of the build, which was written in crooked letters in the notebook.

He diligently flipped through the notebook to find the description of the player.

Park Seong-hwa, Park Seong-hwa Park. Found it.

Park Seong-hwa – The gameplay in the second half is not stable. There are a lot of things that go wrong trying to forcibly finish the game.

Here are the best possible cases.

No matter who wins, the first match will be over soon.

He won't have to wait long until the second game where his youngest appears.

A happy smile formed.

* * *

His son could be seen from afar as he entered the booth to play a game.

The excitement he had just before disappeared in an instant.

He felt frustrated as if there was a stone in his chest.

He looked unwell.

He could tell at a glance that his son's health was bad.

He looks like that?

What the hell are the team managers and coaches doing?

The game started and the commentators started shoutcasting.

His eyes didn't go down to the notebook.

During the match, it sometimes shows the players' faces for a moment.

He couldn't put his head down to the notebook, lest he might miss the brief screen.

About 15 minutes have passed since the game started.

For a moment, his youngest's face was reflected.

The commentator admired and praised his youngest's face, concentrating on the monitor in front of him.

The cheers of his youngest's fans were heard.

He couldn't.

His son's countenance was awful, so he couldn't look at his son's face with joy.

The match continued, and even after the match was over, his youngest's face did not leave his mind.

Since he won today's match, it would be good to rest a little.

He knew very well that his youngest wouldn't do that.

'That child could die before me.'

He thought so.

At first, he didn't even know that the kid had a strong desire to win.

Because he won every time.

The son he sees once every few months boasted only of his victory.

So he thought he was a good son.

He studies well, does sports well, and speaks well.

The father knew later that he wasn't perfect, but that he was a strong kid that couldn't lose to anything.

Not to lose to anything, not wanting to lose anything.

He was sharp and sensitive, as if he would die once he lost.

He felt like his heart was collapsing.

Even if he stopped his youngest, he wouldn't listen.

Still, he was a good listener to his sister, but after the two of them became distant, he couldn't interfere.

No, it's funny now that he was interfering.

He didn't deserve it.

He saw the hand holding the notebook.

It was a blunt, rough hand.

It was the hand that touched mechanical equipment more than the hands of his children.

His fingertips became numb and it was difficult to turn the pages of the notebook page by page.

The writing in the notebook was crooked.

It was full of mistakes because he couldn't learn to write.

He is the only one in the world who can properly recognize this nonsense handwriting.

So neither the nurse nor his daughter could see this notebook.

Because he was shy.

As much as he lacked his own hands, he treated his children poorly.

His daughter, who had to go to work every day while attending school, gave up university and said she wanted to work in a factory.

His youngest child who saw his face only once or twice a year and

grew up almost neglected.

He picked up the calendar at the bedside.

Tomorrow was marked with a red circle.

It's the surgery day.

He's never been a father in his life.

He couldn't even discuss the future.

Now it was impossible to predict how much more time would be left.

He shook his daughter, who was sleeping in the caregiver's bed, to wake her up.

He asked his dreary daughter where his cell phone was.

"Why, Dad. Are you going to tell Ho-jae about the surgery tomorrow? That's a good idea. He should know now."

Saying so, his daughter gave him his cell phone.

He wanted to tell his youngest.

Past failures, future failures and successes.

Do your best, but don't push yourself to the brink by hurting yourself.

Apart from success, you are a worthy person.

He wanted to tell him that it's okay and that he loves his youngest.

He was so determined.

So the night passed.

Even the short morning wait passed.

Morning came.

Then, the door to the hospital room opened.

His youngest said he would come as soon as he finished training, and when he saw the face of his youngest who opened the door of the hospital room, he forgot what he wanted to say.

The words he had prepared to say, not even a greeting came out.

Nothing really came out after seeing his youngest's condition, which was much more serious than he had expected.

Anguish and sorrow.

A sense of shame.

“What’s going on, Dad?”

Unknowingly, he raised his voice.

Completely different words from what he had prepared came out.

His son sighed in frustration.

“Father... at least tell me why you called me.”

The conversation went contrary to his original intentions.

He couldn't be honest because of his lack of communication, intense emotions, and his fear behind the blame.

His youngest and his conversation continued to run in parallel lines.

In the end, it ended in the worst way possible.

Side Story 14

Hochi (1)

“Something like that happened? It’s kind of interesting.”

Lee Yeon-hee, who was listening to what I was talking about, said.

I asked what was interesting.

“That he had a friend like that.”

Oh, was that what I was talking about?

Of course, that’s interesting.

That Hojae had a friend.

It was even more surprising than if one day, all of a sudden, he said, ‘I’m a god.’

To be honest, I wasn’t really surprised when Hojae got out.

Maybe it’s just because I was thinking that it wouldn’t be strange if he did that and became a god.

Rather, it would have been more strange to not be a god.

“I think he got along well with that Lizardman.”

It certainly was strange.

Although Hojae had values that could be very problematic in society.

There were many similarities with the values of the Lizardman, who

were simply ignorant, liked to fight, and liked to be strong.

And.

“I think it’s more about being able to empathize and understand each other than our personality.”

Perhaps in that sense, he felt a sense of camaraderie with the Lizardman Iddy and became closer to her.

I think that was the case.

Hojae is a person who can endure loneliness well.

But he wasn’t terribly lonely, and he wasn’t terribly free from loneliness either.

As soon as he entered the tutorial, he became isolated, maybe even before he got into the Tutorial.

He hasn’t been able to seek empathy and understanding from others since he retired from professional gaming, perhaps even before that.

He had people cheering from afar, but no one was standing by.

He didn’t even have colleagues.

The teammates saw Hojae only as an out-of-the-ordinary monster, an incomparable genius.

His opponents saw Hojae only as an enemy to be defeated.

The presence of fans cheering for him only made him more obsessive about winning.

I think that a lot would have changed if there was even one person who was by Hojae’s side at that time.

Of course, if that was the case, Hojae might not have become a god.

But when comparing becoming a god through that process and not becoming a god without that process.

I think it's a much happier life not being a god.

So whenever I think of Hojae's family, I feel a little sad.

If they protected Hojae.

But they couldn't, and whenever Hojae tried to avoid his family story and ignore it, I could only watch with pity.

Maybe it's a good thing they're already dead.

Anyway, Hojae was cut off from people and had to stand alone for too long.

And Iddy was the only person who could fill that loneliness.

"Still, I can't believe he's trying to destroy the tutorial because of a friend he met on a stage. It's a little weird, but it's cool."

"Right?"

I think so too.

Maybe it's because I was born in a tutorial, Hojae's goal of destroying the tutorial for the people in it feels cool.

Compared to other challengers who say that it's a meaningless world that resets every time, and abuse people in the tutorial, I don't think Hojae is a bad guy, although he is a bit crooked.

"Tell me another story."

Lee Yeon-hee said.

Recently, whenever I meet Lee Yeon-hee on the 61st floor, I tell her stories of Earth.

Today, strangely, the topic of Hojae came up.

Lee Yeon-hee knew quite well what Ho-jae was going through in the tutorial.

She says she's been scouring the tutorial community's old records.

But she didn't know what Hojae was going through on the stages.

By the way, I was a little nervous about telling the story of Hojae to others.

I think Hojae will get angry later.

Or just embarrassed.

I wanted to see it, but I was also afraid of the aftermath.

"How about you? Do you have any memorable stages?"

I asked Lee Yeon-hee in reverse.

"Me?"

"Uh-huh."

All the tutorials I remember are memories recorded during Hojae's time.

I wondered what other people would have experienced and how differently they would have seen it.

"Well, I don't have many memories of the stages because I struggled day by day with the homework Uncle gave me. Oh, but I still remember that place. The 16th floor. You know?"

I know

A stage where doppelgangers and chatty knights and miscellaneous extras appear.

It was a very special stage.

I remember that the atmosphere itself was a little different from other stages.

It was one of the few stages that Hojae remembered as a pleasant experience.

“Ah, that stage was hell.”

* * *

The topic of conversation quickly passed through Hojae and tutorials, and continued to the current state of the Earth.

The Earth was in an ambiguous situation, neither good nor bad.

There are no crazy gods invading Earth, and the gates full of monsters in the middle of the city no longer open.

It would have seemed very peaceful just hearing this, but it really wasn't.

In the areas near the gates where the gates were opened, living things began to become beasts.

From passing birds and stray cats to flying insects.

Even humans are said to become demons.

The exact cause and pattern have not been identified yet.

Compared to the days when the gates were open, it is not at a dangerous level.

However, due to the fact that it occurred without warning, the

damage to the general public was quite large.

This issue is now one of the most trivial issues on Earth.

The bigger problem was, rather, the Awakened who had to deal with such an event.

There were too many Awakened left on Earth.

Most of the Awakened people with too much power became unemployed.

Although they were wary of beasts, the work has significantly decreased compared to the days when there were gates that had to be attacked all the time.

Such Awakeneds were used in national conflicts.

Although a full-fledged clash has not yet occurred, people are publicly speaking in the news that a world war involving the Awakeneds is about to happen soon.

The gap between the Awakened and the non-Awakened is also deepening.

Non-Awakeneds, who make up most of the population and are in fact supporting the splendid daily life of the Awakened, began to feel uncomfortable with the fact that the Awakened wield extra-legal power and authority while just fooling around.

Confronted with the psychology of rewards unique to the Awakened, it is causing various social problems.

Finally. Hojae is gone.

This has also become a big social problem.

Of course, externally, Hojae had been dead for a long time, and he had the 'setting' to return to Earth through resurrection whenever

there was a crisis.

As this guy disappears, the religious system of the Lee Ho-jae Faith is collapsing.

Although I had the authority to operate the system.

It has become difficult to pay ‘reward’, which is a core function of the system.

Lee Ho-jae Faith’s compensation was entirely covered by Lee Ho-jae’s ability.

Rewards such as sending down punishment, giving simple abilities, or summoning guardians.

It all relied on Hojae’s ability to pay all of that in real time.

I didn’t have that kind of omnipotence.

In addition, the same was true for item-type rewards such as potions, which accounted for most of the rewards.

There was a limit to the quantity of items.

It was never meant to be infinite.

To solve these problems, we are preparing a plan to gather the Awakened and send them on an expedition to another world.

If we can successfully explore the world beyond through the inter-dimensional portal.

Therefore, if inter-dimensional exchange is activated, it is expected that several problems can be solved at the same time.

On the contrary, it may be more of an annoyance.

Anyway, because of these things, the Earth has been busy every day

lately.

To solve the governments of each country that do not want to release the Awakened even on the brink of death.

Recruiting manpower and investment funds.

“One thing I know for sure.”

Lee Yeon-hee said abruptly.

“Hmm?”

“It’s that Uncle is a really different person from Hojae. You’re not really a normal alter ego.”

.....you realized that now?

I was a little upset.

Even when we met at the competition, Lee Yeon-hee did not understand that I was a different person even though I was Hojae’s alter ego.

“It’s because I also use an alter ego. However, my alter ego is really me. It is the concept of a separate body that shares a single consciousness. An alter ego with a separate self-consciousness.”

Lee Yeon-hee looked at me with academic eyes.

I got a little goosebumps.

It reminds me of Hojae’s eyes when he was experimenting with me in the past.

“Then what should I call you? It’s a little odd to just call Uncle an alter ego.”

“Hochi.”

“Hochi?”

“It’s my name.”

Lee Yeon-hee laughed and said it was fun.

“I heard he called you that, but that was a name, not a nickname?”

I told her of an anecdote that Hojae made up the name of a character named Hoochi Nedval and his name roughly.

He is a very indifferent guy.

Actually, I wanted to have a grand name like Yong-yong.

“Then Uncle Hochi...”

What do you mean Uncle!

I was furious.

How old am I?

I am even younger than Lee Yeon-hee.

I’m way younger!

“Ah, anyway, what exactly is the relationship between the two of you?”

Relationship?

My relationship with Hojae?

Well, what should I explain?

“I don’t know what Hojae will think, but I think of Hojae like a parent.”

Because I learned everything from Hojae.

Even though I was forced to learn things I didn't want to learn.

Even if Hojae doesn't have to explain it in words, there are many things I learned from his memories.

"It's similar to me in that respect. I learned it from him too. It's only in the tutorial."

It certainly was.

Me and Lee Yeon-hee had something in common which was that we learned from Ho-jae.

Perhaps I know more clearly than Lee Yeon-hee.

Lee Yeon-hee was like a little sibling who suddenly appeared one day.

That's unnecessarily outstanding.

To me, who was judged as a failure and buried in the ruins of the 61st floor, the existence of Lee Yeon-hee, who appeared like Hojae's savior one day, was really embarrassing.

Whenever Lee Yeon-hee went up one level, I saw Hojae regaining vitality and hope, and I felt a sense of shame, and also felt a sense of entitlement and inferiority.

It's an old story.

I now feel only a little bit of regret, a sense of debt, and gratitude to Lee Yeon-hee.

Thanks to Lee Yeon-hee, Hojae found his hope again, and his relationship with me became close, so I could say that Lee Yeon-hee was a benefactor to me.

"By the way."

Lee Yeon-hee said.

“You talk a lot more than I thought.”

“Uh.....”

I was embarrassed.

At Lee Yeon-hee’s sudden words.

Lee Yeon-hee laughed again.

Did she make fun of me?

Lee Yeon-hee asked me what was so embarrassing because she couldn’t think of what to say.

“Are you interested in me?”

“Uh... uh?”

Side Story 15

Doppelganger (1)

The divine message came.

A precious thing will be buried under an unnamed dungeon in the western part of the continent.

‘Dig it out.’

It was an extraordinary oracle.

It was not an archaic language that had been forgotten over the years, nor was it a secret language whose meaning was hidden through difficult rhetoric.

It wasn’t even a prophecy whose interpretation changed occasionally with the passage of time.

It was a simple message.

Here, there is something precious, so dig it up yourself.

It was simple and clear words that both the officer who interpreted the denomination’s Bible and the fruit sellers of the street could understand.

Such an unusual oracle was given to all temples across the continent.

In the papal palace towering in the middle of the belief, to the small monastery in the mountains that cared for the elderly who were recuperating.

The contents of the oracle spread quickly.

From the mouths of the priests to the mouths of the believers, the Empire tried to stop the rumors belatedly, but it was impossible from the beginning.

When the emperor first heard about the oracle, many people on the continent had already heard of the oracle.

Even the emperor could not stop the rumors that had already spread.

For the sake of an instant change of life.

People started to leave their homes.

They set a nail to the front door of their house and started walking westward with a promise to return with gold.

In search of the treasure that may be sleeping somewhere in the western part of the continent.

One year has passed.

Those who were farmers, blacksmiths, bakers, and hunters in their hometown became adventurers in the west.

The adventurers flocked to the dungeon.

Many people died.

Contrary to the name, they were bad at adventures.

Even if a war broke out, this many people would not have died in vain.

However, there were more people coming to the dungeon than those who disappeared day by day.

A city for such adventurers was built near the dungeon.

There was no one to claim the wallets of those who died, for everyone

had given up their lives for the sake of their dreams.

Three years have passed.

The dungeon on the west side of the continent was being attacked.

In the vicinity of the dungeon, a city for adventurers was formed without fail.

The hastily built city also declined rapidly.

The old money the adventurers brought from their hometowns had long since fallen.

Adventurers are no longer consumers.

They weren't even producers.

They became thieves.

Five years have passed.

The seekers lost hope that one day they would find the treasure.

All that was left was the devastated western part of the continent, the family left behind in their hometown after losing their fathers, and a band of thieves.

By the time the vortex of desire that the oracle had evoked calmed down, and the ruins beneath it began to appear.

In the abandoned dungeon that had already been attacked before the oracle was issued.

A certain wizard, who was investigating the outer walls of the dungeon with detection magic, discovered that there was a long straight route beyond the small mouse hole.

It was an artificial straight passage that could not be formed naturally.

Upon hearing the news that a hidden path had been found, the remaining expedition team that had not yet disbanded headed for the unnamed abandoned dungeon.

‘...Can you dig it up?’

‘What, the treasure?’

‘No, the path.’

The hidden path of the dungeon was blocked.

It was in a deep cave, beyond a tunnel where a rock had collapsed and the road was blocked.

The hole that was thought to be a rat hole was a small gap in the ground where the ground collapsed.

Hearing the news, the magicians of the tower arrived at the dungeon, but they could not break through.

There was a risk that the ground of the dungeon itself would sink if they tried to penetrate the passage with magic.

In the end, the only way left was to remove the piles of stones one by one from the deep dungeon.

At this point, most of the adventurers who moved as individuals had left.

The main expeditions for the dungeon were run by the Order, the Royal Knights, the Magic Tower, and the Mercenary Guild.

They had enough time and money to invest in digging the dungeon’s path.

One more year has passed.

The expedition succeeded in expanding a tunnel the size of a mouse

hole into a tunnel the size of a dog hole.

There was an opinion to use magic to temporarily lift the pile of stones, then put a few people in and explore the other side of the road.

Originally, it was planned to send in a few slender people first, but due to the complex interests of several expeditions, a representative of each expedition was selected one by one and they became the expedition team.

And now.

Five men were walking through a dark, small passage.

“Please raise the light.”

Said the adventurer who was leading the advance squad.

The wizard walking right behind the adventurer raised his staff higher.

That wizard was the tower owner of a famous magic tower.

A great person, who originally, an adventurer would not even be able to look straight at.

It wasn't just the wizard.

The knight walking behind him belonged to the Royal Knights.

In fact, the adventurer wanted to become a knight when he was young.

Just like all the boys in their hometown.

Of course, it was an impossible dream.

Behind the knight was a glorious paladin who was respected by the

church members, and at the end of the party, the ace warrior of the mercenary guild followed.

The adventurer felt good.

It gave him a strange pleasure to have such a great group of people standing behind him, as he led them.

The dungeon's path was finally cleared, and the excitement, anticipation, and tension that came from the fact that he was included in the advance squad to search for the treasure was added.

So this experienced adventurer made a mistake.

Unlike an adventurer who had been eating and sleeping in the dungeon for ten years, he could not recognize the figure drawn under his feet.

As soon as the adventurer's feet stepped forward, the figure began to glow.

“Tr……!”

The walls of the dungeon began to collapse before the adventurer could even finish the word trap.

The wall collapsed, revealing a large cavity, and the coffin in the center of the cavity began to open.

The ground shook and rolled down towards the cavity.

He tried to grab something in a hurry, but he was so confused that he couldn't get any strength into his body.

While losing consciousness due to the effect of the stun magic trap.

The adventurer saw.

The figure of a demon crawling out of the coffin with wriggling black

tentacles.

* * *

I opened my eyes

With my eyes open for a moment, I did not move my body, but rolled my eyes and looked around.

Fortunately, a dim light was shining into the cavity.

The wizard's wand was still shining.

Damn it.

Perhaps the ceiling had collapsed, and the way back was blocked.

They are trapped inside the cavity.

“Light.”

The wizard's quiet words echoed in the cavity.

The light from the wand grew stronger.

The surroundings were clearly visible.

I lifted myself up after checking for safety.

“Are you okay?”

Someone's arm suddenly came to my side.

Looking back, it was the mercenary.

The mercenary lifted me up.

While I was with the expedition team, I did not belong to any faction,

so I was stuck in the mercenary guild.

The mercenary knew me and I drank together with him.

We weren't even in the same party.

I had no memory, but the mercenary said he remembered.

I also pretended to remember.

“Let's gather in one place for a while. Is there anyone you can't see?”

The paladin approached the wizard holding the staff and said,

The wizard pointed his staff at the paladin.

“Stop, don't come any closer.”

The paladin was bewildered.

The wizard explained that before he passed out, he had seen the appearance of a demon called a Doppelganger.

The paladin agreed to those words and stepped back.

“I also saw a doppelganger crawling out of a coffin over there just before fainting. It would be better for the mercenary and the adventurer to separate from each other. A demon called a doppelganger kills people and imitates them. I've heard it's said to be so subtle that it can never be identified with the naked eye.”

The knight explained.

The explanation was easy to understand even for an ignorant person like the adventurer.

He was a better talker than I thought.

The paladin prayed for a moment, and then he put on a more serious expression.

He said.

“The doppelganger is still in here.”

Damn it.

Damn it.

Why is my life so twisted every time something is about to be unraveled?

If I had discovered the trap in advance, I would have been slowly approaching the treasure by now.

Instead, now we're being locked in a cavity with a demon.

Damn it

“Isn't it hiding using invisibility magic? The doppelganger is also a demon, so it should know how to use magic.”

I said.

It was also a personal wish.

If the demon were hiding in the common corner, it seemed that our great party could somehow kill it.

“Detect Invisibility.”

The wizard's spell has been cast.

He shook his head quietly.

Then quickly took the magic tool out of his bag.

It was an artifact that sensed the magic being cast around it.

There was one reaction.

There was only one magic that was maintained in this cavity right now.

Light magic being cast from the wizard's staff.

"All five of us here are in my sensest. It seemed that while we fainted, someone had already been killed and the doppelganger replaced them."

the Knight said.

It was the worst.

I looked at the place where the ceiling had collapsed, feeling like I was chewing shit.

When I turned around, everyone in the party was looking at me.

"No. I think we will have to wait quietly for the rescue team to come. It will be difficult for us to clear this wreckage by ourselves."

"The Lord of the Magic Tower is here, what can we not do?"

asked the mercenary.

"I don't think so."

This rubble poured from the ceiling.

Just getting rid of it doesn't solve all the problems.

The more it is removed, the more it may fall, and it may be dangerous.

A number of wizards were needed, as we did when we entered this passage.

Enough to support the ground itself with magic power.

“The rescue team will come. The second expedition team will come in three days, if they find this place.”

the Knight said.

Then the wizard said,

“My apprentice must be included among them. The Memorial magic will be able to read what happened, so a rescue team will be organized.”

It was a relief.

At least I’m not dead yet.

I felt a sense of relief as if a stone in my stomach had passed through.

I had a wasteful life that no one would care about whenever and wherever I die, but for the other party, each one was a valuable person.

The expedition won’t just give up on this party.

The Paladin cleared his throat.

Like to pay attention to himself.

“There’s something more important than our escape right now. The doppelganger is a dangerous demon that should never be left out. We’ll have to work this out on our own before the rescue team arrives.”

That crazy bastard

Even though it was a very reasonable statement, swear words came out of it.

So, even if we all die, we should prioritize finding the doppelganger over that.

Does it make sense?

You have to live and see.

“However, it is very difficult to determine the identity of the doppelganger who has once stolen a person’s appearance. Doppelgangers cannot be easily identified because they steal not only the person’s appearance, but also memories and personality.”

The knight said.

Yes, how can you find a demon that is so hard to find?

When the rescue team arrives, there might be someone among them who can find the demon, so it’s better to leave it to that person.

“Does anyone here know how to find out the identity of the doppelganger?”

The mercenary shouted in a hoarse voice.

At the words of the mercenary, everyone in the party was immersed in their thoughts and pondered on how to do it, but everyone remained silent to see if there was anything that came to mind.

After a brief silence, the group began to share information and anecdotes they knew about the doppelganger one by one.

It wasn’t a fruitful story.

Rather, it was just a heinous story that only aggravated anxiety.

It was awkward

To think that someone here is a demon, not a human.

Unlike the rest of the party, when someone attacks, I have to face it.

I am the weakest here.

People around me began to be wary.

The one closest to me is the mercenary on the right.

And the paladin on the left.

The wizard standing in the center with the others surrounding him.

Damn it. Can I really survive here?

I was worried about that.

That was then.

Someone started whispering in a quiet voice I could only hear

[Hello, human friend? I guess you must have been talking about me.]

It was the voice of the demon.

Side Story 16

Doppelganger (2)

In a dark cavity, five men were conversing, wary of each other.

Everyone was paying attention to each other, but there was one person unfocused.

[Human friend, can't you speak?]

Demon.

It was the voice of the demon.

[Yes, I am the demon.]

“Anyway, doppelgangers should never be allowed out!”

“But there's no way right now!”

The group's harsh voices were heard.

The topic went round and round, and there was no clear answer.

Anxiety and fear added to the perfect situation to confuse people.

Rather than recognizing that there is no logic in their own words, they mistakenly thought that everyone else's understanding was lacking.

In the midst of the frustration, the voices grew louder, and finding a solution seemed to keep getting farther and farther away.

[You seem to know what kind of existence I am. right?]

The demon, the doppelganger, was inside me.

A thought came to mind in an instant.

Should I tell my friends?

[Oh, you better not do that, human friend, but if you really want to die with me, I won't stop you.]

The Paladin and Knight continued to explain the dangers of doppelgangers.

The Wizard stood in the center and kept quiet.

The Mercenary was annoyed and started shouting, "So what am I supposed to do?"

[Do you think those friends will save you? The moment you speak, they will kill us together with no regrets. Human friend, don't you think so too?]

That's probably true.

They will not feel sorry, or even the slightest remorse.

I don't mean that these people are heartless scum.

However, they were people who knew the dangers of doppelgangers better than anyone else, and my value was quite low compared to that.

I am just garbage that crawled through the dungeon and died by stepping on a trap unluckily, a few people died like that every day.

When entering the village, soldiers followed me for surveillance, and the houses with young daughters were locked.

I always had to be looked down on with contempt until I fell asleep.

The Adventurer was such a being.

The reason he was included in this great party was not that he was a great adventurer, but because he was one of the few who survived until now.

Perhaps there was a different reason for having him in the party.

He was clearly aware of his position and value because he had approached the threshold of death more often than anyone else.

However

“It was only 10 years ago that only two doppelgangers destroyed an entire Dwarven city.”

Is it right for me to hide the doppelganger in order to live?

The desire to live was shining, but is it right to sacrifice so many people for that light?

Although I was destined to live like garbage and die like garbage.

[My human friend doesn't seem to know much about me. right?]

The doppelganger broke his train of thought and spoke again.

[Why don't you ask?]

...what.

I didn't know what the doppelganger was suddenly saying.

[What happens to a human being who's been hit by a doppelganger?]

I looked around in doubt.

I kept looking at the knight that was explaining the doppelganger, and

as if he felt my gaze, he turned his head and looked straight at me.

...What, does that man have eyes on the side of his head?

He's wearing a helmet too.

Is it a coincidence?

"Is there anything you want to ask?"

I nodded my head suddenly.

[Ask. What happens if you get hit by a doppelganger?]

I did as the doppelgangers said.

"What exactly happens to a person who has been attacked by a doppelganger?"

The knight nodded his head as if I had asked a very good question.

He looked like a teacher lecturing people at school.

I've never met a teacher in person, but I thought maybe they would be something like him.

"A doppelganger kills a person and immediately melts the body of that person away. And they can imitate the person they killed. In other words, we already have a doppelganger mixed in. To avenge that person, you must catch the doppelganger. There is no need to feel guilty or sorry because they look the same. Rather, it is the right thing to do to soothe the soul of the deceased by killing the doppelganger who is imitating the victim..."

The knight explained.

Good voice, accurate pronunciation, and easy-to-understand explanations.

He was really like a teacher.

[This is a great story. That knight is good at explaining. I wish he had become a teacher rather than a knight.]

Even the doppelganger agreed with me.

[That's not important, my friend. Didn't you notice something strange in that Teacher Knight's explanation?]

What's weird?

Is there something wrong with the description?

[No, that was an accurate explanation. But isn't it strange? You were not killed by me, and you were not eaten by me. Rather, you maintained your ego. Isn't that right?]

...It was.

However.....

[Wow, you think even this is a demon's trick? That is an exaggerated delusion. If I eat you, I will get all your memories and be able to imitate you perfectly. It would be better for me to act to deceive your party than to leave your ego alone.]

It was a difficult argument to refute.

What a surprising demon.

The demon's acting power is certainly enough to deceive humans.

That's why it's a demon.

[Let me tell you one thing. I've been sleeping in that coffin over there for over 400 years. 400 years is no small amount of time for a demon. I won't have much time left in my life.]

The demon doesn't lie.

Only when he declares he is telling the truth.

[During that long period, I grew old. So even though I took a place in your body, I couldn't kill you. The same goes for anyone other than you. Now I have no power left to kill and imitate anyone

[That means I'm harmless.]

[Of course, I am hiding in a friend's body, but that's not a big problem. No one dies, and no city perishes.]

[I just want to live. Even for just a little bit longer.]

[How about you, friend?]

The demon's voice was calm and polite.

Like a teacher who kindly informs you of the obvious.

I was moved by that voice and agreed.

I wanted to live

More than anyone else.

* * *

[Are your worries over?]

It's not over yet.

The doppelganger said he was harmless, but there is no fool in the world who truly believes a demon's words.

But I also wanted to live right now.

[Isn't that enough?]

Ignoring the demon's words, I got up.

The group's eyes naturally turned towards me.

The guy who had been quiet with his mouth shut until now abruptly stood up, so their gaze naturally moved to me.

In fact, in my position, it is natural to shut up and not come forward until the problem is resolved.

But if you really do that, you never know when your neck will run away.

The discussion of the party continues, and when the words, 'But does it matter if that adventurer dies?', I will die on the spot.

It would be nice if the adventurer was the doppelganger after killing him, and if not, 'Well, it couldn't be helped.' One word and I would be forgotten.

I didn't want to die like trash.

Like my fellow adventurers.

"I have something to ask."

The knight's eyes lit up when I said I had a question.

"How much time do we have left?"

"7 days."

the knight said.

"We have more than a month's worth of food, but we should see the time limit as when the rescue team arrives, not the moment we run out of food."

The knight looked like he was trying to find the doppelganger before the rescue team arrived.

How can I change that thought?

“Then we don’t have much time left. I have one suggestion.”

It was necessary to calm the chaos within the cave even if it’s just a little bit.

I knew all too well how reckless and cruel people can become in chaos.

And the victim of such confusion will most likely be me.

I suggested that anyone who would like to present a topic speak with me in the common center.

Fortunately, the mercenaries and wizards agreed.

Soon, everyone in the party agreed.

It was great that the sorcerer told me that he was discussing it in the tower as well.

There is a difference between speaking in a place that attracts people’s attention and a place that does not.

I think a little more about my words, and I calm down.

“Magician, there is something I want to talk about in the middle for a moment. Could you please go to your seat?”

I tried to speak as politely as possible.

If it had been outside the dungeon, it might have been branded as cheeky with this single sentence and I would have turned into a dead body without even realizing it.

Even if this wizard stood still, the people under him would not have left me alone.

Why are you arrogantly talking to the lord of the tower?

“Okay.”

But the Wizard followed my instructions and retreated from the common center.

The Wizard naturally retreated in the opposite direction from where I was approaching.

When I return to my seat, the wizard will be opposite

My place will be the darkest.

It was a small harvest.

[Human friend, you were the type to think deeply about even the smallest things.]

There is nothing you can do to survive as an adventurer.

In the world of adventurers, dozens of people die for really trivial reasons.

“I’m going to ask you another question. Once you’ve uncovered a doppelganger, it’s about how you deal with the demon.”

“Rather than that, shouldn’t we start by discussing how to reveal the identity of the doppelganger?”

The Paladin spat out.

“Oh, let’s listen. It’s not the first time you’ve said this.”

Fortunately, there was the mercenary on my side.

In my heart, I expressed gratitude for the fact that the mercenary was on the same page as me.

And me in the past who pretended to recognize the mercenary at a drinking party.

“Hmmm.”

“If we find the doppelganger, is it possible to deal with it alone with our party?”

“It’s possible.”

The knight answered immediately.

He was the one who seemed to be confident.

With the magic of the lord of the tower, we will be able to defeat the doppelganger. Of course, if the doppelganger interferes in the meantime, I don’t know, but I can stop the doppelganger. It won’t be long, but I can definitely stop it for a moment.”

Crazy.

Can you two kill demons?

It’s too pretentious.

[No, my friend. In my opinion, that knight is more dangerous than the wizard. And don’t forget that I am weakened.]

The demon denied my expectations.

I knew that the Lord of the Magic Tower was great, but that knight was also unusual.

You only need two people to kill a demon.

Too little.

That was enough power to spark the crazy idea of killing the remaining party members.

“What if one of you two is a doppelganger?”

At once, the knight and the wizard tried to talk, but I quickly swung my hand to break it up.

“What if, that’s the worst case scenario.”

“Yeah, didn’t the paladin man say that anyone in the party could be a doppelganger. Let’s talk about it first.”

Once again, I sent my heartfelt tribute to the mercenary and the past me.

A long discussion ensued.

I stayed quiet.

Because my power was at an insignificant level.

When the knight is the doppelganger, it was concluded that if me and the mercenary and the paladin protect the wizard somehow, there is a slight chance of winning.

When the wizard is the doppelganger, it was concluded that it would be the same if the knight were the main element, the paladin and mercenary were assistant, and I attracted attention like a fly.

Of course, the odds didn’t seem high at all.

“If one more person loses here, the odds are...”

“It will be very low.”

The paladin answered.

It was the answer I wanted.

“You shouldn’t attack anyone with hasty guesses.”

“Of course.”

I wanted this one agreement.

“The bottom line is that we don’t have many opportunities. We don’t know how yet, but we must find the doppelganger on the first try. Hmm... I think that’s the point I want to talk about.”

Saying that, I came down from the center.

Instead of going back to my seat, I approached the paladin.

The paladin seemed to dislike me at first, but later, as a more orderly and constructive discussion began, his gaze on me suddenly softened.

He hates demons more than anyone else, and he is a great man who wants to kill them blindly.

He was the most dangerous thing for me.

I came close to him.

“I want to ask you one thing.”

“Why do you have to...”

The paladin didn’t discuss it all together, and he asked as if I was talking to him separately.

“I want to ask you personally.”

“Hmm, tell me.”

“When the demon is possessed. Is there any way to bring out the demon so that the possessed person is not hurt?”

Yes, I'm talking about my story.

"A doppelganger is not a possessing..."

"I'm just asking, just in case."

"...No. Killing the demon and burning him as well is the only way to purify the tainted soul."

[Haha, I'm sorry, my friend.]

Damn it

Damn bastards.

You can't even do this while collecting taxes every month.

Incompetent priests.

Like an incompetent god.

[I agree. Hihi.]

Aside from the feeling of chewing shit, my expression was shown in a restrained way with gloomy regret.

"Why is that? As I explained earlier, a doppelganger is not a possessing demon. It is a demon that kills and imitates someone."

No.

I have one doppelganger whispering inside me right now.

"I was just asking. I just asked. Then there's really no way to save those who have been attacked by the demon."

The paladin nodded his head.

With skeptical eyes.

I said yes, and stood up.

I returned to my seat.

Be brave when you return.

When I returned to my seat, the mercenary sitting next to me greeted me.

“Wow, friend, are you good at talking?”

“Thank you, thanks to you, I was able to talk to the end. Without you, I wouldn’t have been able to come forward.”

“What are you talking about! If you speak so coherently, everyone will listen to you. Thanks to you, the atmosphere has calmed down, you did well, you did well. Even in your hometown, when you started talking, everyone listened.”

The mercenary patted my back and said.

Along with stories of the past that I do not know.

Who is the friend that the mercenary remembers?

Even while we were talking like this, the paladin’s doubts were not resolved.

His gaze was fixed on me as I returned to my seat.

Those gazes would even reach the mercenary sitting next to me.

My behavior of being friendly with the mercenary.

My question on asking how to rescue the victim possessed by the demon.

My topic was not about how to find the doppelganger, but after finding the doppelganger.

If the paladin's head wasn't full of shit, he would soon be able to arrive at one thing.

The adventurer knows who the doppelganger is.

So far it was true.

However.

“That adventurer suspects the mercenary as a doppelganger. Were there any subtle differences that he could discover because they were close friends?”

He would think so

While talking with the mercenary while laughing, my eyes met with the paladin.

He quietly nodded his head.

I nodded my head slightly at him.

Fortunately, the paladin was moderately stupid.

[There was one more demon here, hahaha]

The demon watching me laughed as if it was funny.

Side Story 17

Doppelganger (3)

“No one should be alone.”

The Knight said.

Standing in the center.

He insisted that everyone should be watched fairly and thoroughly.

“I think it would be nice to pair up and watch each other.”

“But, our numbers aren’t even?”

It was just as the Mercenary said.

The number of people in the group is five.

When paired up, there is one person left over.

“How about spying on two people on each side?”

The Paladin gave an opinion.

It was an idea that seemed to come from a sense of wariness that appeared when the Mercenary and I were paired.

I hope it does.

“Two people? Wouldn’t the boundaries between us be weakened?”

“No. In this case, it won’t be much different as you’re being watched by two people on either side.”

The Paladin's opinion seemed the most reasonable, and the party decided to follow it.

Looking at the seating chart, the group was seated in a circle in the order of me – Mercenary – Wizard – Paladin – Knight – me.

In this case, I am monitoring the Mercenary and the Knight, and conversely, the Mercenary and Knight are monitoring me.

I wondered if the Paladin would swap places with the Wizard to keep watch over the Mercenary, but he actually didn't.

Was he trying to avoid unnecessary provocation?

Or is it because he was still not sure of the Mercenary yet?

Or did he decide that it was safer for the Wizard to be with the Mercenary than himself?

I couldn't be sure.

It would be great if I could read other people's thoughts.

[Oh, I sometimes think that, too.]

said the doppelganger.

The doppelganger who said so was reading my thoughts.

[No, I mean that I want to read other people's thoughts. Reading other people's thoughts is very useful. Reading really solves a lot of problems. On the other hand, though, it sometimes causes a lot more problems.]

The devil laughed quietly.

Goosebumps rose on my forearm, perhaps because of that laughter.

I shuddered at the sensation burning down my spine.

Then the Knight turned his head and looked at me.

His eyes were full of doubt.

“Are you all right?”

Did you even watch me shudder?

impossible.

I cleverly sat behind the others.

In the situation where I was sitting in a circle, I sat out of sight unless the Knight moved his head.

“I, I suddenly got a chill. It’s okay.”

“I see. Maybe it’s because you’ve been nervous for a long time. You need to eat something first.”

The Knight climbed back to the common center.

He seems to be talking about having a meal for a while.

It’s okay to just say it on the spot, but he thought it was a common topic, so he sincerely went to the common center.

The Knight begins by explaining the physical and mental effects of nutrition for a person before he even talks about eating.

Was it a coincidence?

The Knight was clearly looking ahead.

But as I moved, when I looked at him, he turned and looked exactly at me.

Twice.

Is it because his hearing is abnormally good that he stares at me even at a rustle?

I don't think that's why he turned his head every time I moved.

Am I mistaken?

Because of the excessive tension, I suffer from hallucinations that the Knight is always watching me with an eye on the side of his head.

There was a possibility.

I had seen many adventurers who went crazy in the dungeon and suffered from megalomania accompanied by optical illusions and hallucinations.

[This is not an illusion. human friend. To a human like that Knight, vision is nothing more than an auxiliary means to grasp the world.]

What kind of nonsense is that

* * *

The doppelganger explained the principle of magic.

I didn't understand at all.

Can you manipulate magical powers to see where your eyes can't reach?

What is that?

It's a scam

The meal began.

As the advance team was organized, they didn't know how long the expedition would last, so they had plenty of food.

“Sir, have some of this too.”

In addition to the supply, I had a few more snacks.

This is what I am giving away to my party now.

These are dried plums with a sour taste, sprinkled with sugar and pickled. If you eat them one by one, your mouth will drool, and if you eat it when you are tired, you will feel refreshed.

I had a lot of experience of being in distress or suffering in the dungeon, so I still brought a variety of things even in a situation where there was enough food.

Finally, I handed out the dried plums to the Knight and took a seat close to him.

“It’s delicious. Normally, I wouldn’t have eaten it because it was too sour. Maybe it’s because I inhaled a lot of dust, so the sour taste is really good. Thank you. I’ll enjoy it.”

The Knight said.

I handed out plums to everyone, but this Knight was the most kind, saying thank you.

This gentleman also seems to have a good personality.

He was like a character in a fairy tale, so I felt a sense of alienation.

“Plums are said to be good for recovery from fatigue and intestinal activity, as well as good for eye strain and immunity. Oh, what does immunity mean? Humans have a certain level of resistance to various diseases. According to bacteriology...”

Although he’s a bit chatty and likes to pretend to know.

A bit much.

I listened carefully to something that didn't even make sense to me and said, 'Oh, that's right. Indeed. I knew it. I can't believe it.' I replied hard, adding those following words.

While talking to the Knight, the Mercenary came closer.

He seemed to want to chat for a bit as we seemed to have a comfortable conversation atmosphere.

"Sir Knight, where were you from?"

"Didn't I tell you? I'm from the Frembe region. Come to think of it, you two said you knew each other?"

So the story of the hometown began.

The Mercenary was excited and started talking about his hometown.

The Mercenary was actually from somewhere together with me.

I just don't remember him.

"In our village, there was a famous tree rock..."

I remembered

A tree rooted in rocks.

The children used to swing in the tree.

It was an unusual tree, and there were many adults praying under it.

However,

"Is there such a rock in our village?"

"Huh? Don't you remember?"

The Mercenary asked as if he couldn't remember the rock tree.

“...I don't know. Haven't you mistaken it for another town?”

The Mercenary said that he could be mistaken, he shouted so, so I hesitated, saying that I did not remember well.

The Mercenary said that my memory is not good, and he told me to take a decoction of good medicine for my memory and went on.

It didn't seem like a big deal, but the light of doubt in the Paladin's eyes who was looking at us from behind, more precisely, the Mercenary, grew stronger.

“What was the Knight's hometown like?”

I asked the Knight to change the topic.

I thought that if it was the Knight, he would make me forget this ambiguous situation at once with his unique chatter.

* * *

“The promise I made with that commoner friend had a profound effect on my life.”

Had I known this would happen, I would not have asked the Knight about his hometown.

If I had known the chatter would be this long.

“It was not my intention to become a Knight. It was my destiny to become a Knight. I had no desire to become strong and become a superhuman, nor did I feel obligated to be loyal to His Majesty the King. I was just being carried away like a boat swayed by the waves. It was that friend who gave meaning to my life. Meeting him gave me the goal of living a life where I can protect and help more people. I...”

When the hell will this end? This damn talk...

“So I started practicing swordsmanship again...”

I know a lot of talkative people.

Mainly, they talk a lot when they are drunk, but they have the characteristic of repeating the same thing over and over again while getting drunk and chattering endlessly.

But the Knight did not get drunk, nor did he repeat what he said.

The fact that the chatter was being filled without overlapping content was surprising, and I was honestly amazed.

“In order to meet the qualifications to become a royal Knight...”

So the Knight continued talking.

Continuously.

[Open your eyes, human friend.]

I was startled by the doppelganger’s voice and opened my eyes.

I fell asleep for a moment.

My heart was pounding.

I hurriedly looked at the Knight, but he was still talking as if he didn’t care that I was sleeping.

The Mercenary was listening with much amusement.

“Light!”

“Light!”

The two were immersed in the story properly, even with strange slogans.

Aren't they just two idiots?

"It's strange. The creator of the light sword said that he left only one word. If you don't think you can do it, you'll die at once."

"Ha ha ha ha ha!"

Where the heck is the point to laugh at?

If you don't think you can do it, then die?

The only answer is to die and be reborn. What is this?

Are you saying to just kill a person with no talent?

It was an upsetting story to hear.

I looked around.

The Wizard was still silent.

The Paladin was still looking at the Mercenary.

I had to keep this situation.

The Mercenary is under suspicion, but should not be branded as the doppelganger.

If the Mercenary even dies due to suspicion, the next victim will be me with a high probability.

My goal is never to reduce the number of party members.

Let's say you kill the people in this cavity one by one.

In the end, there will be two people left, including me.

And I'll die as the last one.

As the overwhelmingly weakest me, I had to hold on to the time somehow.

Until the rescue team arrives and the blocked path reopens.

[After the path is open, don't worry. Activate the stun magic trap beyond the wall once more, kill everyone, and then get out of here.]

Very good.

The people outside don't yet know about the doppelganger.

If I kill everyone and the rescue team and go back to the entrance alone, I'll be the only survivor and can make up a story.

I can survive.

I couldn't die like this.

When I left home to find the treasure, my life was ruined.

Since then, my life has been like rolling in shit.

Killed people, cheated people, betrayed people.

I was betrayed, deceived, and nearly killed.

All that was left for me was that I did not die and survived.

If the end of that long, long abyss is futile death.

I couldn't accept it.

* * *

The night passed.

Inside the cavity in the cave where neither the movement of the sun

and the moon nor the intersection of light and darkness could be seen.

We could tell the time by looking at the clock.

And apart from the movement of the world

Incidents happened at night.

As always.

As if it was set that way.

People become more sensitive over time.

The friendly atmosphere of the mealtimes became harsh as if it had all been a lie.

The problem was that fatigue and drowsiness after eating were setting in.

The fact that there was still a doppelganger in the cavity made people afraid to fall asleep.

They began to guard each other sharply like a wounded beast.

And sparks flew over the oiled fuse.

The Wizard suddenly insisted on doing business in the corner.

Everyone was against it.

It was too dangerous for one person to disappear out of sight.

“It’s because I can’t! Damn it, I’m so old that I’m so embarrassed about my wrinkly things. We all should go away little by little and get business done.”

The Mercenary fiercely opposed it.

But the Wizard didn't give up.

He insisted on doing business in a place out of sight no matter what.

It may be inevitable that the Mercenary suspects the Wizard as a doppelganger.

To the Mercenary, the only person in the group who was acting suspiciously was the Wizard.

He accidentally pulled out his axe.

The Paladin who was watching him accidentally raised the hammer and blocked him.

“What, this! You should attack that old man, why stop me!”

Instead of responding to that, the Paladin used a holy spell.

“Cast a shadow under the light. Holy Mark.”

“Bastard, you want to try it with me now!”

The hammer of the Paladin and the ax of the Mercenary began to collide.

The Knight was perplexed by the sudden development of the situation, and I was quietly watching.

As if dealing with the enemy of his life, the Paladin swung his hammer desperately with a frightening expression on his face.

However, the fighting power of the warrior representing the Mercenary guilds covering the entire continent was formidable.

“Keuk!”

The Paladin fell on his butt.

Then, in the eyes of the Mercenary, I saw the Wizard casting a spell.

“This crazy old man...!”

The Mercenary pulled out the dagger hidden in his abdomen band and threw it.

The Wizard was hit by the dagger and fell.

“Stop it!”

Kuang!

A sudden burst.

As the Knight swung his sword and hit the floor, there was an explosion like magic, and the floor shook.

While the Mercenary looked at the Knight in amazement, the Paladin threw the hammer unhurriedly.

“Holy Smite!”

The hammer that even had a holy spell on it hit the Mercenary.

The Mercenary just fell to the floor.

[Hoho, this is totally messed up.]

It was as the devil said.

Damn, I should have stopped the fight somehow.

The fight broke out much more suddenly than expected.

There was no room for me to intervene.

I didn't even have the strength to stop their fight.

If I had intervened blindly, I would have died within a second.

The Paladin jumped up and picked up the hammer again.

The Knight also approached and began to stop the Paladin from trying to end the fallen Mercenary.

It's fucked up.

Really fucked up.

Those excited gents didn't seem to notice, but the Mercenary's head was bleeding.

It's bursting like a waterfall.

"Stop! Why are you doing this all of a sudden!"

"Get out of the way. He's a doppelganger! Let's take this opportunity to put an end to it..."

The Paladin clouded the end of his words.

It was then that he discovered that the back of the Mercenary's head had been completely smashed.

The fact that the body of the Mercenary, which had already been stretched out on the floor, was not moving at all.

"is, is he dead?"

The bewildered Paladin's eyes slowly rose and turned towards me.

Before new doubts appeared in those eyes.

I reflexively did what I was supposed to do.

"No!"

I ran to the fallen Mercenary with bitter tears.

And grabbed the Paladin's leg.

"Paladin! Please use a healing spell!"

"Bu, but..."

"If a doppelganger is in danger of dying, should he reveal himself!
This man is definitely not a doppelganger!"

Even in the midst of embarrassment, the Paladin poured healing spells into the back of the Mercenary's head.

The Mercenary miraculously survived.

Just for a second.

"If I become successful and go back to my hometown someday..... I want to propose to your sister..... Yuri..."

The Mercenary grabbed my hand and said so.

That was his will.

At the end of his last words, he died completely.

"No!"

I wept and wept like the end of the world.

Meanwhile, my mind was filled with unresolved doubts.

But who the hell is this Mercenary bastard?

I can't quite remember who he is.

How does he even know my sister's name?

My doubts were not resolved.

The only Mercenary who held the key to the answer was already dead.

While the bewildered party was silent, only the sound of my crying as I hugged the Mercenary's corpse reverberated in the cavity.

And

[Hihihihhi.]

The sound of the devil's laughter also accompanied the cavity.

Side Story 18

Doppelganger (4)

The devil said

[He just wants to live.]

I thought so too.

I want to survive somehow.

I wondered if there was any value left in my future life, but I still wanted to survive.

Rather than hope for the future, I wanted to live because of the frustrations and pains of the past.

How have I survived this far?

I endured those terrible times.

[I won't do anything. I will only be with you in your body until the end of your life. There won't be.]

My life was a waste.

I had a friend who told me to find a treasure in the west and become a rich aristocrat.

To use my hometown village as a manor, build a castle, and have knights.

Because of that goal, I left my hometown and family.

[What did you live for?]

I wanted to be a knight.

A shining life.

Like the heroes in the story, I wanted to walk the glorious path.

I bumped into the wall of reality, but I didn't lose my dream.

The only hope that protected me from the sense of separation was the treasure hidden in an unnamed dungeon to the west.

If only I can possess that treasure, my impossible dream can become a reality.

To do that.....

First I had to survive.

“Ahhhhh! Jack!”

I cried out the name of the Mercenary.

It was fortunate that I remembered the name of the Mercenary, who had been fluttering in my memory.

I just remembered hearing another Mercenary at a drinking party calling this guy Jack.

I cried desperately.

Like a person who has lost all of his family, I was heartbroken and desperate.

I thought while crying.

The Mercenary shouldn't die here.

It was never going to happen.

This was an accident.

Pickled plums with stimulants and sleeping pills created an unexpected accident.

My special pickled plums have been tested several times.

It puts people in a state of excitement with short-term arousing effects.

In a dungeon, even in such an extreme situation, it feels like hundreds of people clashing as an emotional battle begins.

If you are so excited, the effects of the sleeping pills will be delayed.

You feel drowsy and sleepy, and the people take it for granted.

It is natural that fatigue and drowsiness are felt because your mental energy is drained in a stressful situation.

Without even suspecting that I put sleeping pills on the food, they calm down and fall asleep.

This time it went the way I thought it would.

I handed out the plums to everyone in the group.

It was good to create an atmosphere of heated fighting.

When people start to slowly calm down from the effects of the sleeping pills, I intervene.

By appealing to the fact that I am in the weakest position, the plan was to gain justification during the arbitration and gain a voice.

My idea was that if I went that far, no one in my party would accidentally think, 'Let's kill that guy for now'.

The problem is that the Paladin, who thought the only suspicious one was the Mercenary, was almost certain that the Mercenary was the doppelganger.

And it may be my mistake of not guessing the instinctive disgust and aggression that the Paladin has toward the devil.

Anyway, this is fucked up.

Now that it has been proven that the Mercenary is not the doppelganger, the next suspect is naturally me.

“Ugh...!”

I did the acting of losing a friend with all my might, but.

Even when the party sees me like this, they may think, ‘Even that could be a doppelganger’s performance.’

If the doppelganger is really active, every time the party loses one member, the doppelganger has a huge advantage.

Naturally, the doppelganger will try to kill at least one more when given the chance.

Of course, I was the one who contributed decisively to the death of the Mercenary.....

“Get away.”

Or not.

The Knight instructed the Paladin to retreat.

“It’s better not to approach each other within a certain distance. Take a few steps back.”

The Paladin took a few steps back while panicking at the knight’s strong response.

I called joy inwardly at the sight.

Yes, the decisive culprit for reducing the number of people was not me who provided the clue.

It was the Paladin who blew off the Mercenary's head directly.

Fortunately, it seemed that I would not be designated as the first suspect.

With a smile inside, I wept.

* * *

The Knight sat next to me.

I had to manage to calm down my body.

It was too close.

If the Knight raises his hand and squeezes the back of my head, I will die.

On the other hand, the Knight sat comfortably as if he had no fear of being attacked by me.

“Aren't you going to kill me?”

I asked in a hoarse voice.

The Paladin explained everything.

He listed all the evidence he heard and judged, excluding his own feelings and subjective judgments.

Prior to the Knight's judgment, the Paladin knew that I had leaked the first clue.

I had to protest.

I said the Mercenary was different from what I usually knew.

He said the wrong memories and witnessed him behaving in an uncomfortable way.

Overwhelmed with guilt, I cried and said that my mistake had caused him to die.

Thank goodness for the knight.

“It’s not your fault. It’s all of us, and it’s an accident that was caused by the doppelganger.”

He gave a naive answer.

Such a nice boy.

I could bet all my fortune that if I brought this nobleman to the adventurer city, his underwear would be robbed off in less than two days.

We were seated narrowly in a circle.

There are now four people left in the cavity.

Me and the knight, the Paladin and the Wizard.

Among them, the state of the Wizard was not good.

The dagger thrown by the Mercenary stuck in his shoulder, and he is still unconscious even after pulling the dagger and stopping the bleeding.

The Paladin had to heal him.

It was a very dangerous situation for the Wizard, as he had to be treated alone by the Paladin.

In the end, the Paladin took care of the treatment, and the Knight and I took a few steps away to monitor it.

“I wanted to be a Knight who protects people.”

Suddenly the Knight began to speak.

Are you trying to comfort me?

“My friend asked me. He was surprised that I would become a Knight to save people. I just wanted to be a Knight to save people. After thinking about it, I answered, “I want to protect more people.”

So the story of the Knight began.

The knight's voice was warm.

It was a voice like a warm bonfire that calmed the listener regardless of the content.

The problem is... that it was way too long.

“It would be ideal to save everyone. That's what I was hoping for. But as time went on, I realized that it was a false ideal. When I tried to protect someone, someone would be left out. Those who were left out do certainly exist.”

I was starting to get a little annoyed at the endless words of the knight.

Normally, I would have coughed in moderation or cut off the conversation while avoiding my place.

I couldn't do it because of the circumstances.

I pretended to listen to him and then I pretended to be asleep.

Only then the knight's chatter stopped.

I quietly opened my eyes.

There was the sound of the knight's wheezing.

He, too, sat down and fell asleep, apparently because of the sleeping pills.

Completely defenseless.

I looked ahead.

The Paladin was still healing the Wizard's shoulder.

That Paladin also ate the special plum, but at the moment I thought he had a great will.

It was confirmed that the Paladin was nodding off asleep.

You're holding on to that healing spell while you sleep.

If I have attempted a surprise attack, he may come to his senses and counterattack.

[A surprise attack is not recommended, human friend. Especially against that knight.]

The devil advised.

I closed my eyes again and continued to pretend to sleep.

While counting the numbers inside, memorizing the time.

I fell asleep for a while.

Whaak.

Surprised by the fact that I was asleep, I took a deep breath.

Fortunately, I did not writhe or make a sound.

“Ma, maybe... your parents...”

“I’m an orphan. I was given to the magic tower.”

The Wizard and the Paladin were talking.

There was something strange.

One was that the Wizard’s voice belonged to a young woman.

The second was the content of the conversation.

What’s the matter, this

[Interesting, interesting. The Wizard wasn’t really an old man, she was a young woman. She was wearing polymorph magic. And the Paladin looked at that face and remembered the figure of his lost daughter in the past.]

“Then... before going to the magic tower...”

“I don’t know. It is said that there was a wandering troupe who took children who lost their parents during the war and gave them a performance.”

“Is the name of the wandering group...”

The conversation continued.

What, is she really the daughter he lost when he was young?

The Wizard’s past and the Paladin’s lost daughter had a lot in common, enough for me to think so, who started listening to the conversation late.

Place and time of disappearance, things they like and things they can't eat since childhood.

It really made me wonder if that Wizard was the Paladin's daughter.

[I have one thing to tell you. Human friend.]

The devil said

[The Wizard used magic. HiHi.]

What magic?

[Familiarization.]

It was the magic I knew.

It was simple magic.

It was just magic that made users feel friendly.

It has a slightly favorable effect, but in this situation.....

It can lead to great misunderstanding.

Let's think from the Paladin's point of view.

Suddenly, the Wizard's face changed, and the old man turned into a young woman.

There is a sudden feeling of familiarity in that face.

Even about the same age as his lost daughter.

Is this the attraction of blood ties? Enough to deceive.

Using magic to target the most painful past of a person.

She was a wonderful woman.

The expedition has been working together for nearly a year and investigating the dungeon together.

It is not strange that the Wizard picked up the story of the Paladin's lost daughter during that time.

Obviously, she knew the story of the Paladin's daughter, and he was deceived with her intentions.

If the Paladin is a doppelganger, I don't know what she's going to do.

Are you sure that the Paladin isn't the doppelganger?

Or is she wondering if he is the doppelganger through such behavior?

I couldn't figure it out

There is a possibility that that Wizard is the real Paladin's daughter.

[Looking at that Wizard's reaction, absolutely not. That's acting.]

The devil was sure.

“Dad?”

At the Wizard's watery word, the Paladin collapsed.

[Hehehehe, maybe our human friends don't need demons anymore.]

* * *

There was no need to panic at the unexpected development.

Not long after, the Knight woke up feeling the fuss.

The Wizard explained that he was imitating the face of the tower

master.

That was why she insisted on doing business in the corner and kept her conversations as short as possible.

The Paladin and the Wizard never talked about blood ties.

In this situation where the doppelganger is hiding, did she decide that revealing it would be of no help?

But they didn't know that I was eavesdropping on the conversation.

Let's take the opportunity to speak to the Knight and find a way to turn the situation in my favor.

The knight, who had listened to all the stories, seemed to ponder for a moment.

He is standing alone inside the center.

He looked like he was thinking deeply about something while looking at the wreckage that had been broken on the floor during the battle.

The Knight who muttered like that suddenly stood in the center of the cavity.

And he asked us.

"Do we have to live?"

...what kind of bullshit is that?

I thought I was getting used to the chatter of the knights, but those absurd remarks that came out from time to time still puzzled me.

"If we can find the doppelganger with minimal sacrifice, it'd be great, but I can't think of a way right now. So I'm telling you. If we don't find the doppelganger in the end."

The Knight said so hopefully.

“How about we all die together.”

There was no answer.

Side Story 19

Doppelganger (5)

“...Dad?”

The Knight couldn't open his eyes.

Instead, he continued to pretend to sleep quietly.

* * *

“That's who you are.”

“Yes.”

“I remember seeing you. Were you a disciple of the Tower Master?”

The Knight asked.

The Wizard nodded her head.

It was not surprising that the female Wizard had the appearance of her old master.

The bizarre behavior of the wizards was well known, and among them, the eccentricity of changing their appearance was one of the famous ones.

If you are a magician who is about the same level as a tower master, you can use polymorph magic like breathing.

The master, who had been too bothered to explore the depths of the dungeon, had his apprentice pretend to be himself and then sent her in.

It's something that could happen.

"I see. Then the rescue team..."

"Master is coming. As myself."

That's a bit...

It's fair if a female disciple walks around pretending to be the teacher.

But it's a little bit when an old Wizard walks around pretending to be the young female disciple.....

"I see."

The Knight left the party for a while.

He lingered around in a line that did not deviate from the view of the party.

The Knight thought.

It seems that the Paladin and the Wizard are not going to tell the secrets of their blood ties.

'Should I pretend not to know?'

The Knight who did not sleep deeply listened to the conversation between the Paladin and the Wizard.

He wondered if he should have woken up instead of pretending to sleep.

"Hoo."

The Knight sighed involuntarily.

He was frustrated

This situation.

The group was swept away by emotions.

They should not overlook that there is still a doppelganger in this space.

‘Should I push them?’

A doppelganger is here, forget about the reunion for now.

If there was the Mercenary, he might have said so.

But the Knight didn’t.

They could not ignore their feelings because they had more urgent and important problems.

The Adventurer is still unable to escape from his sorrow.

Of course, he could have been a doppelganger.

There was certainly a possibility that he encouraged the Paladin to attack the Mercenary.

But what happened to that individual Adventurer was definitely a tragedy.

Whether it’s the Adventurer himself or the doppelganger who ate him.

While the Knight was in the expedition, he had seen the Adventurer and the Mercenary drinking fondly.

The Adventurer giggled at how cool the guy who used to cry every day when he was young had turned.

Even the Mercenary didn’t feel bad and laughed, saying he really did.

In fact, the Knight has met everyone here several times over the past year.

It was unfortunate.

The Wizard held the Paladin's hand behind her back.

The Paladin also held her hand.

Although he was standing with his back turned and looking the other way.

The Knight was able to watch the scene using his magical powers.

The Knight also knew the story of the Paladin's daughter.

The Paladin was a famous person.

The profession itself as a Paladin had no choice but to gain fame.

It is a priest who has to take care of all the people, and other times a Paladin is a battle profession where he has to oppose and even kill someone.

At every moment his faith is tested and questioned.

Because it was a glorious job that no one could become, their numbers were small, and as the number was small, a heavy-duty reputation followed.

The Paladin lost his daughter during the war.

Residents who were not involved in the war had to evacuate to the temple and usually wait until the battle is over.

The commanders of both sides also protect the inviolable territory unless it is a temple that participated in the war.

Magical failure was the direct cause.

The wide-area magic cast by hundreds of Wizards was fired toward the city, in the opposite direction, not beyond the walls.

In fact, there was a temple where civilians had been evacuated.

In the yard where the walls collapsed and the battle began, there was no means to support fire fighting for the temple.

The city fell, and the city's chaos continued for a long time.

It was only a few months later that the entrance to the burnt-out temple could be reopened.

Thousands of bodies were found there.

There were also countless children's bodies.

The identities of the bodies could not be determined.

The Knight approached the Mercenary's body.

The dead Mercenary with the back of his head exploded was already smelling rotten.

'If I had stepped out... faster.'

Maybe the Mercenary didn't have to die.

On the Mercenary's cheek, traces of the Adventurer's tears remained.

He wet his leather gloves with a little water and wiped the marks.

The water spread from the Mercenary's face.

He had to wash the Mercenary's face thoroughly.

The Knight prayed for the Mercenary.

The Mercenary was said to be a believer of the God of Balance.

May there be a price worthy of his death.

The Knight had once studied the Bible.

It was because of a question a friend asked.

“Do you think you can do it?”

The friend asked

As if to refute the Knight’s words that he wants to protect everyone.

‘Do you really think you can abandon them?’

When the Knight said that he would protect, his friend asked if he could abandon.

The Knight did not respond.

He couldn’t turn away from the few in order to save more.

He couldn’t even downplay less important values in order to pursue more important ones.

He couldn’t kill someone else to save someone else.

The young Knight didn’t throw anything away.

So he couldn’t protect anything.

Time has passed.

The Knight has aged.

He belatedly searched the Bible to find the answer.

The God of Light said.

There's just light.

The king prayed.

When will this drought end?

There's just light.

The beggar trembled in the cold and cried out.

When the hell does the morning come?

There's just light.

Will my father come back? Can I marry her? When the hell is that kid going to die? I have to close this deal. done. May this moment last forever. Please, just once. I'm happy. I shouldn't have done that, I love you. I'd rather die. How could I have saved everyone?

God answered.

There's just light.

The God of Sky said.

All life below me is equal, and all values are precious.

Lookup

Your answers will be there.

The reason was always cruel.

The ideal, as always, was vain.

The Bible did not give an answer.

One person has already been sacrificed.

It was no longer possible to close the case without blood anymore.

Finding the doppelganger is now a problem.

If the doppelganger is the Paladin or the Wizard, there is a high probability that the other person's power will also deviate.

Even if the devil revealed his identity and the rest of the party did their best to fight back, the odds were not high.

The vacancy of one Mercenary was too large.

He got up from his seat

He couldn't avoid sacrificing blindly.

If possible, he wanted to kill the doppelganger without any of the party dying.

But the party couldn't let the doppelganger go out.

Outside the dungeon is a city where many people live.

He could not endanger the entire kingdom beyond that city.

'Can you kill him?'

Yes, if necessary.

Even if I kill everyone

"Everyone."

The Knight stood in the center of the circle and said.

Although upset by his own helplessness to force sacrifices on others.

The sacrifice will include himself, he comforted himself.

“Let us die. All together.”

* * *

Hearing the Knight's words, I was stunned.

Do you want to die together?

Is he crazy?

Could it be that he developed a mental illness when he couldn't chat because of the quiet atmosphere?

The Wizard and the Paladin were also showing a reaction that was no different from mine.

It's crazy, what the heck is that?

A sense of displeasure appeared on their faces.

Seeing that, I quickly straightened my expression.

“What does it mean?”

I asked the Knight.

“Literally, Adventurer. We spent a day trying to figure out how to find the doppelganger. But in the end, we couldn't find a way. During that time, our suspicions grew and the Mercenary was sacrificed as a result.”

Damn it.

As soon as the Mercenary was mentioned, I had to quickly put on a sad expression.

Should I be in a position to empathize with the Knight here?

Disappointed at the death of a friend, should we all choose to die together to defeat the doppelganger, the main culprit?

I'm sorry for the death of my friend, but if I show that I want to live, I would seem too selfish.

No, if you're a human, you can be selfish to this extent.

What if I'm not the doppelganger?

[Do whatever you want, my friend.]

What?

The doppelganger said something irresponsible.

If I died, wouldn't you die too?

[My will is yours, do not be confused and decide. If it's a wrong decision, I'll stop it.]

While I was confused, the Wizard and the Paladin first responded to the Knight's words.

"There's still time."

"We still have at least two days, or at most a week, before the rescue team arrives. We just need to find the doppelganger before that."

They protested against the collective suicide of the Knight who wanted to die together.

Yes, of course.

Who wants to die

Moreover, the doppelganger is in my body.

Knowing that they are not doppelgangers, they have no choice but to reject the extreme method of committing suicide together.

But it's not good.

If I urgently point out the doppelganger, I become the most likely one.

It's not because I'm the most suspicious.

It was because I'm the weakest.

“And how do we trust the Knight? You could be the doppelganger.”

Said the Wizard sarcastically.

She seemed to think that even the Paladin wasn't a doppelganger.

Is it because the Paladin's reaction was humane?

Is it because he is a priest?

Nothing could be a solid basis for trust.

Even if the Paladin is the doppelganger, do you think he will be on your side now?

[Maybe she thinks that she really might be in a daughter-father relationship.]

Does that make sense?

She deceived him by using magic.

[You need magic to deceive others, but nothing is needed to deceive yourself. Hiihi.]

Anyway, the Paladin and the Wizard accused the Knight of dying together, saying it was rather suspicious.

A question arose.

What the hell was the Knight thinking when he asked us to die together?

Was he not at all concerned about being the doppelganger?

Is there any way to convince everyone in the party to commit suicide together?

There can be no such way.

The Wizard and the Paladin stood up.

The Knight saw the figures and slowly put his hand on the scabbard.

You crazy, are you really going to fight?

If the offer to die together isn't accepted, you're going to kill everyone yourself?

I knew that he was crazy, but I didn't know he was crazy to this extent.

The Knight must not die here.

When the Paladin, the Wizard, and I were left, it was all too clear who they were going to designate as the next doppelganger.

I must intervene.

Although I can't have a big impact on the battle with my own power.

I must not let the Knight die in the battle.

Rather, the best situation is when either the Wizard or the Paladin dies under the guise of an accident.

The two surviving people are hostile to each other, and I will mediate between the two using my strength to deal with the doppelganger.

It was a good picture.

With that in mind, I slowly pulled out a dagger.

The devil whispered as I picked up a small bottle of paralyzing poison from my pocket.

[Don't do that, you're going to die.]

What, who?

[Everyone except that Knight.]

...Damn, how strong is that Knight?

Even if the Paladin and the Wizard work together, the Knight wins?

Would it be the same if I joined there?

[You'll die. Don't fight.]

Side Story 20

Doppelganger (6)

“Wait!”

The fight had to be stopped first.

Regardless of whoever wins, it will result in a terrible outcome for me.

When the Knight wins, he might point his sword, saying that we should all die together.

Conversely, if the Paladin and the Wizard win, it was obvious that they would immediately point to the Adventurer as the doppelganger.

Either way, the chances of me dying were too high.

“Listen to me for a second!”

But that didn’t mean there was a proper way.

At my desperate cry, the eyes of the Knight, Wizard, and Paladin turned to me.

It stops for now.

Now the Adventurer must come up with a way to persuade them.

In 10 seconds.

To provide an answer, the Adventurer must first know what they want.

“What exactly does the Knight want? Can you explain it a little more

convincingly for us?”

I was most curious about the intention of the Knight who asked us to die together.

The Knight listened to me and nodded his head.

“Yes. I’ll have to explain. As I just said, we didn’t figure out how to find the doppelganger in the end.”

It was fortunate that the Knight was a person who likes to explain.

He argued that it is unlikely that we will find a way forward, and that it will only become more dangerous over time.

“Now that I am still in good shape, I want to finish my work.”

In the end, he said that he had to kill all of us now that he had enough energy left.

“There is still a doppelganger among us. When the battle begins, the doppelganger may reveal itself. Then we will never win if we are fighting each other instead of uniting.”

“The Adventurer is right. We must join forces against the devil in case we find the doppelganger.”

The Paladin supported the Adventurer’s statements.

However, the Knight denied us, saying that it would be difficult for us to find the doppelganger on our own.

“If you have to fight, you will not be able to defeat the doppelganger. In the end, only the doppelganger will survive. The rescue team that follows will only listen to the doppelganger’s statements and will rescue it without even knowing that it is a doppelganger. ”

It’s the worst case.

From a human point of view.

This is the best situation for me.

As the Adventurer, it was difficult to trust the rescue team, and there was a possibility of being questioned or tortured.

But if I kill them all and take the form of a Knight or a Wizard, I could disguise myself, say it was a rock accident and escape the dungeon.

[...what?]

It's nothing, friend.

Just focus on the conversation, it's an important moment.

[Yeah, that's right.]

“Of course, it will be difficult for us to defeat the doppelganger. The mercenary is already dead, and if we fight each other, the odds will be very slim.”

The Paladin and the Wizard raised their voices saying that they should find the doppelganger through conversation again even now.

“But don't worry. We'll all die here, but the doppelganger won't survive.”

Whoa, that was interesting.

It's not about asking the Wizard to commit suicide with wide range magic.

The Knight intends to commit suicide on his own, along with all of the party and the doppelganger.

If he can wield enough power, it would be more reasonable for him to kill the entire party and find the doppelganger rather than commit suicide.

But he dared to commit suicide.

Yes, his abilities are limited.

There are limits that even he can't handle.

The Wizard and the Paladin countered that the Knight's words were nonsense.

It was funny.

They concluded that the Knight's remarks were foolish.

When humans oppose a claim, they really believe that the claim is absurd and unreasonable.

Maybe the Paladin and the Wizard could agree with the Knight's opinion.

They could cooperate.

One was a glorious Knight of the gods who had the respect of his followers.

The other is a direct disciple of the magic master who is leading the cutting edge of magic.

Either way, humans would agree that sacrifices should be made for the sake of others who would be harmed by the devil.

But 'I have to live.' And because of the two thoughts that 'there is another way', I rebelled against the Knight's words, and once I revolted, the backlash continued.

Far from thinking deeply about the Knight's opinion, it was ridiculous

Humans become blind as they get more excited, and when they become blind, they devalue and ignore answers other than the ones they have set for themselves.

“How can I trust you, that we should just die?”

Oh, I think our Adventurer friend is going to add some kind of fan to that.

The Adventurer’s words were key.

Now, the Paladin and the Wizard raised their voices to the Knight and began to explain how absurd his words were.

“I’m really sorry, but... I believe that the doppelganger will die here too, and all I can do is ask you to die with me.”

The Knight didn’t give up.

Oh my, you stupid friend

It’s not that they weren’t sure they could kill the doppelganger.

They were angry about ignoring the possibility that they may live and trying to kill them in advance.

The Knight finally pulled out his sword.

The Adventurer tried to persuade him, but he didn’t seem to have the intention of putting everything into words in the first place.

When he initially made an extreme claim of ‘let’s die together’, he was like a reflection of the idea ‘I’ll kill you even if you don’t like it.’

“I have a way!”

The Adventurer shouted.

It was also imperative.

Hmmm, he was a pleasant fellow to look at.

At first, I was desperate at the fact that the body I occupied was such a weak piece of garbage, but the improvisation of the original owner of the body, that is, the Adventurer's self, was useful.

Desperateness, quick thinking and judgment, coolness and immorality with no sense of guilt.

He was doing really well while I was recovering my strength.

After a little tweaking of his memory and personality, he became really useful.

Whether everyone else died or not, he was struggling to survive.

It was cute.

"I have another way. A way to definitively die with the doppelganger!"

The Knight looked at the Adventurer while holding the sword.

"I agree with the Knight's argument that the doppelganger should not be released."

The Adventurer made an unexpected remark.

"But I'm also concerned about the dangers of the doppelganger appearing and the dangers of leaving everything to one person and dying together."

While the Adventurer agreed with the Knight's argument, he also sympathized with the concerns of the Wizard and the Paladin.

Then it's time to come up with an answer.

"Magician, will the Lord of the Magic Tower be part of the rescue team?"

The Wizard nodded at the Adventurer's question.

“I’m sure he’ll come.”

After hearing the Wizard’s answer, the Adventurer now looked at the Paladin and the Knight and asked a question.

“The Knights and Paladin must also be included.”

The Knight and Paladin answered that it would be the same.

“Then it would be a much more powerful force than the four of us. Maybe the lord of the magic tower alone can burn the doppelganger to death.”

The Adventurer did a great job.

He showed both a selfish desire to live and a sense of justice that he still had to kill the doppelganger.

Among the party listening to the Adventurer, ‘I don’t think the Adventurer is a doppelganger.’ There must be one person who thinks like that.

“Why do we have to do everything on our own? Why don’t we just let the rescue team know we have a doppelganger?”

“But doppelgangers are very dangerous demons. They can harm others and change their appearance if left unattended.”

“You can ask the rescue team to quarantine us, or if that doesn’t work, you can ask the rescue team to attack all of us. Why don’t you do that? The doppelganger will appear, and maybe we can kill the doppelganger with the rescue team. Even if we’re seriously injured, we could be healed by the Paladins of the rescue team and survive. Above all else.”

The Knight almost seemed to have fallen for the Adventurer’s words.

The Adventurer was an eloquent speaker.

As the already dead mercenary said.

“If we die on our own, no one will know what happened here. But if we do as I say, others will know about our sacrifice. Shouldn’t we at least let them know that we sacrificed ourselves for the sake of peace on the continent? I don’t want to tell my family in my hometown that I died when the ceiling collapsed while crawling like a mole in a dungeon.”

The Knight thought that was completely out of the question.

Honor was a noble thing.

You have to try to protect yourself, but if others don’t look at you, it’s worthless.

The Knight was greatly shaken by the fact that nobody would ever find out that everyone here sacrificed themselves to defeat the dangerous devil that is the doppelganger but would instead believe that the party died in a rock accident.

“Furthermore, the rescue team may have a way to find the devil. There will be many Wizards and Paladins, including the Lord of the Magic Tower, who will be included in the rescue team.”

The Adventurer sharply lowered the tone of his passionately speaking voice, adorning his last words with a soft, gentle but a little weary tone.

“Why do we have to carry everything?”

Excellent.

* * *

The Adventurer’s argument was correct.

If it goes according to his argument, the doppelganger will be in a beleaguered state.

It was more likely to show up first before the rescue team arrived.

Our party decided to be as vigilant as possible and aim to not be wiped out until the rescue team arrives.

When the rescue team arrives, at least two survivors must inform them that there is a doppelganger in the area.

The worst outcome was that only the doppelganger survives alone.

Our group decided to be vigilant with each other as much as possible while trying to get the rescue team to arrive as quickly as possible.

Clearing the crumbling debris of the wall and drilling a small hole.

Through the hole, the magician sent magic power.

The efforts paid off.

Beyond the crumbling wall, the road is still intact and he could tell that the rescue team was clearing the rubble.

The rescue team, who sensed that the magician's magic was flowing, was advancing in the correct direction.

Now, the sound of a pickaxe squeaking could be heard clearly in my ears.

The rescue team was close by.

Our party supplemented the Adventurer's plan a little more.

With the magic of the magician's master, the lord of the magic tower, he drives everyone in the party to a dying state.

Soon the doppelganger will appear.

In the meantime, our party will recover with the help of the Paladin who would have been part of the rescue team and will also join the

battle against the doppelganger.

“I think blitz magic would be good for magic. It can stun people for sure, and there is little physical loss, so you can fight right away as soon as your healing spell is done.”

In this way, we even talked about which order to ask for.

We expected the doppelganger to appear first and attack the party, and we were thoroughly prepared for it.

Fortunately, the party was able to unite again, confident that we would win if we persevere over time.

The united party strictly followed the rules and watched and protected each other.

“Knight.”

The Adventurer handed out pickled plums.

At each meal, the Adventurer gave me some snacks.

I smiled and said thank you.

The role of the Adventurer was really big.

Although he had the weakest power, the Adventurer’s contribution was really great in uniting the party and coming up with a solution.

“This might be the last snack.”

A rescue team will arrive soon.

The Wizard had assured that the rescue team would drill a hole in the wall before the next meal.

“Oh, you’ll still have a chance out there.”

The Adventurer smiled and said that I would still be able to eat the snack he had made when I went out.

While we were chatting like that, a hole began to be drilled in the wall.

The rescue team came.

Everyone in the party stood up and walked towards opposite walls.

It had already been discussed.

The doppelganger might attack the rescue team, so we approached opposite walls.

We also kept a reasonable distance between ourselves.

Gulp, saliva ran down my throat.

I became nervous.

The rescue team has finally arrived, and a battle with the devil is scheduled.

Looking at the party, everyone was quietly looking at the wall where the hole was widening, perhaps nervously.

While looking at the wall, I was prepared for a threat that might pop out.

The devil hasn't appeared yet, but you never know when it will come out.

“Arhan!”

A familiar voice came through the small hole in the wall.

The voice was calling my name.

“Arhan! There it is!”

The rescue team seemed to include several fellow Knights.

I smiled at the voices of my colleagues I had not heard in a long time.

I tried to answer in a loud voice, but no voice came out.

There was a strong sense of alienation.

My throat was choked like I was suffocating.

In the midst of the fluttering feelings, the sound of laughter from a foreign voice was heard.

“Hihihi.”

It was the devil’s laughter.

Side Story 21

Doppelganger (7)

“Hihihi”

I was so happy that I smiled involuntarily.

Crumble.

A small and short sound

A small noise generated by the preparatory action of moving the lower body's center of gravity and swinging the upper body using it as the axis of rotation.

The sound of rubbing small pieces of soil and stones between the stone floor and heavy boots.

The weak human friend would be able to hear this noise, but would not be able to respond.

But I am different.

Even with such a garbage-like body, I was able to show better movements.

“Ike.”

As soon as I bent my knees, the Knight's sword passed over my head with a stinging sound.

Soon after

Bang!

The Knight struck the stone wall.

Hey, hitting a stone wall with a hammer wouldn't make that kind of noise.

I doubt that that friend is human.

“Hihihi.”

A few steps back

As soon as he stepped back, debris poured over the spot.

The Knight glared at me and licked his mouth.

Well, is it quiz time?

Looking at that mouth shape... ‘Were you a doppelganger?’ he would have asked such questions.

“Yeah, I’m a doppelganger.”

The Knight cleared his throat and lowered his voice.

It was in vain.

“Isn’t it fun? It’ll make you feel a little out of breath, but don’t worry too much. It’s not toxic. It’s just a paralytic that makes it hard to talk.”

So why do you take what others give you and eat it straight away?

No matter how unvigilant you were when I was distributing snacks at every meal every day, you should have been vigilant on the last day.

Isn’t it?

“Arhan!”

A voice was heard calling the Knight's name from beyond the wall.

He must have heard the Knight's sword hitting the wall.

Apparently, the Knights are at the forefront of the rescue team.

“What's going on! Are you okay?!”

It was an urgent call.

As if the Knight wanted to answer, he worked hard to clear his throat, but in the end, he couldn't make a sound.

I told you not to.

It wasn't just the Knight.

The Paladin and Wizard naively ate the plums I gave them.

In the case of two people using spells, they would be far more lethal than a Knight.

“Arhan!”

“Paladin, are you inside?!”

Voices kept coming through the wall, but no one answered.

A murmur began, and the murmur soon became chaos.

I burst into a laugh.

I had no choice but to.

Things were going as our Adventurer friend had planned.

What should I do for this wonderful friend?

Would you like to visit your hometown?

[Kill me...]

“Hihihihi”

Cute

You want me to kill you?

Did you not know that it has been a few days since you died?

Contrary to the wishes of this Adventurer friend, I will not let his self-consciousness disappear.

Why would you throw away such a useful guy?

Manipulating the memory to fit the situation and bringing it to the fore will give him a head start on trying to somehow survive.

For my sake.

[...just kill me]

Oh man, the memory of your hometown friend seems to cause a bit of a shock.

Don't worry about it.

Those memories will soon be forgotten.

Would you rather be proud of yourself for tricking the mercenary?

[Devil.....]

Aww, you are a cute friend!

How can you be so cute!

Smart and stupid friend!

While the Adventurer's friends entertained me, the Knight and the Paladin seemed to have made up their minds.

They grabbed their weapons and started running towards me.

“Answer me! Arhan! Are you okay?!”

A cry for an answer continued from beyond the wall.

Our talkative Knight couldn't answer anything.

He was just approaching me with an unspoken shout.

* * *

There was a feeling of as if I had a foreign body in my neck.

It felt as if I had swallowed a wet cotton ball that got stuck in my throat.

“Hihihi.”

Then I heard laughter next to me.

It was such a sinister laugh.

The Knight reflexively swung his sword.

The Adventurer evaded the sword as if he had expected it and increased his distance.

There was a clear difference from the movements the Adventurer had shown during that time.

Only then did the Knight know the answer.

The Adventurer was the doppelganger.

He was taken aback by the lack of voice he had, but fortunately, he was not poisoned.

The Knight and the party exchanged opinions silently with their eyes.

It was already what they expected.

When the rescue team arrives, the doppelganger has no way to survive.

At the very last minute, the doppelganger was expected to show up, and it turned out exactly as expected.

So, as originally planned, all they had to do was fight the doppelganger and hold on until the rescue team arrived.

There seemed to be no problem except that it was the Adventurer who first came up with this plan.

The Knight, Paladin, and Wizard swallowed their anxiety and raised their weapons towards the doppelganger.

So the battle began.

The battle was tense.

Although the doppelganger's identity was revealed, he did not reveal his demonic form.

He maintained the appearance of an Adventurer.

Of course, he was showing a different level of movement than the Adventurer, but he could not overcome the limitations of the Adventurer's body.

The Knight and Paladin maintained the line, and the Wizard checked the movement of the doppelganger from behind.

The three's stance was solid, and it looked like they could hold out long enough until the rescue team arrived.

The problem was rather with the rescue team.

"Damn it, what are you doing!"

"Get away. Now we'll take the lead and break through."

The rescue team behind the wall was confused.

The battle continued in the cavity, and the sound of knives resounded.

There was no response to the question about the group's well-being.

The rescue team was divided into Knight, Templar, Wizard, and Mercenary guilds.

Each faction was wary of each other and began to be hostile to each other.

"Stand back. I warn you."

"That's a load of nonsense. Hey guys, take out your knife."

The Knight was frustrated.

Now is not the time for them to fight over there.

They must not bleed in vain.

If only he could say something.

I am fine, there's a demon called a doppelganger here and we were all fighting it together.

Not being able to deliver that sentence, the confusion beyond the wall was aggravating.

Kuang-kuang!

The doppelganger was diligently swinging the Adventurer's short dagger, blocking the weapons of the Knight and Paladin.

Now, the Knight and Paladin, who were leading the battle calmly and dragging time, started to get impatient on the contrary.

That was then.

The doppelganger suddenly screamed.

“Aaakkk!”

What came out of the doppelganger's mouth was the voice of a mercenary.

The doppelganger cried out in a loud voice.

“It's a betrayal! These damn bastards! They're trying to bury us in the dungeon and take possession of the treasure!”

It was the perfect voice of the Mercenary.

His tone and voice, his intonation, and even the vocal range were very similar to those of the Mercenary.

The Mercenary's voice, mimicked by the doppelganger, echoed through the walls.

The commotion heard from beyond the wall grew explosively.

‘Is this what the doppelganger was aiming for?’

The Knight was later aware of what the doppelganger was aiming for.

Because of this, the party was given paralytic drugs, and it took time until the rescue team arrived.

“It’s a treasure! Here’s the treasure!”

This time it was the voice of the Adventurer.

The two shouts the doppelganger masqueraded were so fatal.

“Look, it’s because of that! They cheated on us! Son of a bitch, kill!”

From beyond the wall.

The sound of knives began to be heard.

Followed by a scream.

“Argh!”

“What are these idiots doing!”

The dungeon expedition consisted of several groups.

And the group that first entered was made up of people representing the group.

All groups were competitive with each other.

They cooperated for a while to clear the road, but in the end they had to fight for the one and only treasure.

It’s a fact that everyone in the group had forgotten about because of the common enemy called the doppelganger.

They were not only a rescue team to rescue the party, but they were also the latter sent by each faction to claim the treasure first.

“Ahh!”

“Are you crazy!”

“Stop! Stop!”

“You betrayed me first! Die!”

Screaming.

Death.

“Argh! Arhan!”

The voices of their colleagues calling for themselves, who could not answer until the end.

‘No... No!’

They wanted to break down that wall and run to their colleagues right away.

I had to stop the meaningless battle and explain all of this.

However.

“Hehehe, where are you going, we were playing together.”

The cursed devil did not give way.

As if ridiculing the Knight, he was constantly keeping a close watch.

The Knight’s sword began to shine.

The sword that illuminates the dark cavity was swung towards the demon.

Quazzik!

The doppelganger hurriedly abandoned the Adventurer’s appearance and pulled out the devil’s arm, but could not stop the Knight’s sword.

The doppelganger, half human and half demon, looked up at his arm and said.

“I still don’t have enough strength. Hihi.”

The devil was muttering, but he didn’t seem to feel any sense of urgency as he looked at his squashed arms.

As the battle continued, the wall exploded with a huge explosion.

Buried in the roar, the screams and the sound of knives from beyond the walls all disappeared.

A strong heat emanated from the collapsed wall.

A Wizard with a long wand.

Burning corpses, visible behind the Wizard walking out.

“No.”

After checking the faces of the corpses, the Knight unwittingly let go of the sword from his grasp.

It was an unrealistic sight.

He finally met his colleagues again, and what he finally encountered was the faces of his colleagues who had become corpses.

All of this felt like a play, not an actual situation.

The wall that broke with the magic of overwhelming power, the one who broke through and appeared was the Wizard’s master who led the Wizards.

The Lord of the Magic Tower had the appearance of a young woman in her twenties who did not match with an elderly man of over 100 years old.

After he sent in his disciple in his own image, he himself came in as the disciple and belonged to the latter group.

He had the same face as the disciple, but there was a completely different atmosphere on the face that showed no emotion.

“Master! That’s a doppelganger!”

The Wizard behind the Paladin shouted to the master.

The Master didn’t even respond to the disciple’s cry.

He just prepared his magic.

A huge magical energy moved and concentrated on the tip of the staff he was holding.

“It’s a precious treasure. Please survive and become my test subject, demon.”

The master said to the doppelganger.

The doppelganger, who had been quietly listening to those words, muttered to himself.

“Yes, that was the perfect plan, friend.”

The doppelganger flicked his fingers as he said so.

At the same time, the floor of the dungeon began to glow.

The Knight felt dazed.

‘...stun trap. The first thing we saw when we were locked up here.....’

The last card prepared by the Adventurer and the doppelganger.

It was a magic trap.

Side Story 22

Doppelganger (8)

I opened my eyes

I couldn't see well ahead.

There was a pile of dirt on my face.

I involuntarily raised my arm and tried to shake it off, but my arm did not move.

I shook my head.

Then a pile of dirt ran down the side of my face.

It was uncomfortable because of the remaining dirt, but I forced my eyes to open.

It wasn't completely dark.

There was a flame.

There was a fire that was attached to the stone wall and the earthen floor and lit up the surroundings.

It was an explosion caused by the master wizard.

The master wizard, who was preparing a powerful magic, fell into a stun trap.

The prepared magic could not be captured and just exploded.

The explosion completely shattered the already endangered cavity.

Once again the ceiling collapsed.

Both the explosion and the collapsing ceiling could not be stopped.

I turned my head and looked at where my arm was.

My right arm rested on a rock.

My right ankle was likewise laid on a rock.

Crack-

I felt the pain later.

I clenched my teeth and held back the scream.

There was no sensation in the limbs that had been laid on the rocks.

The pain was even more terrifying.

There was a sharp pain in the shoulder and knee that seemed to be pulling on a nerve line.

There was a burning pain in the front of the chest.

How could I survive the explosion, but without burns?

My only moving body part was the left hand with the fingers stuck together due to the high heat.

It was as blunt as a child's clenched fist, and my knuckles were hard to recognize.

I'm not alive, even though I'm alive.

It was such a serious injury that it would have been better to die.

I was the only survivor.

I was the only one who had witnessed the sight of the wizard master raising the power.

No matter how much I spread my senses, I couldn't see anyone alive but me.

“Hihihi”

I need to correct my words a bit.

No humans survived the explosion, but a devil survived.

I heard the sound of the devil, pounding, footsteps walking.

Did you notice that I woke up?

Hatred ran up my spine.

I felt a disgusting feeling of vomiting, and I could feel the terror suffocating my lungs.

“Hello, Sir Knight.”

The doppelganger walked over to me and greeted me.

The devil giggled and laughed.

He shuddered and laughed, as if he was too happy to bear it.

Huge tentacles were intertwined like tree trunks.

The whole body was trembling like a wriggling snake.

“Devil.”

I could only utter a single word.

I felt the pain in my throat tearing like paper.

“Hehehehe. Yeah, I’m the devil. I know.”

“...you won’t last long either, devil.”

The devil groaned loudly again.

“Knight friend, do you really think so?”

The devil made a face over his body full of tentacles.

I could recognize it at a glance.

The face of the master wizard.

“I have never eaten such a powerful human being. I have never eaten such a powerful human being. A vast amount of magic and fame and influence spread across the continent. Hihi, how far can I go? “

Next to the master’s face, other faces appeared.

Paladin.

Mercenary.

The faces of other characters who were part of the subjugation team were also visible.

“I mean, I ate so much. Hihi, do you really think I won’t be able to last that long?!”

The devil’s laughter grew louder.

The joking and teasing giggles became more and more intimidating.

That voice sounded loud like thunder.

As he fell to the floor, I winced and my body started to tremble.

“Ah, yes, come to think of it, our Sir knight also had friends.”

Familiar faces floated over the doppelganger's body.

Knights comrades.

They were colleagues who were with me every day until I came back here.

The faces of my colleagues were even moving alive.

[Sad? Because your friends are dead? Because we're dead?]

The faces of my colleagues asked me.

The voices of my colleagues that are so familiar that just listening to them gives me strength.

The devil ripped off the face that floated above his body.

Tentacles with sharp claws bit their faces like meat dough.

“There's no need to remember this rubbish. Hehe.”

Without realizing it, I bit my tongue.

Blood broke out

Tears flowed from the corners of my eyes, like blood gushing out of my tongue.

It was my fault.

It was an issue I had to deal with.

It wasn't meant to bring them in.

It was the result of my weakness.

Maybe they'll all survive.

It was because of the complacency that colleagues could suggest a smarter way.

I should have killed him.

“Hehehe, it was difficult, it was really difficult. It’s a damn holy sword. I had been asleep for hundreds of years, but who knew that the aftermath of that time would still be there.”

said the doppelganger, wriggling its tentacles.

The dynamic movements made it look as if a human was dancing.

Then I should have not listened to the adventurer.

No matter how reasonable and plausible it may seem, it should not be forgotten that it could also be a doppelganger’s proposal.

The five of us.

I thought the sacrifice of five people was not worth it, so I multiplied the sacrifice dozens of times.

“This guy did a really good job.”

The adventurer’s face appeared above the doppelganger’s body.

The face of the adventurer was clearly expressing his emotions, unlike the other expressionless faces.

[Kill me]

The devil scratched the face of such an adventurer with its tentacles, crushed it, and tortured it.

He smiled as if he were as happy as ever.

Countless faces floated over the doppelganger's body.

Among them, the face of a childhood friend came to mind.

'Sorry.'

'You promised me. To protect people'

My friend blamed me.

As a child, I didn't know that the act of guarding meant giving up something else.

'You didn't throw anything away. This time too'

No.

I wanted to say that.

I tried too.

For the best result.

'But look at the consequences you have brought.'

The small world collapsed, and the people were slaughtered.

Only the evil demon remained, making fun of the deceased.

"Hehe, once the magic is restored a little, I'll go out with the power of the wizard knight. Then, I'll start looking for where you lived first, Sir Knight."

The devil whispered.

Now I know.

The devil was just making fun of me.

For the rest of the time.

For fun.

I raised my left hand.

It was the only limb that moved according to my will.

“What are you doing? Are you going to fight me with it?”

But my fingers were crushed by the heat.

It was hard to even wiggle my wrists at will.

Then there was no need.

With a pop, my left hand exploded.

Blood splashed on my face.

My sword was spread out in the distance.

There was no way I could reach out my arms and bring it.

Then I will use my left hand, which has already been broken, as a weapon.

“What are you doing? It’s too much to be called a self-determination. Honorable knight man, do you not know that self-determination is a mortal sin against the will of God?”

The devil speaks of the will of God.

It shouldn’t have happened.

The flame burning my hand grew bigger and bigger.

Instead of running to me, the devil backed away.

It was no use.

There was no escape from this narrow space.

A light sword.

A mythical technique used by a legendary swordsman.

Later swordsmen tried to imitate it, but in the end, no one ever created it like the original.

It wasn't because of the lack of power.

Rather, it was full of power.

Because of its excessively powerful power, there was no one who could survive immediately after using it.

Over time, the light sword improved.

Reduced power and increased stability.

So the light sword has changed.

When it came to my generation, I only swung the shiny sword and broke the rocks a little.

Prohibited suicide that endangered the user.

Yes I will die

I will die with you.

[Aaaaah! Stupid human!]

The devil roared and inflated his body.

The fire on my left hand is now so strong that I can't look straight

ahead.

I prayed towards the pure white light.

Please kill everyone.

The devil's tentacles rushed.

Even a tentacle the size of a cow's thigh was burned when it came close to the light.

The devil couldn't even get close to the light.

When the light is at its peak.

The sound is gone.

The screams of the devil, and the sound of my heartbeat ringing in my ears.

A world unseen and unheard unfolded.

I could recognize it.

That I had recreated the very technology that appeared only in legends.

With one swing, to defend the kingdom.

With two swings to defend the continent.

The god who wielded it for the third time, evoked admiration.

The skill of a swordsman who was born as a human and became a god.

Light sword.

Bright light.

Burn me.

So that all things return to the light of the beginning.

* * *

“His Holiness.”

The old man raised his head at the voice that called out to him.

When he opened his eyes, the room was full of people looking at him.

“Did you sleep for a while?”

The old man thought for a moment and shook his head.

What he saw and felt was not a dream.

“The oracle has come down.”

The archbishops rose to their feet in amazement.

He hurriedly drew the holy grail and prepared to listen to the oracle.

The old man told the bishops who were waiting thrilled and excited for him to speak.

“God was satisfied.”

The Pope’s words reached all the bishops of the continent.

The Continental Festival has begun.

The oracle of the God of Light that suddenly came down one day.

‘There are precious things in the west, so dig them up.’

Unprecedented simplicity and clarity, this oracle changed much of the western continent.

As the elders headed to the dungeon, the proportion of the population in the territory collapsed and the economy started to suffer.

The economic crisis soon led to a food shortage.

A war for limited resources has begun.

In the meantime, many orphans and beggars were born.

The collapsed city was filled with adventurers, not citizens.

Such cities became slums.

Adventurers lost their dreams and became thieves.

The adventurer city has become a stronghold city for thieves.

The thieves who started their activities on a city scale formed a huge force, turning the western continent into a lawless zone.

It is the story of a kingdom in the western continent.

There was a kingdom that did not give up on the oracle even after many years had passed.

Because the main cities of the kingdom had fallen into ruins, the kingdom hung on the treasure mentioned by the oracle.

All of the knights dispatched to a certain dungeon lost contact.

The king thought that the knights had turned away and fled with the treasure.

He dispatched his troops towards the dungeon.

The soldiers could not find the escaped knights.

Instead, the corpses of the knights could be found in the dungeon rubble.

In the wreckage of the collapsed dungeon, where even the soles of boots were melted by the powerful geothermal heat, they found a dying knight buried in a pile of stones.

* * *

“Sir Arhan.”

I turned my head to the sound calling me.

“Again, you’re spying on the royal family through the window. Don’t do that. What will you do if you get caught?”

I just smiled.

Through the window, I could see the garden of the royal family.

The young royals were still running around.

“I’ll be right back.”

said the caregiver Tom.

I nodded.

Decades have passed since I was imprisoned here.

After fainting in the dungeon, when I woke up again, I was in the kingdom.

With the whole body bound

The king apologized to me.

He was supposed to give me credit, but he asked me to understand why he had to do this.

I understand.

I was the last survivor of the scene where the doppelganger appeared.

It was only natural that the hero who defeated the doppelganger could not be guaranteed freedom.

I thought I would be put to death in prison or quietly executed.

It didn't matter.

It was a life I had already given up on.

Rather, I was grateful to get some extra time and see the palace once again.

Then the king told me an unexpected story.

The story that I will be transported to the Empire.

A land protected by the Emperor and the Pope.

I couldn't speak.

A restraint ball was bitten in my mouth, so questioning itself was not accepted.

I was transferred to the unnamed tower of the Imperial Capital and imprisoned.

There was no freedom to leave the tower, no freedom to get out of bed and chairs without a guard, no freedom to even talk.

I followed the instructions faithfully.

So time has passed.

The Empire has forgotten me.

The watchman became the caretaker, and even when I went out of the tower, there was no guard to stop me.

But I locked myself in the tower.

There were no restraints on my mouth anymore, but I did not open my mouth recklessly.

There were times when I felt a sense of triumph that I overcame the devil and survived.

But the fear of the devil grew day by day, and the older I got, the more I grew.

I was worried that the darkness of that day would come again after I opened my mouth recklessly.

I also suffered from delusions of whether the devil was waiting for his time in my body.

it's dark

I lost even the strength of my last strike, and now I am so helpless.

One remaining fire was extinguished.

The limbs were cut off one by one, and the left hand was cut off from the top of the wrist.

An idiot with only one leg left.

I was forced to do nothing but look at the world through the window.

I remember the flame that day.

Sometimes I think

Is the technology of the light sword really reachable by humans?

Is it impossible without God's grace?

There were times when I thought about sharing my experiences with other swordsmen.

Give up everything and try with the intention of dying.

Maybe you can be successful.

I stopped thinking

I might really die.

I couldn't teach others what I didn't understand.

Outside the window, a loud laughter was heard.

It was the voice of the running royal family.

Forgetting old thoughts again, I watched the children play.

There was a naive innocence.

Of course, since they are the royal family, they are more accustomed to the messiness of the world than other children of that age.

Still, they were kids.

Kids are pretty

"You know what?"

Tom asked.

He said he was going out earlier.

I wonder if he's back.

"A new knight is coming to our knights!"

Tom's eyes were twinkling with excitement.

I could understand because I knew the romance that boys of that age had for knights.

By the way, a new knight is coming to this knighthood.

I belonged to the Knights of Knon.

Of course, I am the only member of the knighthood.

It was like an honorary post that was confined in a tower.

"His name is Sir Cromwell!"

Cromwell.

I wanted to tell Tom to study.

Cromwell is the castle of the Empire.

A surname given to a knight from commoners or bastards.

How could such a knight come to such a place?

What's the story?

It was sad.

I know the knights who live and die for honor and fame all too well.

Therefore, I knew very well what it meant to be assigned to this

Knighthood, which was nothing more than an exile.

It would be like a social death.

“Tom.”

“Yes!”

Tom was lively.

“A new knight is coming, you should welcome it. Try preparing some refreshments.”

“Yes! I’ll prepare for it!”

Tom went out with a bang.

It’s noisy.

I leaned my head back on the chair for a moment.

When I opened my eyes again, I could see a face I had never seen before.

A girl with wide eyes and red under her eyes.

She cried so much that her face turned white.

The sun was pouring in from the window behind me.

The light of the sunset, which had been covered by the clouds, illuminated the room.

The girl’s face, which had looked as pale as gray, regained some vitality.

“...Serezia Cromwell. As of today, I have been assigned to the Knights of Knon. It is an honor to be assigned as the successor of the Knights

Commander.”

“Welcome. I am honored to have a knight like you as my successor.”

I looked around.

Behind the newcomer, I saw Tom diligently coming with a tray.

Fortunately, it's not too late.

Tom did what I asked him to do.

Sweet cookies and warm milk were prepared on a tray.

“Sir Serezia.”

“Yes.”

“Do you like sweets?”

Side Story 23

Hochi (2)

“Homen.”

“Homen.”

They joined each other and prayed.

Hochi thought to himself.

How long will this fake prayer greeting last?

It started unintentionally, but now it is becoming a tradition of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

If he had known that this would be the case, he would have looked for the right word.

“Are you going in now?”

Kim Min-hyuk asked.

Hochi nodded his head.

The festival was in full swing in Seoul.

It was the 1st anniversary of the founding of the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Seoul, the central city and capital of Korea, was now recognized as a sacred place for the Lee Ho-jae Faith.

Residents came from all over the world.

The crowd was enough to make the huge city of Seoul feel cramped.

You can get points for the Lee Ho-jae Faith just by participating in the festival.

As a church member, there was no reason not to participate in the festival.

On the contrary, if you engaged in a livelihood without participating, your faith score could be reduced.

The festival was almost coming to an end.

The fireworks that now lit up the night sky were actually the last event of the festival.

He took all the pictures

He met everyone he wanted to meet.

Hochi left the rest to Kim Min-hyuk and returned to the temple.

“Hello, Hochi? Homen.”

“Homen.”

There were also church members who he encountered inside the temple.

There were office workers who dealt with the Lee Ho-jae Faith’s affairs, and there were also believers who lived in the temple at all times.

The atmosphere of the temple was lively.

It wasn’t even authoritative.

Hochi was proud.

The religious system of his own creation.

Everyone puts moral values first and makes everyone act in a law-abiding manner.

Be more harmonious.

Be better.

Be more faithful.

He was also proud that it was achieved through the rewards that people aspire to, not through coercion through punishment.

Hochi thought that a person could be good or bad.

But in modern society, people have more easily chosen the opportunity to be evil.

If you commit an illegal act, you will be punished by the law.

However, in a line that does not come into contact with the law, or in a situation where they can avoid the law, people can become evil without hesitation.

There was no system that rewarded the opposite.

Instead, there was only compensation for evil deeds.

Conversely, rewards for good deeds were worthless.

Meddling to help others became a rarity, and the only reward for good deeds was the satisfaction you felt yourself.

As society became more competitive, and making a living became more difficult, this tendency became stronger over time.

It was the same with Lee Ho-jae.

He was crazy about competition.

He did everything to beat others.

Hochi knew.

Only Hochi knew.

How crazy Lee Ho-jae was about winning and losing.

This utter madman didn't even notice his meticulousness and naivety to others.

It wasn't because he didn't want to be the bad guy.

He was hiding his actions, lest the next time he would use the same method.

In return, Lee Ho-jae rose to the top of his profession as a pro gamer.

It also allowed him to retire at the peak.

Hochi didn't like that aspect of Lee Ho-jae.

The religious system of the Lee Ho-jae Faith was the opposite of Lee Ho-jae, who can be said to be its owner.

It encouraged people to be more relaxed and peaceful.

Without worries and obsession for the future, they lived each day doing their best and praying hard.

They had a belief that religion would take charge of their future and their family, no matter what happened to them.

They began to enjoy good deeds.

Good deeds satisfy both the practical benefits of religious points and

emotional satisfaction.

The world was changing positively.

At least from Hochi's point of view.

* * *

Hochi confided his concerns to the Grandmother, who was half lying on his sofa.

The Grandmother was living on Earth for the church festival.

She was controlling the temperature so that people wouldn't fall from the heat during the festival held on the street in the sweltering summer.

She was lying on the sofa in the temple lounge.

Hochi told the grandmother what he had in mind.

Originally, he should have asked Lee Ho-jae, but now that Lee Ho-jae has gone to catch the God of Order, he has no one to consult with.

"What do you think, Grandmother?"

"I think you're like a kid."

Hochi pursed his lips in disbelief.

"Look, isn't that a childlike reaction?"

Grandmother said with a big smile.

Hochi didn't feel like laughing at all.

"What is childish?"

“Something cute like a child.”

The grandmother thought it was funny even though she said it herself, and she started to laugh a little louder.

Hochi's expression grew worse and worse.

“Isn't it right to be like a child?”

“Not really.”

Grandmother laughed again.

“No! No! I'm telling you!”

Hochi shouted, but the grandmother did not stop her laughing.

She shook her neck and chuckled, and she started to laugh.

Hochi could feel the rising feeling of injustice.

“I'm just thinking about it and I'm worried.”

“Yeah, you are.”

Grandmother just kept laughing and teasing him.

When Hochi was thinking about just leaving the room, the grandmother finally stopped her laughter.

“What are you so concerned about?”

“Just that...”

It was complicated.

Jealousy, envy, and inferiority that he felt in the past.

Regret, pity, and guilt.

There were too many emotions to single out.

There were also things in common.

That he was raised by Lee Ho-jae for the same purpose.

“That’s enough to get you interested.”

The grandmother nodded her head.

“Just go and talk to him often. If you talk, you will one day know exactly how you feel. The girl who is locked up on the 61st floor needs a conversation.”

For Lee Yeon-hee’s sake, try to talk to her often.

Hochi nodded.

That was clear and wise advice.

“Anyway.”

The grandmother floated her words.

“I sometimes think. Why don’t you blame the king?”

The king the grandmother was talking about referred to Lee Ho-jae.

Hoch was able to clearly answer that question.

“I blame him. Still.”

“Do you?”

Hochi’s body is, in theory, identical to that of Lee Ho-jae at the time when he created an alter ego on the 61st floor.

So are his brain functions.

Hochi did not forget what he had been through on the 61st floor.

He had too good a memory to forget those experiences.

But he wished he would sometimes forget those things.

Those were painful memories.

He received an apology from Lee Ho-jae, and he is still with him and has become his family.

Lee Ho-jae forced himself to be unfair from the beginning.

As an alter ego, he did not hide the fact that he was made to clear the 61st floor, and was made to be left behind on the 61st floor.

Of course, Hochi resisted.

Very violently.

He confronted Lee Ho-jae with the mindset that he would rather die fighting.

It didn't take long for that mindset to break.

Lee Ho-jae was a natural fighter.

He was even an experienced fighter.

Lee Ho-jae tried to grow Hochi.

Enough to make it all the way to the end of the 61st floor alone.

Or enough to be recognized as a challenger in the tutorial.

The process of growing up was no different from torture.

Hochi was different from Lee Ho-jae.

Even if he saw the same things, he could not learn the same things.

Lee Ho-jae did not accept that.

He thought that Hochi was forcibly slowing down his growth to prevent him from clearing the 61st floor.

‘Be strong! If you don’t become strong, you die! Don’t think you’re going to die on the 61st floor. If you don’t have enough strength, I’ll kill you before I put you on the 61st floor.’

And after I kill you, I’ll make you again.

Just remembering those memories made Hochi shudder.

Rather than his body being tired and exhausted, it was when the mind was more scared and terrified than the spirit.

In the end, Hochi couldn’t clear the 61st floor.

It wasn’t because he couldn’t get stronger.

Hochi was not accepted as a contender for the 61st floor.

Hochi thought that Lee Ho-jae would kill him, who had become useless.

So he hid in the ruins of the 61st floor.

He was sure to be caught soon, but he wanted to survive just a little bit longer.

Even a few minutes or hours

So time has passed.

A day passed, a week passed, a month passed.

It was then that Hochi realized.

Lee Ho-jae doesn't hate himself.

Lee Ho-jae doesn't even hate him.

To his surprise.

The reason he tortured Hochi by pushing him to the limit was really purely to make Hochi stronger.

It was amazing that there was no malice in that vicious act.

Lee Ho-jae, who gave up using his alter ego, started tormenting himself again instead of Hochi.

“So could you forgive me?”

“What is forgiveness?”

Hochi didn't forgive.

It would be right to say that he did not forgive.

As long as he can't forget the memories of that time, he will never completely forgive Lee Ho-jae.

Lee Ho-jae will not be able to cast off his guilt either

“I understand rather than forgive.”

“Understand?”

“That you were originally like that.”

Lee Ho-jae was a character who pushed himself more than others.

Perhaps the person who hates that hostile nature the most is Lee Ho-jae himself, not anyone else.

How could that be?

The spirit of sacrifice that laid down everything to achieve his purpose was truly magical.

There seemed to be no greed or satisfaction for a comfortable life.

He was like a human who had mentally castrated his indolence and slackness.

“He must have killed himself. His weak side. Just like he did to you.”

said the grandmother.

Hochi thought so too.

What human being is born so obsessive from the moment they are born?

He cut off his own weak side.

Hochi knew it too.

Lee Ho-jae gets annoyed whenever he sees Ho-chi idling, slacking off, and playing, and gives him a scolding

He was sometimes angry.

Each time Lee Ho-jae calls him, Hochi could feel jealousy.

Lee Ho-jae was envious of Hochi's laziness, but he did not stop it.

Of course, this is the story after giving up on the 61st floor.

Lee Ho-jae used to write novels for Hochi as a hobby.

Lee Ho-jae himself could have also enjoyed reading the novel he wrote.

But he couldn't.

Instead, he watched as Hochi had fun reading the novel.

It was an indirect surrogate satisfaction.

He was tickled, wondering what was so much fun.

When Hochi had almost finished reading his novels, he would transcribe a new novel.

Hochi thought about what Lee Ho-jae was doing now.

He couldn't imagine.

He disappeared saying he was going to beat the God of Order that is close to a transcendental god.

He still shows no sign of coming back.

However, the God of Order did not become a transcendental god and the world did not perish.

How much more is he pushing himself?

He was worried.

* * *

The church festival was over.

Hochi, who had been spending his days busily working, finally became a little more free.

Hochi, who was breathing a sigh of relief from his seemingly endless

work, was able to realize one thing.

He realized that he wasn't the only one worried about Lee Ho-jae.

“Uncle!”

Yong-yong called him in a determined voice.

Hochi opened his eyes and grabbed the little hand.

Yong-yong looked cute rather than determined, but he knew that Yong-yong was determined anyways.

“Uh... uh.”

Hochi was perplexed.

It was because of Yong-yong's outfit.

Yong-yong usually liked to wear fairy-tale and girly clothes.

However, the clothes that Yong-yong is wearing now were combat uniforms.

The military uniform-like outfit was strangely cute.

“I'm going to find Daddy!”

Hochi was even more perplexed.

How? Where? In what way?

A number of questions filled Hochi's mind.

“So, let's go together, Uncle!”

Side Story 24

Hochi (3)

“Me too?”

Yong-yong nodded his head.

Hochi felt embarrassed.

“Yong-yong, do you miss your dad?”

Yong-yong nodded his head again.

Yong-yong’s facade of courage quickly faded.

Yong-yong looked a little gloomy.

Hochi reached out and touched Yong-yong’s cheek with his hand.

He was as soft as a loaf of bread.

He thought Yong-yong was a good kid on his own, but since Lee Ho-jae has been gone for a long time, Yong-yong seems to be worried too.

When did you prepare a battle suit like this?

It looked more like a costume rather than a proper military uniform.

“Did Yong-yong make it?”

“Huh.....”

Although it was not comparable to Lee Ho-jae and Yong-yong, Hochi also had a knack for magic.

He also had the insight to recognize magical items.

He could see that the clothes Yong-yong had prepared were not just a costume that was focused on design, but a proper combat outfit.

It was evident at a glance how hard he had prepared.

“Yong-yong, wouldn’t it be a hindrance if uncle goes too?”

It was Hochi’s honest opinion.

Not to even mention Lee Ho-jae, compared to Yong-yong, his ability is far behind.

It was clear that he would only hold the ankles of others if he had come.

If he didn’t just grab an ankle, he could put them in danger as well.

“No, uncle has to go too.”

Yong-yong was rarely stubborn.

It wasn’t the courageous attitude he had before, but he stubbornly didn’t give up.

What was the reason?

Hochi had no intention of visiting Lee Ho-jae.

Of course, he was worried for Lee Ho-jae

However, it wouldn’t change anything if he went looking for Lee Ho-jae, and there was also the expectation that if it was Lee Ho-jae, he would somehow overcome any trial and come back.

“You must go.”

Yong-yong wiggled his fingers and said.

Hochi had no choice but to ask.

“Why does uncle have to go?”

In fact, Hochi was willing to join Yong-yong if he wanted Hochi to go with him because he was afraid or nervous to go alone.

Of course, it would be a hindrance, but no matter how lacking their abilities, it was not the behavior of a guardian to let a scared child go alone.

He had no intention of stopping Yong-yong from leaving to find Lee Ho-jae.

However, Yong-yong gave a different answer than expected.

“Just. I feel like it.”

“How did you feel?”

Hochi asked while holding Yong-yong.

Yong-yong thought Hochi would refuse, so he nodded his head slightly and buried his face in Hochi's chest.

Hochi thought as he patted Yong-yong on the back.

If he had to give reasons why he shouldn't visit Lee Ho-jae, he could name a few things right away.

Hochi's own judgment and Yong-yong's intuition were put on the scale.

The weight of balance was tilted to one side.

“Yeah, let's go.”

Hochi got ready before morning came and wrote a letter down.

It wasn't a huge letter.

It was a letter that said that he would be absent for a while and to take good care of the church in the meantime.

The letter placed on the desk in the office was picked up by Kim Min-hyuk the next morning.

Kim Min-hyuk screamed and made a riot that he would leave the church immediately, but he had to start his work in the end due to the disapproval of other members of the church.

* * *

“Uncle, why are we sneaking out?”

Yong-yong asked.

Hochi and Yong-yong were walking down the street on the 60th floor of the tutorial.

Secretly

Sneakily.

It seems that Yong-yong felt strange that he had to hide himself in the residential area on the 60th floor, which had been their home for a long time.

Actually, it was weird.

“...There is such a thing, Yong-yong-ah.”

Bump!

The windows of the two-story house swung open.

It used to be the house that Lee Ho-jae used as his room.

Now, Lee Yeon-hee inherited it.

Lee Yeon-hee appeared through the window.

Lee Yeon-hee leaned her arms against the windows and looked down at the street.

As soon as the window was opened, Hochi hardened.

“...Yong-yong, we’re not seen right?”

“That’s right.”

Hochi let out a sigh of relief.

No matter how good Lee Yeon-hee’s skills are, it won’t be enough to see through Yong-yong’s magic.

“Uncle, why did you ask me to use invisibility magic?”

“It’s nothing.”

Hochi didn’t answer in the end.

It was a bad decision.

Yong-yong couldn’t understand Hochi’s intentions until the very end, so he really only used invisibility magic because Hochi instructed him to do so.

The invisibility magic had hidden their appearance, but it could not erase their presence or voice.

Lee Yeon-hee leaned against the window and watched their backs.

Smiling quietly.

‘It seems that he’s not ready for an answer yet.’

Or just shy.

Lee Yeon-hee watched them with interest but didn’t really care where they were going.

They might have had something to do somewhere in the 60th-floor area.

Having lived here for ten years, she thought it could be.

In fact, Hochi and Yong-yong often visited the 60th floor.

Hochi left the streets of the 60th floor residential area while holding Yong-yong’s little hand tightly.

He was so nervous that his hands were sweating.

* * *

“Now, what should I do here, Yong-yong?”

Yong-yong excitedly explained Hochi’s question.

“Uncle that way, I’m this way!”

Yong-yong said, pointing to the volcano and the ice mountain.

Hochi couldn’t hide his curiosity.

The theme of the 61st floor was well known.

At the end of the two-way road, the challengers who meet again have to face off.

And only the victorious challenger could advance to the 62nd floor.

The problem is that Hochi himself is not recognized as a challenger.

So Hochi believed that Yong-yong had a way to get past the 61st floor.

But they have to move from here separately.

He couldn't understand.

"See you later!"

Yong-yong used magic and disappeared in a blink of an eye.

"This....."

Hochi was perplexed, and he himself moved towards the volcano.

The next moment, Hochi reached the heart of a lava volcano.

"Come on."

At the volcano, Hochi was able to meet a giant who had lost his confidence.

He encountered the old man lying on the lava.

"Uh... Old Man, are you okay?"

Hochi asked in a voice filled with concern without knowing it.

The complexion of Old Man didn't look that good.

Hochi felt sorry, wondering if he had been too indifferent to the Old Man.

"It's alright."

He didn't look okay at all.

The giant's body was flowing.

He knew the story about losing divinity, as even Hochi has heard of it.

The loss of divinity was more fatal than Hochi had thought.

The body and mind of the giant were returning to their pre-god state.

It was degeneration

Everything he had gained was falling apart.

“No, I really don't know. Whether I'm okay or not.”

The giant said so.

He said that perhaps he would suffer and die like this rather than getting stabilized without his divinity.

“.....”

He couldn't let his mouth fall easily when he saw the giant who said he was about to die too calmly.

“I can't help it. It's a natural result that a god who has given up his deity must face. I can't deny the result I brought. Anyway... What's going on here?”

Old Man asked.

Hochi didn't come to the 61st floor often to play.

In fact, the 61st floor did not remain a very good memory for Hochi.

Rather, it was full of memories of the bad side.

Neither the Old Man nor the other giants knew it.

Hochi said that he would find Lee Ho-jae.

The Old Man spoke as soon as he heard the explanation.

“You’re going to die.”

It wasn’t a joke.

The Old Man really thought Hochi was going to die.

“Maybe.”

In fact, Hochi thought so too.

Yong-yong will protect him, but his opponent is the God of Order, who is close to becoming a transcendental god and may destroy the world.

“Are you still going?”

Hochi nodded his head.

“What’s the reason?”

“Because I’m worried.”

Worried.

In fact, Hochi believed that Lee Ho-jae would win, but he wasn’t sure.

It was different from the giants who made Lee Ho-jae’s victory their deity.

Hochi considered both the possibility that Lee Ho-jae could win and the possibility that he could not win in the end.

“Because there is a possibility that Hojae may never come back.”

Then he will live with regrets for not visiting now.

He may not be able to meet him even if he goes looking for him.

Still, he didn't want to leave any regrets.

“You don't believe in the king's victory.”

It was natural.

A vague expectation that Lee Ho-jae could do it.

He was close to wishing he could do it.

“Good.”

The giant's body became smaller.

2 meters. About the size of a tall person.

“I'll go too.”

Old Man said.

“You are right. I do not want to die like this, leaving only regrets. It would be better for me to die while visiting the king.”

It seemed that the thought that he was still going to die had not changed.

Hochi nodded his head.

He had no reason or justification to oppose the companionship.

A portal appeared in front of Hochi and Old Man.

It was the portal to the final area on the 61st floor, the battlefield.

Hochi stepped up to the portal with Old Man.

“Aren’t you leaving?”

Old Man asked.

Hochi broke into a cold sweat.

‘What if the portal doesn’t work?’

Hochi, who was not accepted as a challenger in the past, could not advance from here.

Lee Ho-jae tried all sorts of methods, but Hochi couldn’t get to the last section of the 61st floor.

“Old Man, what if I don’t enter it?”

The Old Man seemed to have understood just then.

“We’re both going to be quite embarrassed. You didn’t even prepare a way to get over it, and with what confidence did you come here. You were so confident that I thought there was a way.”

Hochi scratched the back of his head in embarrassment.

“Try it for once.”

Old Man said.

It was as he said.

Hochi said, looking at the portal beneath his feet.

“Move.”

The portal’s light expanded.

Light enveloped Hochi and the Old Man's body.

In the next moment, Hochi and Old Man had moved to the arena.

“Uh... it works.”

* * *

[Lee Hochi(?)]

Lv.499

Power: ?

Agility: ?

Physical Strength: ?

Magic: ?

“Up to the status window...”

Hochi didn't understand why all of a sudden he was accepted as a challenger for the tutorial.

He shouldn't have said it like that before.

After waiting for a while, Yong-yong arrived at the arena.

Hochi asked Yong-yong what happened to him, but Yong-yong replied that he did not know.

Did they just bring him in just to be vague?

He couldn't figure it out

“How do you plan to move on?”

In the battle arena, challengers who arrive through the two paths fight each other.

Only the winner will advance.

Hochi thought.

‘Is it possible that Yong-yong wanted to bring me here to move on?’

If so, Yong-yong leaves the 61st floor and he returns to the 60th floor.

Hochi turned his head to look at the Old Man.

He thinks he’ll be embarrassed again.

He continued to embarrass himself because he had said big words while regretting nothing.

He said frankly that he followed Yong-yong without thinking about anything.

Fortunately, Yong-yong didn’t bring Hochi to use as a sacrifice on the 61st floor.

[You have cleared the 61st floor.]

It was easy to clear.

He was nervous for nothing.

All he needs to do is believe in Yong Yong.

Hochi asked a question to Yong-yong, who had already moved to his side.

“How did you do it?”

“We broke through the system and moved to this side. Then all the

challengers over there will be eliminated, and that will be treated as a loss, and this will become the winner's group."

It seemed so simple.

Hochi thought.

If Lee Ho-jae had known the method years earlier, a lot would have changed.

Once again, Yong-yong looked great.

Hochi is with Yong-yong and Old Man.

Once again, he went through the portal.

Where they arrived was a green field.

"Huing?"

And in the field.

There was Kirikiri looking at them with round eyes in surprise.

Side Story 25

Hochi (4)

A pearl was placed on a flat stone.

Pearls are auspicious gems.

Unlike other jewels, the pearl conceived by life itself contains birth and death.

It was a smooth pearl with no blemishes.

Kirikiri struck the pearl with a stone.

If you hit it by mistake, it will bounce off and roll away.

But Kirikiri smashed the pearls very neatly.

“Unggg.....”

Kirikiri groaned as she looked into the remnants of the broken pearl.

This fortune-telling wasn't good either.

It was a fortune telling, but no matter how much she looked at it, there was no room for interpretation.

Suddenly, Kirikiri wondered if he had ever paid so much attention to fortune telling.

There wasn't.

Before and after becoming a god.

It was a sensible thing to do.

The start was also because of the challenger.

The challenger, Lee Ho-jae, went to the God of Order of his own volition.

She could hardly have predicted the outcome.

The God of Order was already beyond Kikiri's prediction range.

Only the great God of Slowness could guess what kind of will the machine god, who had power that had come close to the level of a transcendental god, will realize.

Lee Ho-jae was also a challenger that was difficult to predict.

He was a human being who had become a god alone since a little over ten years now.

She couldn't guess the outcome.

But she couldn't just sit back and wait.

The glimpses of the future she could view were regretful.

The God of Remorse existed as proof.

But like everyone else, Kirikiri couldn't overcome her anxiety and curiosity about the future.

Kirikiri was confident.

She knew how to use fortune-telling in a very positive way.

As soon as a positive prediction comes out.

As soon as a negative prediction comes out.

She tried to pull it in her favor.

Fortune-telling was the direction of the trend, the shadow of causation.

When that figure comes to reality, it can be changed as much as you want.

She was well aware that her own efforts and actions could shape the future to some extent.

Kirikiri looked down at the fortune telling with confidence.

And as soon as she checked the fortune-telling, her confidence was gone.

There was no scar like this.

There is an end but no beginning.

She repeated the fortune telling over and over again, but the result was the same over and over again.

In an adventure, the end means a new beginning.

There is no eternal end.

Even if you come back after an adventure and settle down.

That peaceful and comfortable life will also be the beginning of another adventure.

But the fortune telling was telling that...

There will be no more new beginnings.

As the long adventure is over, the true end will come.

Kirikiri released her own ear that she had been holding on to unconsciously.

As soon as it was released from her hand, her ears pricked up towards the sky.

Her ears were stiff enough to feel the heat.

‘Am I going to die?’

The end of the fortune telling was reminiscent of the end of her life.

The end of all adventures.

The extinction of the grand universe was executed through the destruction of the minor universes.

Death.

Kirikiri thought.

What her own death meant.

Even though she already wanted to die, she became a being who could not die.

That she is facing her death.

“Hooojae is losing.”

In the end, the God of Order achieves complete transcendence.

The world comes to an end like that.

“Ahhh...”

Kirikiri moaned.

She too had to destroy the world.

Even so, it should have weakened the God of Order.

That doesn't guarantee victory, but the win rate would have been a little higher.

"What to do..."

Kirikiri did not have a powerful card that could reverse the direction of that fortune telling.

She had no way to induce a variable in the confrontation between the God of Order and the challenger.

That was then.

A portal appeared in the middle of the field.

Three people were summoned above the portal.

Hochi and Yong-yong and the lava giant on the 61st floor.

Kirikiri's eyes widened at the unexpected appearance of the characters.

"Huing?"

* * *

"Wow!"

it was Yong-yong.

Yong-yong was holding Kirikiri's hand and spinning round and round.

Kirikiri was still buzzing as if she didn't understand what was going on, and was being dragged around by Yong-yong's hand.

Seeing that, Hochi thought it was a strange thing.

Yong-yong seems to like Kirikiri.

He probably remembers that she was from the first time he saw her.

Rather than having a strong affinity, it was closer to what young children would see as a kindergarten teacher or host of a children's entertainment program.

Is it because it's a rabbit?

It seems to be so.

Hochi strongly affirmed his thoughts.

Kirikiri hugged Yong-yong from behind, who was turning endlessly.

When Hochi is hugging him, Yong-yong fits snugly in his arms, but his legs tremble a lot because of the small difference in height between him and Kirikiri.

It looked like a little one was holding her little brother.

Kirikiri approached while hugging Yongyong.

She asked Hochi.

“What's going on here?”

Hochi felt annoyed.

How should he explain it?

Is it right to be honest?

Should he deceive Kirikiri?

What if Kirikiri won't let them pass?

In an instant, all sorts of thoughts filled his mind.

Hochi turned his head for help and looked at the Old Man.

Old Man did a great job.

He just ignored Hochi's gaze and looked into the distance.

What bothered him was the firm refusal.

Hochi felt sad inside.

In the midst of this, Kirikiri's round eyes were urging Hochi for an answer.

"This is pretty, right!"

Yong-yong, held by Kirikiri, pointed to his clothes and said.

"Uh... uh... huh."

Kirikiri's answer was unconvincing.

The military look is not to Kirikiri's taste.

"What are you doing here?"

Kirikiri immediately asked the question again.

Hochi was forced to confess.

"Are you on your way to find Hooojae?"

"Yes. You're okay, right?"

Kirikiri's round eyes widened.

“It’s not okay! No way!”

* * *

“If you persist, I will punish you!”

Kirikiri put her hands on her waist and shouted.

Like a strict teacher.

But Yong-yong was no ordinary student.

Yong-yong did not break his stubbornness.

He told Kirikiri, who had declared that she would not even open the way, that he would find a way to find Lee Ho-jae right on the 61st floor.

Even if the system collapses.

“Impossible! Huh!”

“It’s possible. All I have to do is follow Dad’s way of connecting the passage to Earth.”

Yong-yong countered that it was impossible.

Kirikiri pondered for a moment after hearing Yong-yong’s words.

She soon came to the conclusion that if it was Yong-yong, it was really possible.

“Aaaah! Why the hell are you doing this to me!”

Kirikiri was clamoring with all her might.

Yong-yong was strong.

Watching Kirikiri's stubbornness, his expression didn't change.

"Hey, you can't just go."

Kirikiri changed her attitude right away.

Instead of urging harshly, she began to ask Yong-yong.

"No."

As expected, Yong-yong was adamant.

Suddenly, the conversation between the two became the other way around.

"If you don't go, I'll give you the macaron I saved."

Kirikiri took out a macaron set from somewhere.

It was a macaron set box divided into 4×4 compartments, but only three of the 16 macarons remained.

Were you giving away leftovers?

Hochi felt embarrassed.

Even that macaron set looked somehow familiar.

No, he thinks Lee Ho-jae bought it a while ago.

"This is delicious."

I'm not going to eat it

I don't need it.

Besides, that would have been absolutely disgusting.

The color is also a bit weird.

There is also white mold.

She was trying to save it, but it must have been that she hadn't eaten it for too long.

So, ten years after he bought it, she still has three of those macarons left.

And if it's spoiled, throw it away.

Don't keep it like a souvenir.

The nagging reached the tip of Hochi's tongue.

Recently, since he was in charge of pointing out things in the church, it was Hochi that was used to pointing out things to others.

"Hey, it's delicious."

Hochi ignored it.

Yong-yong was not interested in macarons either.

Kirikiri tried to persuade him in other ways.

"If you go, everyone will die."

"No, they won't die."

Kirikiri clasped her head in response to Yong-yong's resolute sword-like answer.

It felt like a headache.

Of course, it was only a feeling.

“Well, everyone ignores me.”

“Wouldn’t that be okay. Our Yong-yong is a god.”

said Hochi.

Hochi thinks if it’s Yong-yong, it would be helpful for Lee Ho-jae as well.

“...do you mean that you know what the God of Order is like?”

The God of Order was originally a god of machines created to counter and restrain the gods.

Because of its overly superior performance, he has acquired a self and is approaching transcendence.

“If you go inside, divinity will become meaningless. You may lose your divinity altogether. The God of Order is such a god.”

Hochi had to try hard not to turn his eyes to the old man standing next to him.

In fact, there was a case right next to them about the loss of divinity.

God loses their divinity.

It was a loss worse than death.

However, Yong-yong did not succumb to Kirikiri’s warning.

“It’s okay. I’m strong even without it. Without it, I’m the strongest.”

Kirikiri made a tired expression without realizing it.

She also explained to Lee Ho-jae about the power of the God of Order.

At that time, Lee Ho-jae said that he could do it, and he went in at

will.

The same answer came back from Yong-yong.

This family doesn't make sense at all.

She felt like her clothes were about to burst out of frustration.

Hochi was bothered in his own way.

Yong-yong's last words, that he is the strongest, caught his mind.

That wasn't true.

Without divinity, Lee Ho-jae was the strongest.

Hochi, who had watched Lee Ho-jae and Yong-yong's matches many times, knew best.

Yong-yong would have known that too.

Nevertheless, the reason Yong-yong is so optimistic is not that he really thinks he is stronger than Lee Ho-jae.

Because Lee Ho-jae taught him that way.

He has the mindset that he always thinks he is the strongest.

When Hochi was again thinking about Yong-yong's education, Kirikiri pointed out Hochi and tried to persuade Yong-yong.

"If you don't know, other people will be in danger."

"I am fine."

The Old Man next to him spoke first.

"I have already lost my divinity. Even if my divinity is lost again, it

has nothing to do with me. And it doesn't matter if it's dangerous. This is a body that is already dying due to the collapse of my divinity."

Kirikiri moved his gaze to Hochi without strength, as if she had no energy to speak anymore.

What is he going to do?

"Uncle is fine."

"Why?"

"Uncle has no cause and effect."

Kirikiri was silent for a moment after hearing Yong-yong's answer.

So was Hochi.

There was no cause and effect, a story he had heard once before, but he couldn't understand why it suddenly appeared again.

"You mean you know what causality means?"

Yong-yong nodded his head.

"I know what you're saying..."

Kirikiri muttered to herself like that, and then went silent.

She stood blankly without saying a word.

Standing tall like a stone statue.

Yong-yong was also silent.

Hochi wondered if Yong-yong and Kirikiri were talking telepathically, but that didn't seem to be the case.

Both are just silent.

It was an awkward silence.

It had suddenly become so quiet that he was concerned about the sound of his own breathing.

Hochi looked up.

He said nothing, looking at Yong-yong and Kirikiri, who didn't show any movement, alternately.

Kirikiri, who stood like that for a while, spoke up first.

It was a completely unexpected sentence.

“Okay, I'll let you in. If you pass my exam first.”

After finishing her words, Kirikiri suddenly waved her hand.

In her hand was a gleaming golden blade.

The blade was pointed straight at Hochi.

Side Story 26

101st Floor (1)

[101st floor]

“This is so different from what I thought.”

[Is that so?]

asked Ahbooboo.

Seregia was silent.

It seemed that it would take more time for her to re-establish her communication skills.

The God of order could be found through the tutorial.

The God of order, the system itself, lives off the tutorial.

I re-entered the tutorial through the 61st floor stage, and was able to go straight to the 100th floor with Kirikiri’s guidance.

Unlike before when I was moved to Earth with a clear message on the 100th floor, I was able to face a message asking if I would move on to the next one.

[You have cleared the 100th floor.]

[You have met all the challenges. Would you like to challenge?]

It was a very simple question.

Naturally, I answered the question.

And I expected to face the God of Order right away.

Even if it's not, it will be settled in a short time.

However, contrary to expectations, the 101st floor had not been finished for several months.

Growl-.

My stomach rumbled.

I felt hungry.

“Ah damn.”

I took something to eat from the subspace.

Fortunately, a mountain of food remained.

It was fortunate that a large amount of food was prepared for Lee Ho Jae Faith's compensation.

Thanks to this, there was no need to procure ingredients and make a fire to cook and eat.

It was a hassle, but it was also a really good thing in terms of maintaining dignity.

How miserable would it be if I became a god and sat by myself, making a bonfire, grilling meat, and eating?

[You're not a god now.]

said Ahbooboo.

That's right.

I am not a god now.

I wouldn't feel hungry, and I wouldn't feel relieved to eating a sandwich.

And I wouldn't have wasted months of time on this 101st floor.

[Your divinity will be sealed.]

This was the message I saw as soon as I entered the 101st floor.

Sealing of divinity.

As soon as I checked the message, my godhood disappeared.

My body has gone back to what it was before I became a god.

As if I was in a virtual world created by the God of.

“Did the God of sky follow this place?”

[Yes, it did.]

Ahbooboo answered my question.

The God of Sky created a virtual world that annihilated the godhood through the medium of Ahbooboo and restored one to their form before becoming a god.

In it, he tried to subdue the opponent using the infinitely differentiated Ahbooboo.

It was quite a genius idea, but it was nothing more than a copy of the 101st floor.

It was a little disappointing.

I threw the rest of the sandwich in my mouth.

Bread crumbs remained in my hands.

I had to find wet wipes in the subspace and wipe my hands.

It was annoying.

“Why did the Hundred Gods Temple make such a place?”

I couldn't understand it at all.

The 101st floor of the tutorial here was nothing more than a device the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple had made to block the God of order.

Kirikiri explained that clearing the 101st floor can neutralize the God of order.

It was a really comfortable story.

If you have the ability to create a place like this, you can create a way to easily defeat the God of Order from the beginning.

So how comfortable and nice.

[As far as I know, there are good reasons.]

said Ahbooboo.

When I met Ahbooboo again, he had a lot of information about the gods.

There were many limitations in his memory before.

Ahbooboo, who likes to chat and talk, generously released his memories.

[The God of order is said to have been a mechanical god created from the beginning to monitor and contain other gods. It was decided that it would be dangerous for the control of such a machine god to be concentrated with one god. So.....]

“They’ve set up a trial ground like this in case the machine god breaks down after they’ve put no one to control?”

[Yes.]

There was one thing that bothered me.

“In such an ordeal, you should be able to clear it when a certain god in the Hundred Gods Temple breaks out. Why are they destroying the divinity?”

This was the problem.

When the God of Order had a problem, it was good to have a device to prevent it.

Because there is actually a problem.

But the problem was how to run the device.

[I heard that there is a reason.]

“What is it?”

What on earth is the reason for putting this son of a bitch ordeal that blows away the divine power?

If there was a good reason, that would be more interesting.

[The godhood is not reasonable and correct for everyone.]

“What are you talking about, that?”

[The gods act only according to themselves and their divinity. Even if there is a rational way to save the world, if your divinity wants it to be destroyed, you are willing to do it.]

For a moment, I pondered Ahbooboo’s words.

It wasn't wrong.

Let's think of the God of Light right now.

One day, the world suddenly collapses.

But if the method of destruction is the explosion of the universe.

The God of Light will favor destruction.

God of Hope.

God of Adventure.

God of Duel.

God of Nature.

God of Death.

God of Sacrifice.

God of Devotion.

No matter how much I thought and thought, there was not a single god who was sane.

In the field of 'common sense judgment', all of the gods were troubled people full of reasons for disqualification.

"So that's why they've eliminated divinity?"

[Yes. It was because it would be possible to make a more rational judgment in this place where godhood has been eliminated.]

Is blocking the God of Order really right for the world?

Are they saying that you have to get rid of the godhood and decide

again after you judge?

I understood.

There was a really good reason.

That fact was even more surprising.

“Then why didn’t the gods directly block the God of Order?”

Why did they make a tutorial and nurture a challenger to take on the challenge here?

As time dragged on like that, the God of Order went beyond a simple problem and came closer to the God of Transcendence.

[Isn’t the godhood disappearing? What kind of god would want to give up his godhood himself? No matter how temporary.]

“Ugh.”

It was such a godly reason.

I got up.

The enemy was approaching.

The enemy was a huge beast-type monster.

With a bizarre appearance that looks like it was made from black cotton balls.

With golden claws.

My pulse was beating fast.

My body trembled with excitement.

Yes, my godhood was sealed, but this one thing was good.

Being able to feel the excitement and pleasure from before becoming a god again.

I heard Ahbooboo.

From that point on, the beast monster started running towards me.

It was a surprising phenomenon in itself.

Order was an unusual concept.

I have talked about the concept of order with Hochi in the past.

What is order and what is chaos?

Divinity is the force that shakes the law.

An apple that should have fallen down soars toward the sky.

Time flows backward.

It creates an impact force that is physically impossible in the air and creates life without any components.

Godhood had such power.

It was such a force to destroy order in itself.

The golden claws containing the divine power of the God of Order created a phenomenon the moment they were swung.

The divine power of the God of Order produced miracles, and the will of the God of Order did not allow miracles to entangle the laws of the world.

The clash of divine power and will lead to dimensional differentiation.

Instead of embodying the action of the divine power that tangled the world into reality, he created a new world.

The division of the world was the next best thing the God of Order could have chosen.

Numerous universes were created as the golden claws swung.

And countless universes fell with the golden claws.

It was a universe compressed into a space close to a point.

The weight that filled the world swung towards me.

I tried to calculate the impact.

It was impossible.

It was not a physical force that mere mortals dared to imagine.

Even after my powers were frozen, I did not stop doubting my abilities.

Even in a space with limited power, I was strong enough.

It was impossible.

This was not a place that could be overcome only by the abilities of mortals, except for divine power.

Every moment was a test of myself.

Can I persevere in the face of overwhelming power?

Can I affirm myself?

Can I be god?

I asked myself.

I answered once again.

Under the golden claws, I became a god once more.

“Go die.”

Ahbooboo was swung

The black beast with the golden claws.

It annihilated the fragmented universes as they were.

[Your divinity will be sealed.]

In the next moment, my divine power was gone again.

After being a god for a while, I became a human again.

“I’m getting used to this.”

[...I have nothing to say.]

Ahbooboo murmured.

I warmed up.

The body that became a god for a while and then returned to a human was stiffened with tension.

However, it was fortunate that only one came out this time.

If several beasts attack at the same time, I have to gain and lose the godhood and repeat it several times.

After that, my body can’t stand it.

Due to excessive tension, the new system begins to collapse.

Each time, I had to pull myself together before moving forward.

After all, I haven't been able to clear the 101st floor here for several months.

[The God of Sky must have failed.]

said Ahbooboo.

“What do you mean?”

[The God of Sky did not want to entrust everything to the challenger. He was trying to solve the problem himself.]

I nodded and listened to the story.

The God of Sky was such a god.

[The solution was to make me infinitely different, as you know.]

Ahbooboo with a number that is close to infinity.

It will definitely be a huge power.

[But I don't know if the God of Sky came here with me and succeeded. He probably failed.]

I think so too.

Perhaps the God of Sky's preparations were appropriate.

As long as the God of Order had not reached the Transcendental God.

The God of Order, which is said to be approaching the Transcendent God, was clearly demonstrating abilities beyond common sense.

The monsters that contain the power of the God of Order, even in a limited way, were embodying a transcendental phenomenon that could not be imitated by any other great rivals.

The idea of creating multiple universes in an instant and using the weight of the universe that was shrunk to pin down enemies.

It was surprising in itself.

However, there was one more surprising thing.

It was because of the favor that Ahbooboo was showing to the God of Sky.

Whenever Ahbooboo talked about the God of Sky, the affection and loyalty he showed were beyond my expectations.

[Of course, how long have I been with him? I have a lot of affection.]

“More than me?”

I asked.

As I asked, I knew it was childish.

[Absolutely.]

Ahbooboo answered immediately.

I was frankly upset.

Yes I am childish

“It’s surprising. I wouldn’t be like that.”

If someone locks me up in the tutorial, and even after pulling me out, playing around with me.

I'll never let it go

I must stab them in the back.

[Warrior is a great man, who, if given the opportunity, will hit the person above him in the back of the head.]

said Ahbooboo.

I couldn't think of anything to refute.

[Maybe it was the first time we were together, I don't know.]

"First time?"

[Yes. I remember the days before you became a god, when you were still an immature human.]

Ahbooboo started talking about the past again.

Side Story 27

The Boy and The Sword (1)

There was a small village.

This village was special.

It was a village that had two features that were different from other villages.

For that reason, the village was enough to be called a special village.

The village paid no taxes.

While the other villages at the foot of the mountain were struggling to make a living due to tax collection, the villagers did not pay a single penny in taxes to the lord.

The village was a slash-and-burn village where slash-and-burn people lived.

Young people who fled to avoid taxes gathered and formed a slash-and-burn village.

It didn't matter when a few people lived in hiding in the mountains.

They were earning a living by quietly plowing the fields and hunting for meat and hides.

However, as more and more people fled the territory due to the tyranny of the lords, the scale of the slash-and-burn village grew.

The lords became aware of the existence of the slash-and-burn village.

The soldiers came in.

The lords did not burn the slash-and-burn village.

Instead, they allotted harsher taxes to the villagers.

The people resisted.

From then on, the villagers became rebels.

Slash-and-burn village became a rebel base.

Although they were given the grand word “rebels”, there was really no basis for calling them “an army”.

There were three hunting bows, and there were more than ten tree furrows for plowing.

Hunting traps were installed in the rugged mountains.

That was all the rebels had.

When fewer than a hundred rebels were contemplating whether they should run away from the slash-and-burn village, or should they die while fighting.

A boy climbed a mountain.

“Hey, wait a minute.”

I cut off Ahbooboo for a moment.

Before continuing with the story, I have a question to ask.

[What?]

Ahbooboo asked.

“Why are you starting such a long story all of a sudden? Out of the blue?”

Aren't you too free?

We are still on the 101st floor to challenge the God of Order.

[Aren't you going to rest a little while recovering anyway?]

It is, though.

“It's because the story is so long that it doesn't seem like it will end during the break.”

If I ask you to stop talking in the middle and move on, you'll be disappointed.

I know it all.

I've been through chatting with Ahbooboo not just once or twice.

[Ah. It'll be over soon. It's not a long story.]

“Really?”

[Yes. Of course.]

Ahbooboo reassured.

Okay, so I told him to talk.

It didn't matter if it wasn't a long story.

As Ahbooboo said, I should have rested for a while to recover anyway.

Then Ahbooboo started talking again.

The boy who climbed the mountain alone solved the problem.

Leading the men and besieging the mountain

He sent the lords back to their estates.

Through an agreement with the rebel chief, he obtained a promise to exempt all taxes for three years, after which they would pay a reasonable tax for their income.

So the rebels again became ordinary villagers in a special village.

The village chief wanted to repay the boy who saved them from death.

He wanted to reveal the other reason why their village is called a special village, so he could reward the boy.

The village chief took the boy to a small cave.

Deep in the cave, there was a sword stuck in the stone floor.

“It’s a magic sword.”

“...A magic sword?”

The chief nodded his head and explained.

“It is a magic sword that makes you angry if you hold the sword carelessly, and makes you go crazy with blood lust if you pull it out without permission.”

“If it’s such a magic sword, isn’t it right to throw it into the furnace and melt it?”

Said the boy.

Then, the magic sword stuck in the cave floor began to hum.

It was a ghastly and gloomy sight.

But the village chief shrugged his shoulders as if he was familiar with it.

“But it’s a wise magic sword. The advice of that sword played a big role in how we lived and formed a small town here.”

It was difficult to understand.

A magic sword that can be a good adviser.

“That magic sword always lamented that it had no master to have itself. To handle that sword, you need excellent skills and a strong mind that will not be shaken by the temptation of the magic sword. I think the warrior is enough to become the master of that sword...”

That was the first meeting between the boy and the sword.

I listened to the story up to this point, and finally intervened.

“Ahbooboo. Were you a real magic sword?”

[It was a long time ago. That was a long time ago.]

It’s no wonder that he was a magic sword.

This was much more realistic than the story that he was a holy sword from the beginning in the first place.

Ahbooboo continued the story.

The boy liked the sword.

Although the sword was called the Magic Sword, it did not harm people randomly.

It was kind to the boy and shared its wisdom with the villagers that often spoke to it.

Above all, its performance as a sword was amazing.

The spirit of the sword was a little cruel.

He did like blood.

But the boy decided to live with it and take the sword.

The sword was originally an object that could become evil.

What the sword would do ultimately depended on the one who wielded it.

The sword liked the boy too.

It was not easy to meet a boy who seemed to have a talent for swords in a cave deep in the mountains.

[How did you save the people?]

The magic sword knew the situation the village was in.

The three lords were encamped at the foot of the mountain, leading their soldiers and knights.

If all the villagers did not come down within two days, expressed their intention to surrender, were punished, and paid their taxes, the soldiers would have climbed the mountain.

[I was planning to fight even if I borrowed the hand of the village chief's son.]

“Why him?”

The boy asked.

[Hmm. Because the village chief's son has good arm strength]

The boy thought that this magic sword cared for the villagers more than he thought.

It was a positive thing.

The boy told the magic sword how he had saved the village.

Honestly.

“I bought this mountain. Now, this is my estate.”

The greedy lords just couldn't go back.

The boy bought this mountain from the lords.

And a small number of permanent residents live on this mountain.

The lords will also have new lords in the neighboring land.

He didn't like the fact that he had to go back without punishing the bad guys even though he had led the soldiers.

So the boy paid the price to the lords to solve all their dissatisfaction.

[What, were you a noble?]

The magic sword was a little disappointed.

Especially because he persuaded the lords with money.

It was the pinnacle of inefficiency.

With that money, the boy could do more.

The foolish boy only raised the stomach of the greedy lords.

“But we were able to save the villagers right away?”

[You could have bought a mercenary. With that amount of money, you could get permission from the central government and win through the territorial war.]

“Then the mercenaries and the soldiers of the lords wouldn’t be saved.”

The boy was optimistic.

[You’re a dreamy fool. Damn, I think I picked the wrong owner.]

The boy drew his sword.

The magic sword, which said that if someone he didn’t like picked it up, would hum wildly and make him go crazy with blood, didn’t resist at all.

The boy left the village and continued his adventure.

[Have you never learned swordsmanship? Why are you so bad at holding swords?]

the sword asked.

The boy decided to answer honestly this time too.

“Actually, I can only use spears.”

The sword was puzzled.

Nobles usually use swords.

This is because swordsmanship has been taught for self-defense and training since childhood.

“Because I’m from the military.”

Whatever a soldier does, how would he be able to get ahead of himself enough to buy a whole mountain?

Did you seduce the daughter of a nobleman?

The sword asked.

The boy talked about his past.

It wasn't a very interesting past.

In return for it, the sword told the boy about his past.

Before it became a sword, it tells the story of a time when he was a human.

He was a great swordsman during his lifetime.

In his later years, he had a talented disciple.

The disciple mastered all his skills and went out into the world.

And he intercepted his master's achievements as his own.

[Everything I have built up is known as the achievement of my disciple. Damn it.]

"Are you going to reverse it?"

The boy asked.

The sword replied immediately.

[No, it's already too late. Now that I have died like this and remain as a magic sword.]

The sword was gloomy.

To his surprise, the boy could feel the feeling of the sword he was holding.

As the boy was thinking of words of comfort, the sword revealed his ambitions.

[Instead, I developed something more and more wonderful and tried to cover the disciple's achievement with it.]

“Something wonderful? What is it?”

[It's a great skill. I've never used it myself, but I've done it. If you have even half as much talent as I have, you can use it too.]

The boy wondered about the new skill.

To the boy, he gave the name of the technique he had developed just before his death.

[Space Rift Mind Slash]. It is a technique that will change the world.]

* * *

Bang!

“Ho,ho,ho,ho,hot!”

A sudden explosion caused the boy to miss the sword.

It already happened a few times today.

When the boy swung the sword into the air, an explosion would occur as if he had put some gunpowder on the sword.

The boy quickly picked up the sword.

[Hey! That's not it! Why can't you leave your life force alone, because the life of this technique is simplicity! The life force runs wild like rabid bastards, so they collide and fire up!]

The sword threw a fit.

“I'm sorry.....”

The boy apologized hastily.

The boy, who had already made several mistakes during the day alone, was a little gloomy.

The sword was silent for a while but praised him saying that he did well.

The sword really thought the boy was doing well.

Even though it verbally cursed the boy for being stupid and incompetent, the sword was surprised every day.

It was truly a monstrous level of talent.

The boy's growth rate felt like that.

The sword thought.

Would he be able to grow at this rate?

No matter how good a teacher is, is it possible to develop a life force in less than two years?

It was impossible.

The sword had fun.

It felt as if the boy's achievement was his own.

The boy's adventure continued.

The boy saved and saved people.

The boy saw and learned a lot.

People can be good or bad.

The people rescued by the boy were no exception.

In some cases, some had come back and punished the person he had saved.

Conversely, there were cases where the person he had imprisoned was reborn and found a new life.

People didn't stop pointing fingers.

Unrealistic dreamer.

An idiot who wants to live his own life.

All were correct.

But the boy did not stop.

Out of the reach of the shield of the law, there were so many people who desperately needed help to lift themselves up.

Always pressed for time, the boy always arrived late.

It was the same when he reached the city that was being attacked by hordes of goblins.

When the boy arrived, the goblins had already crossed the walls and entered the city.

Fortunately, the city's soldiers and the boy were able to stop the goblins' attack, but there were many casualties.

There was a person approaching the boy who had been thinking about having a drink alone after leaving the memorial service in the cemetery that was built in haste.

The person was wearing a priestess's uniform.

The priestess he met in front of the cemetery was cheering.

“Swordsman, please do that earlier! Do it again!”

“Yes?”

The priestess saw the sword bang and explode as the boy was fighting the goblins.

In the end, the boy, who could not solve the problem of the life force explosion, found a way to use the explosion in a combative manner with his sword.

The sword complained that it was not cool, but it was effective against monsters who hated fire and light.

“Do that one more time! Kwaang! Flash! Do that again!”

The boy refused.

“Sorry, Priestess. That technique is too dangerous to use in town. Plus, it’s so loud that people will be surprised.”

The priestess did not give up.

She introduced herself as a priestess of the Order of the God of Light, and she followed and annoyed the boy all day.

The boy eventually ran with all his might and had to run away from the priestess.

[It’s surprising that those crazy fanatics are still alive and not extinct.]

The sword spoke as if it knew about the priests of the God of Light.

The boy asked the sword.

“Do you know about them? I’ve never heard of the God of Light until today.”

[It is a small religion with fewer than a hundred members. It was like

that when I was alive.]

Side Story 28

The Boy and The Sword (2)

Space Rift Mind Slash

It was a technique developed by Ahbooboo.

Although it was given a grandiose and technical name, it was a technique that did not require a specific mindset or enlightenment at all.

It was simply a move that increased the attack range by compressing aura to the limit and widening it with a fine thickness.

The technique of the ‘boy’ that Ahbooboo spoke of was of a light sword no matter how much I heard it.

Although the power was incomparable at the initial stage, the mechanics of the technique were the same.

Looking back, there were many similarities between the Space Rift Mind Slash and the light sword.

This was especially true of the way the aura was used.

The light sword was a technique that generated light and heat by rubbing aura particles with each other in the process of compressing the aura.

Maybe that’s why it didn’t feel so strange when hearing Ahbooboo’s story of a boy who was practicing the Space Rift Mind Slash and accidentally created an early version of the light sword.

Because there were so many connections between the two techniques.

[In the end, the Space Rift Mind Slash didn’t work out until the end.

So, the Space Rift Mind Slash has remained my own technique for a long time.]

It was an amazing story.

The fact that the light sword was made from the failure of the Space Rift Mind Slash.

It is said that technological progress always comes from failure, and that really is true.

“But you said you didn’t learn it to the end? You just have to practice hard.”

Perhaps because I learned the light sword first, I was able to easily follow the Space Rift Mind Slash.

Shortly after meeting Ahbooboo, I succeeded, and I improved it and combined it with the light sword to create my own technique.

[Shut up, please.]

Oh my.

Now you curse at me too.

I had one thing to ask Ahbooboo.

Why didn’t he tell me about the origin of the light sword earlier?

How much trouble did I have on the 35th floor to finish the light sword?

[Ah, I didn’t remember it when I was in the tutorial.]

Yes, I’m sure you did.

Some of the characters appearing in the tutorial often had limited memory.

Ahbooboo was such a case.

On the 61st floor, the god of the sky retrieved it and started putting it on him again, and it seemed that his memory was restored.

[It is a story of the time when God was human. Wouldn't it be a big deal if it got leaked by mistake?]

“Why is it a big deal?”

As a god of human origin, I asked.

Ahbooboo pondered about my words for a moment, and then said.

[Isn't that a sense of mystery? God must exist beyond the clouds. Can you feel the awe of a god who lives next door to you?]

I used to think so too.

If you are a god, you must be godly,

But recently, that thinking has changed little by little.

My followers on Earth knew all the dark histories of when I was a pro gamer.

I didn't even think about controlling all of them, as they roamed around the internet so much.

Anyway, people continued to grow their faith while looking at my human side.

I wondered if a closer and more horizontal relationship between God and believers could be possible.

[An interesting idea. I wouldn't agree, though. Anyway, let's keep talking.]

Ahbooboo doesn't like to be disturbed while chatting.

I was starting to wonder if this story was going to end really quickly.

Ahbooboo, who had clearly ignored my worried expression, started talking again.

* * *

“A hundred? It’s a really small church.”

said the boy.

The sword clicked its tongue.

Of course, the sword didn’t have a tongue, but it made a *tsk tsk* tongue-clicking sound.

[Yes, it’s a pity that the church hasn’t been destroyed yet.]

It was a great joke.

However, the sword was good at slander and liked to hate others.

The boy didn’t fuss about it and moved on.

[They have no sense of reality at all.]

The members of the church who believed in the God of Light did not faithfully farm or trade, nor did they cultivate special skills.

They didn’t even have the mindset that they had to live or work hard.

They just loved seeing sparkles.

Surprisingly.

Their goal in life was to see something sparkling.

Whenever they could afford it, they lit a fire and played while

appreciating it.

It's a sad story.

Oil, firewood, and gunpowder were all consumer goods.

Therefore, most of the members of the God of Light were poor.

They make fires as soon as they have money.

There were no temples.

It was said that they played with fire so much that they burned them all down.

It would not be strange if the church died of starvation tomorrow.

"It's a church that makes you really wonder about how it is maintained."

said the boy.

The sword was guessing the reason.

[Maybe because their god is powerful.]

"Yes?"

The boy did not understand the sword's words.

[The god of light that those crazy fanatics believe in is so powerful, that's why they've been able to survive. Perhaps]

The sword guessed so.

"But wasn't the greatness of God determined by the number of members and the power of the church?"

The boy asked.

It was a theory.

[I don't know, I guess the god of light is at least powerful.]

The sword knew nothing more.

It had never been interested in theology in its lifetime.

However, it had experience working with a priest of the God of Light.

[I once entered a dungeon with a priest who worships the God of Light.]

To the boy, the sword told the story of its past.

The priest he met by chance when the sword was a human had tremendous abilities.

[Once, I cut my chest with a monster's claw. At that time, the priest of the God of Light healed me, and the ability was really great.]

“Did the wound heal all at once?”

[No, it only stopped the bleeding]

The healing effect was weak.

Instead, the lighting effects were awesome.

The little blood-stopping effect came out of a light that was like as if the sun that erupted from the priest's hand.

Anyone who saw it would have thought it was a resurrection.

[Thanks to that, all kinds of monsters in the dungeon came. I barely managed to escape.]

“What about that priest?”

[I don't know, I left him in the dungeon.]

The boy scolded the sword.

No matter how many monsters the priest had brought in, he should have rescued the priest and came out together.

[What a comfortable thing to say. If I did, I would have been a good roast with the monsters.]

As the monsters came, the priest fired a holy spell.

He was really pissed off.

Like a drunkard who drank only alcohol all day, he poured dazzling divine spells without stopping, as if peeing everywhere.

Laughing like a crazy person.

[He was under stress in the dark dungeon, but when he saw the light, I guess his head had finally turned crazy. He was so engrossed that he burned the monsters to death. He tried to burn everything in sight, so I ran away too.]

“Ummm...”

[Anyway, that wasn't the ability a single priest could use. There is a limit to human magic. It must have been that god who gave power to the priest. And if it was a god who would give so much power to a single plain priest going crazy and setting fire to a dungeon, then of course the god would be incredibly powerful. It's so powerful that it doesn't matter if they just consume it.]

Only then did the boy understand.

The god has great powers, but it was a little strange.

Very strange believers who worship a slightly strange god.

The boy defined the Church of the God of Light as such.

The next morning, the priestess who worships the God of Light came to visit the boy again.

She screamed and begged him to show her the shining sword, but the boy just ran away from the priestess.

Around the time when his stomach, which was filled with breakfast, finished digesting and began to feel hungry.

The goblins that attacked the city yesterday are back.

With a greater number of kin.

Unlike yesterday, there was the boy in the city, and the city walls were stronger than yesterday.

Eventually, by the time the sun began to set, the goblins stopped attacking the city and retreated.

But it wasn't without damage.

The soldiers who had not recovered from yesterday's battle were vulnerable to the unexpected claws and stone axes.

A new cemetery was built.

The cemetery was full.

If the goblins' attack continues tomorrow, another cemetery will have to be built tomorrow.

There was a woman approaching the boy who was bowing his head in helplessness and self-blame.

She was a priestess of the god of light.

“It was great today! Bang! Flash! How do you get that light from the sword? Can you show me one more time?”

The boy didn't say no.

Instead, he asked a question.

“Why didn't you come forward?”

It was a battle.

If one priest with outstanding abilities had been added, far fewer people would have died.

But the priestess did not take part in the battle.

She sat on the roof of the village building, watching the boy wielding his sword.

“If I step out, the chance to see the shining sword decreases even more!”

The priestess said as if it was natural.

Crazy bitch.

The boy cursed in his mind.

“Would you like to become the paladin of our church? If it were you, all of our members would like you. The God of Light will also welcome you! Surely!”

“That's enough.”

After saying that, the boy walked away from the priestess.

The priestess kept shouting at the boy's back.

“Please think about it! Absolutely!”

* * *

The battle continued.

Day after day.

The goblins’ attack continued for a full week.

The soldiers were exhausted.

Unlike the goblins, the soldiers who had no reinforcements had to stand on top of the wall while still being wounded.

The priestess of the god of light came to the boy.

She offered to heal people free of charge if he regularly showed her the shining sword.

It was truly a pure suggestion.

It was like a child’s offer to help if given candy.

The problem was that the object to whom the offer was offered was on the verge of drowning and dying.

The priests of that damned church had no idea of morality.

The boy demonstrated the shining sword the priestess had longed for.

Fortunately, the priestess kept her promise.

One thing that was encouraging was that the priests who believed in the God of Light were flocking to the city one after another, perhaps the priestess was spreading rumors.

When the number of priests was sufficient, all the wounded could be

meticulously healed.

But it wasn't possible to bring the dead back to life.

It was possible to maintain a miraculous exchange rate due to the struggle between the boy and the priestess.

When a soldier on the wall dies, over twenty goblins die.

But there were more goblins than that.

When the number of young people and elderly people who can't straighten their backs properly among the soldiers was much higher than that of strong adult men.

The boy thought.

This city has collapsed.

[Are you planning to run away now?]

The sword asked.

The boy had no intention of doing that.

"Why? It's been a month since I sent out a request for help. By now, it's time for help to come from the neighboring cities."

However, the fields outside the city were dense with only goblins.

There was no help to be found.

[I don't know. Maybe saving this city wasn't worth it. Maybe they preferred it to collapse.]

It was a terrible thing.

Not acting when you have the ability to help and save others.

The boy thought so.

No matter how much people pointed fingers and be sarcastic around him.

Even though he was betrayed and rejected, the boy wanted to help people.

He could not bring perfect peace and happiness to everyone.

It would be impossible, no matter how great a god.

He just wanted to give to people, as much as he could move and act on.

The boy grew himself up.

To save more people, to solve more dangerous situations.

He was acclaimed as the continent's greatest warrior, but his limits remained.

The problems that could be solved by an individual's ability were limited.

[Do you know what you lack?]

The boy asked what the hell was that.

The sword answered.

[Justification. Fame. Influence. capital. These things. Do you know what you need this for?]

“...what is that?”

[It is necessary to lead people.]

How many dreamy people want to become heroes on this continent?

How many other people in the armed forces would like to fly a nice flag?

When it comes to money, there are many crazy people who jump into battlefields and dungeons.

And there are those who intervene to gain an advantage in that flow.

[If you had led such people together, there would have been no reason to be sad waiting for the reinforcements that would never come.]

The boy was confused.

He never thought of leading anyone.

He was alone from the beginning, and he has been alone ever since.

He just moved alone and saved people by himself.

The sword saying that he must now gather people and lead them, did not make sense to him.

But he could understand.

That there are limits to one's ability to some extent.

As the boy grew up and more things started to intervene, more power was needed.

The power of a united group.

“What should I do?”

[What you need is a reason. If you go around saving people, people can praise you for being a really good young man, but they don't really understand why you're saving people. So no one agrees with your actions, no one is willing to help.]

[Justify your actions.]

The boy went to the priests of the God of Light.

The boy became a paladin.

Side Story 29

The Boy and The Sword (3)

The boy accepted the priestess' offer.

Surprisingly, the priestess, who annoyed the boy, presided over the oath of the paladin as a bishop.

The ceremony was held in the presence of several priests of the God of Light who came to hear the rumor of a boy wielding a shining sword.

It was a bizarre vow ceremony in which strange firecrackers were fired at the night sky.

At the end of the ceremony, the boy stepped forward.

The final procedure remained.

[Are you really going to do it?]

The sword asked.

It was a worried voice.

“Yes.I’ve never been educated anyway, so I don’t know what the nobles say. I’ll just say what I want to say.”

[No.....]

the sword wanted to say that it wasn’t the problem.

It wasn’t a matter of speech and formality.

But before the sword could stop the boy, he fell to his knees and put

his hands together.

The boy prayed to God.

“Strength must be wielded.”

It was more of a declaration than a prayer.

“That’s the only way to shine with value.”

The power of the God of Light was enormous.

The boy taking the vows thought so.

But the God of Light did not move.

It wasn’t swung.

When used correctly, a mighty power that could save countless people, perhaps even all of the continent, was silently asleep.

“If God doesn’t want to wield that power, I will wield it. In a way, that benefits people.”

It was an extraordinary prayer.

If it were any other popular religion, there would be nothing to say even if the boy had his wrists and ankles cut off and tied to a pole and burned at the stake.

However, the priests who worshiped the God of Light did not care at all.

On the contrary, they were very happy with the words the boy had mentioned several times, ‘I will wield it’.

It seems that the boy was trying to wield the shining sword and they liked it.

Feeling like a student waiting for his turn to be beaten, the sword looked at the night sky.

It thought that lightning might fall on the boy's head at any moment.

But the lightning did not fall.

God heard the boy's prayer and did not respond.

* * *

The boy became a paladin after that.

The next day, the boy went out of the city walls.

On a dark and gloomy day with rain clouds, the boy ran towards the goblins alone.

The battle has begun.

A showdown between thousands of goblins and one boy.

The difference in power was overwhelming, but the battle composition was the exact opposite.

Each time the boy's sword was swung, it flashed and exploded.

Up to this point, most of the people defending the city had seen it once or twice.

The rain clouds cleared

Just a little.

The bright sunlight fell through the rain clouds.

The sun was shining right on the boy.

As the boy moved, the sunlight followed the boy.

In a dark world, the boy shines alone

He moved alone and seemed to exist alone.

The people on the wall were thrilled, feeling the presence of a god at the surreal sight.

The goblins fled from the mysterious dazzling light and the occasional exploding sword.

The boy's story quickly spread through the songs of the minstrels.

Soon, the story of the boy paladin covered the continent.

A righteous and glorious knight of light.

A hero who wears flashing swords and flashing armor to save people and defeat villains and monsters.

The boy roamed the continent without a single day off to help people.

As a result, his heroic stories began to pile up.

His heroic stories, which were handed down in the form of short stories, piled up and piled up to become a thick book.

People could always smile when talking about the Knight of Light.

The impeccable hero jumped into any danger without hesitation.

The songs made with the deep favor of the minstrels were all mysterious and exciting.

At every tavern, a song was heard praising the boy's heroic story.

In the town square, a troupe playing a heroic story of the boy

entertained people by performing a different heroic story every day.

It became a daily routine for the children to gather in front of the plaza every day to watch the performance of the troupe.

“Wow!”

The children cheered as they saw the host on stage.

Occasionally, there were even adults who screamed like children.

The host smiled contentedly at the enthusiastic response and explained about today’s play.

People’s cheers grew louder.

Numerous stories of the Knights of Light.

Among them, the greatest and most dramatic story, the story of finding out the doppelganger that engulfed the subterranean city, and slaying even the Great Demon who was behind it, was the play prepared by the theater company today.

* * *

“Is it over?”

[Yes.]

The sword answered.

Hearing the answer, the boy knelt down on the floor as if torn apart.

The wobbly legs could no longer support the boy.

His pants caught on fire and began to burn.

There was a sea of fire all around.

Engulfing the boy's surroundings and even the entire city.

[That is amazing. It is doubtful whether this is a phenomenon that only one human can create. It would be impossible for even the greatest wizard to do this.]

The technique the boy named the Sword of Light swept the surroundings with light and heat.

No matter how mighty the Great Demon was, it could not stand this light.

It was a light with divine power.

The Great Demon has disappeared without leaving a trace.

Only the pattern of the huge magic circle that summoned the Great Devil remained.

It is a pattern that symbolizes the God of Harvest.

The boy remembered the divine name.

It was a god who wanted to intervene directly beyond spreading its ideals in the human world.

Divine intervention in itself could not be a problem.

But it was a different story if the god incited demons to slaughter people.

The boy's eyes were full of the burning mess of the city.

Due to the dwarves' building skills and abundant mineral resources, the city that once boasted the best fortress on the continent has now been completely ruined.

This city will soon collapse and crumble.

[You saved the people. If the Great Demon had gone out, one or two kingdoms would have just been wiped out.]

The sword comforted the boy.

What the sword said was true.

But it was also true that the boy who destroyed this beautiful city.

It was also true that he burned the survivors hiding in the city with his own hands.

[There is always an unavoidable sacrifice.]

said the sword.

The boy did not affirm the sword's words.

"There is no such thing."

The boy thinks all this devastation is because he was lacking.

People would not have died if the Great Demon could have been killed with a single slash.

[Impossible. Humans have limits. No matter how great you are, you can't save everyone.]

said the sword.

The boy noticed that the sword's words overlapped with those of others.

That's a word he's heard a lot.

A lot of times.

"I'll make it. Someday."

The boy has now become a continental celebrity.

A force has emerged to harm the boy.

The forces collided with the boy's support base.

The boy's support base was the people themselves.

People started to collide.

A new line was drawn between people.

Those who support the boy and those who slander him.

Those with vested interest and none.

The rich and the poor.

The nobles and lowly.

There were people who supported and loved the boy although they were aristocrats, wealthy and had vested interests.

Conversely, there were people who were jealous of the boy even though they had nothing.

But the line was drawn.

People split up and started fighting.

They made their position clear to survive and win.

In the face of the great harbinger of war, the boy had to go out on his own to prevent a great sacrifice.

The war didn't happen.

Kings and nobles hated the boy, but their men loved him.

Enough to throw away the existing system they belonged to.

In the complex flow, the people surrounding the boy were reborn as a new class.

They became the cornerstones of a new kingdom.

The boy became a kingdom.

* * *

The king stroked his long beard.

He left it for the solemn look, but now he'll have to cut his beard short.

It was just like when he was a boy.

The kingdom barely escaped a long period of chaos.

It was a new kingdom that reorganized the class hierarchy and existing laws and order.

There could be no confusion.

There are too many rats in the world who want to take advantage of the law, no matter how noble the will, to increase their belly.

The king realized.

That no one can be perfect.

No matter how sympathetic you are and dedicated to peace they are.

Although he had brilliant visions in his past, he wasn't sure what his future would be.

Laws and systems will not be perfect before time either.

It is humans who maintain and repair it after all.

Since it is man-made, man will find a gap.

No matter how perfect a law, with a little modification It becomes an evil method to harasses people.

“Haa.”

The king felt his limits.

He studied and researched a lot.

He tried to care for the kingdom, end chaos, and usher in an era of peace.

The king still had great power and symbolism.

The people's support was strong, and the officials still did not forget their respect for the king.

But there were still limitations.

The king recognized that he had become the cog of a gigantic sculpture called a kingdom.

Although he was a much larger and more important cog than other cogs, it was no different than an accessory belonging to the sculpture in the end.

There was bound to be a limit to what the cog could do.

The question of whether it was the best for the king to be loved and praised had tormented the king for a long time.

The king, who finally ended the chaos and brought stability to the kingdom, could only decide today.

The king arranged for his succession.

His heir did not have his own blood, but he was the most reliable person.

He was a wise man, a brilliant manager, and one who knew that the king could return at any time.

After making all his preparations, the king found his friend whom he had not sought for a long time.

His own friend had been waiting for him for a long time, stuck in the scabbard.

[Long time no see, little boy.]

“If you still call me a little boy, you might be thrown into the furnace for insults.”

The sword laughed.

The old king also smiled after a long time.

[Yeah, what’s going on?]

The sword asked as if insignificant.

It’s like asking a friend you separated with just yesterday.

“I’m thinking of wandering again.”

[What about the throne?]

“I left it to someone who was better than me.”

Although he will not be a king who will receive a lot of love and support from the people, he will become a capable king.

He may even be able to lead the kingdom better than the king himself.

On the other hand, the king himself.

He could have saved far more people by walking around the continent with a sword than sitting on a throne and doing government affairs.

To say that an individual's wanderings are more beneficial to the peace of the continent than the government affairs of the kingdom sounds like nonsense at first glance, but it is a different story if the individual's force exceeds the human category.

[Ehyo, if you're tired of being king, just retire and enjoy wealth and glory. Why are you trying so hard again?]

The sword clicked its tongue and said.

But its voice was very bright and light, unlike the words.

"So, would you like to join me? Just like back then when I was still young."

The sword paused for a moment before answering.

[of course.]

The king, no, the boy, now an old man, smiled brightly and put the sword around his waist.

[So, have you decided where to go first?]

The old man answered the sword's question.

"I want to go to the highlands of the Blue Mountains."

[Why there? Did the God of Light give you an oracle?]

"No, that's not it."

The oracle of the God of Light does not come down easily.

Even an old man who had been active as a paladin of the god for a long time had never experienced it a few times.

[Then why do you want to go there, it's just so damn far away.]

“Well, it's just my intuition pointing to it.”

The old man said it was his intuition, and he gave a somewhat absurd answer.

The sword spoke as if he was terrified.

[Intuition? Do you do prophecy now? Do you, by any chance, have some kind of supernatural power?]

“Well, maybe.”

The old man smiled and passed.

He feels that way these days.

He could guess the future.

He sees a place farther than his field of vision.

He can see a person's honest heart.

It was strange, but the old man decided not to care.

He had abilities that might help save people.

“Do you know what lies on the summit plateau of the Blue Mountains?”

asked the old man.

The sword thought it was very fortunate to be able to answer this question.

The eastern end of the continent.

The highlands of the Blue Mountains where human footsteps have been cut off because of their high and rugged nature.

There are races that are separated from the world and live peaceful lives in their own world.

[If the rabbits aren't extinct, it'll be exactly what I remember.]

Side Story 30

The Boy and The Sword (4)

“Ahbooboo.”

[Yes, warrior.]

Ahbooboo replied.

It was a very bright voice.

Maybe it was because he had been chatting for a long time, so I could even feel the freshness in his voice.

“Isn’t the story a bit long?”

[Oh.....]

I thought that he was telling an anecdote about when the God of the Sky was a human.

It was a mistake.

This chatterbox Ahbooboo was recounting the life story of the God of Sky as a human being.

[Should I stop?...?]

Ahbooboo asked.

He wouldn’t be the first to say he’d stop chatting.

He seems to know that the story was too long.

“No, just a little more.”

In my mind, I decided to just rest here today.

I’ve already wasted enough time.

It wasn’t bad to take a day off at all.

More than anything.....

[Haha, are you curious about the next story?]

Yeah, I was curious.

So I wondered what would happen to the old man who had quit being the king.

I kept telling him to cut off the conversation in moderation, but I thought it would be a bit disappointing if it ended here.

“Just tell me he found the rabbits.”

Because I’ll have to listen there.

If I didn’t hear that story, I thought I’d keep wondering and remembering it.

[Yes, he did. Hoho.]

Ahbooboo replied with a low smile.

It was an oddly arrogant laugh.

I felt bad.

[Okay, let’s start the story again.]

I thought as I listened to Ahbooboo’s voice.

It was the idea of the God of Sky and Ahbooboo.

I thought that there was a separate Ahbooboo who was trapped in the tutorial, and the genuine Abutz that the God of the Sky had as his divine object.

But listening to Ahbooboo's story, I changed my mind a bit.

Their relationship was very deep.

To put him in the tutorial, retrieve it, merge it, and treat him as an object.

I continued to be bothered about the strong affection Ahbooboo showed whenever he spoke of the god of the sky.

The two were so close.

But Ahbooboo was in the tutorial.

I came up with a hypothesis.

Maybe the genuine Abutz does not exist.

* * *

"How do you read it?"

The coachman, who had received the nameplate, asked.

"High seeker."

The coachman nodded his head.

The coachman, who returned the nameplate and told him to sit in the back, asked the old man one more thing.

"Are you an adventurer?"

The old man asked why he thought so.

“Because it’s a weird name.”

The old man had nothing to say.

The sword giggled and laughed.

“Why are you having so much fun?”

The old man under the pseudonym High Seeker asked the sword.

[I told you so. Because such a name is tacky. It’s old-fashioned.]

The high seeker wondered whether his pseudonym was tacky.

It didn’t feel that way at all.

Had he spent too much time in the royal palace?

So, did he become an old man who couldn’t get the sympathy of his younger friends?

He tried to question it, but quickly brushed it off.

The mental age of the sword making fun of him was over 100 years old.

It’s not an age issue.

The high seeker looked at his own shortened beard.

It was rough.

The effect of cutting his beard was amazing.

He had been growing his beard for decades, so people didn’t recognize him even though he had only cut his beard short.

Maybe it's because he's wearing travel clothes, not fancy clothes.

The High Seeker, who changed his appearance and prepared his fake nameplate, was heading east of the continent.

As a child, he always walked around saying he would save money, but as an old man, the high seeker decided to compromise very little.

Instead of walking on his two feet, he paid for the carriage and rode it.

It was comfortable.

The coachman who had an extra income was also happy.

[You would have died if you had gone west instead of east.]

“The West?”

The high seeker chatted with his sword while sitting in the carriage.

There was no one other than the high seeker in the car behind the carriage, so he could talk comfortably.

[I wish I had gone to the hall at the western end of the continent.]

Hall at the western end.

The high seeker knew well which place the sword was talking about.

“Are you talking about the temple of goblins?”

The sword once told the high seeker about the place where he studied while he was a human.

[Hmm. If you go there, you will learn a lot.]

said the sword.

It was difficult for the high seeker to agree frankly.

Of course, the temple of goblins, the Shaman Hall is an honorable place that many warriors consider a holy place.

But the high seeker didn't think he could be taught by anyone else.

If it's about shamanism.

[Don't be conceited. You're a superhuman, that's the story of the human world.]

The boy who got old gave the sword a scolding for making a fuss.

* * *

It was a beautiful valley.

It would have been even more so if the valley water had not been stained with dark red blood.

The high seeker pulled the Imoogi's(*) head out of the water, trembling.

The Imoogi inhabiting this valley was famous.

Even as the High Seeker wandered the continent in his childhood, he had never heard a tale of this giant serpent before.

It protected the humans who came to the valley and protected the surrounding villages from landslides and floodings of the valley.

Instead, it was praised as a spirit that protects the mountain, and it was offered human gratitude and various meats through the annual thanksgiving festival.

It was a symbiosis between creatures and humans.

It was a fairy tale and a beautiful story.

That was until the news came that the Imoogi was going crazy with blood and devouring all living things near the mountain.

While heading to the east of the continent, the high seeker heard the rumor and came to the mountain.

As rumored, there was not a single creature larger than a human finger on the mountain.

Humans, wild animals, and even small-sized bugs were completely devoured.

The high seeker, who cut off the body of the blood-crazed giant serpent and pulled his head ashore, asked before killing the Imoogi.

“Why?”

The Imoogi’s eyes turned to the high seeker.

The giant serpent that had its body separated and exhausted all its magical powers and stamina, but still had life attached to it.

The whole reason

“You don’t understand.”

The Imoogi spoke human words.

The humanity felt in that voice made the high seeker even more unpleasant.

“What.”

“I had to eat. I had to. You don’t understand.”

After all, is it a tragedy that the monster’s appetite has created?

Couldn’t the wolf and the sheep be friends forever?

Although coexistence was possible

“It’s not like that, stupid human. I had to become a god.”

“...God?”

The giant serpent uttered words that were not expected at all.

“The world is awakening. We must be gods in case everything returns to the arms of the Great Mother. So I ate it up. More power, higher rank.”

“What...”

Are you talking nonsense, the high seeker who was about to speak hastily stopped.

The giant serpent’s eccentricity is not over yet.

“There is a cause, but no effect, there is emotion, but no affliction. A world is coming where there is no death but no life. In preparation for that, I must ascend to the throne.”

They were completely incomprehensible words.

“What the heck is it that you have to become a god?”

“Things that shine as the only value because they have no value. To be accepted into the world as one, you have to become a god. Because only gods can perceive it.”

After finishing his words, the giant serpent opened its mouth and ran towards the high seeker.

The giant serpent’s head was cut in two and it died.

Now, in the deep mountain valley, there was only the high seeker alive.

“...what did it mean?”

[Well, maybe the apocalypse.]

The sword answered.

The end of the world.

Did the giant serpent want to become a god in order to survive it?

He couldn't figure it out

[Let's just say that the strange snake went crazy and died.]

said the sword.

But the high seeker couldn't get past it.

While he was sitting on the throne, he had heard and heard a lot of news.

There have been a number of anomalies that have increased significantly over the recent decades.

The first was that many divine beings were being born.

As far as the high seeker knows, three objects have already attained the level of a demigod.

It was a surprise.

The birth of a demigod was a miraculous event that only happened once in a thousand years, not ten years.

The second was that such divine beings wanted fear, not respect, and carried out slaughter.

[Did that happen?]

“Yes. Right now, I believe it was similar to when the Great Demon was summoned from the Underworld that we defeated in the past.”

There were an increasing number of beings who wanted to gain greater power and dignity through massacres, human sacrifices, and biological experiments.

It was a chaotic world.

The High Seeker also said that it was the right choice to abandon the throne and leave the palace.

He still had a lot of work to do in the world.

* * *

“What is the plateau like in the Blue Mountains?”

The high seeker asked.

[It’s an amazing place. You can’t go up there by just walking.]

“Is it too high?”

The sword said no.

[Of course, it’s high, but you can’t go up there without a guide. It is forbidden to enter unless you’re rabbits.]

As the high seeker listened to the sword’s explanation, he thought he could just climb up.

It made him curious.

The old man, out of his palace, was slowly regaining the spirit and challenge of his youth.

[If there is sugar on the way, let’s go buy some.]

“Why do you need sugar?”

[Because the rabbits there like sugar]

They were unusual rabbits.

As the sword said, the high seeker bought sugar little by little every time he stopped by the village while heading east.

After traveling, heI was able to arrive at the front of the blue mountain range.

There was a small village at the start of the Blue Mountains.

The high seeker went straight to the mountain range without stopping by the village.

As he followed the sword's guidance as he climbed the mountain, he found a strange stone staircase.

[If you climb these stairs, you can go up to the plateau. Now, let's wait here for a few days and wait for the guide to meet us.]

“Do I have to wait?”

[Hm. The rabbit will come to meet you. Because humans cannot climb alone.]

The high seeker started climbing the stairs without waiting for the rabbit to meet him.

The sword laughed at that sight, but did not stop him.

The high seeker had confidence.

He was able to jump even the highest wall of the continent with one step.

Even in the great desert of the West, if there was enough water, he

had the stamina to cross without a break.

He was no ordinary human.

So the high seeker went up the stairs.

He climbed the stairs, climbed, climbed and rested a bit.

After a short break, the high seeker climbed the stairs again, climbed again, and climbed again.....

“I can’t do it.”

[Right?]

The sword scoffed hard at the high seeker.

Hearing the giggles of laughter, the sword seemed genuinely happy to see the foolishness of the high seeker.

It has been a week since the high seeker started climbing the stairs.

Considering his pace, he should have reached the end of the sky, not the top of the mountain.

The high seeker turned back and started going down the stairs.

In just two hours he was able to get back to where the stairs started.

“...it was a real waste of effort.”

[See, listen to me.]

The high seeker waited for the rabbit guide at the end of the stairs.

But the guide did not come.

As advised by the sword, he sprinkled some sugar in front of the stairs

and waited, but the guide did not come.

[...What is this? I sprinkled sugar. But why doesn't anyone come out?
This can't be happening.]

The bewildered sword murmured.

Editor Note:

(*) Imoogis can be interpreted as lesser dragons or essentially large serpents.

Side Story 31

The Boy and The Sword (5)

[This can't be happening...?!"]

The sword murmured.

Apparently, it was quite a shock.

[No, you mean the rabbits don't come even when they smell the burning sugar? This doesn't make sense!]

The high seeker sighed.

He lifted his head and looked up above him.

He was already on the hillside, but the location of the plateau was obscured by clouds.

It's a really, really high place.

Can the rabbits living there come down with the smell of burning sugar?

It was unlikely.

Even if you burn a corpse instead of sugar here, the smell wouldn't reach there.

[No, the rabbits' obsession with sugar goes beyond common sense, how did this happen.....]

It wasn't that the sword had no idea.

The time when the sword was active as a human is a distant past.

Maybe there was a change here too during that time.

It takes less than a decade for a region to flourish and fall.

In extreme cases, the rise and fall could be different within a year.

Considering the passage of time, it was not difficult to guess that something had changed here.

For whatever reason, the rabbits that live here have become more closed off.

Whether their preference for sugar has declined.

It wasn't strange.

"I don't know what's going on. Let's go back to the village first."

He wasted too much time trying to climb the mountain alone.

He thought he should go back to the village and wash up and rest.

He had to find more food, and he had to ask the villagers how to get to the plateau.

The high seeker returned to the village at the beginning of the Blue Mountains.

It was a small town, but there was one inn.

It was a one-floor inn with a kitchen and a hall, and two small rooms in the corner.

The innkeeper prepared a meal for the high seeker and began to ask questions.

Rather than asking questions for interrogation, it was the peculiar curiosity of rural people.

The high seeker knew it well, too, because he had a lot of experience in the countryside when he was a boy.

Most of the people in the area isolated from the outside by the street were either very indifferent to the outside world, or, conversely, very curious.

The owner of this inn seemed more curious than indifferent.

Fortunately, the high seeker was a person who knew very well about the situation on the continent.

He was able to satisfy the innkeeper's curiosity.

The two quickly became friends.

Maybe it's because they're the same age.

Drinking wine that tastes like vinegar, with the innkeeper, the high seeker inquired about the plateau of the Blue mountains.

"Hahaha, you went up there for a week? In fact, if you live in this town, you must have climbed those stairs at least once. A stubborn person climbs the stairs for two or three days and eventually gives up. It's the first time I've ever seen a person!"

The innkeeper chuckled.

"Somehow, I felt like I could go up."

"Huh, everyone is like that. It's like a world in a mysterious fairy tale. Maybe I could climb it. Everyone must have tried climbing with that idea."

The innkeeper seemed to understand the high seeker's thoughts.

The high seeker asked what he had to do to get to the plateau without the help of the rabbits.

“Well, I’m not sure about that either. There’s no way to get up there without the help of the rabbits.”

The innkeeper affirmed.

The problem was that the rabbits didn’t come down after smelling the sugar.

[Since it’s like this, let’s just go somewhere else. There is no reason to go up to the plateau.]

The sword asked.

It was the sword’s intuition that the High Seeker came to the plateau of the Blue Mountains.

The only reason was that his intuition was stuck to the plateau of the blue mountains marked on the map.

[My intuition has frozen to death. Didn’t you just want to travel to the edge of the continent? If that’s the case, let’s go west again. from the east end to the west end. It’s going to be a pretty good trip. Let’s go to the Shaman Hall at the western end together.]

The sword tried to convince the high seeker.

The high seeker was worried.

About that intuition.

Anomalies were occurring all over the continent.

The Imoogi he met in the valley was one of them.

Recently, there have been many strangely related incidents related to ‘the Godhood’.

There were more and more incidents in which people were reborn as divine beings through training, or commotions were taking place to be reborn as divine beings.

The problem was that in some of these events there were truly divine beings mixed in amongst the absurdities.

The Fairy Queen, the queen of the fairies, has become the lake's guardian deity, and she's been moving the weather of the vicinity as she pleases.

There is also a rumor that the most outstanding one among the goblins of the west became a fighter.

He even confirmed with his own eyes the rumor that the Imoogi of the valley ate people and animals in the forest, then sprouted wings and started flying in the sky.

It was surprising that mere mortals wanted to become gods, even more surprising that they had tangible results.

Three already in one era.

It happened in less than a decade.

Even if it happens once in a thousand years, amazing things are happening in succession in a very short period of time.

The high seeker was concerned.

If more of this is happening.

The most worrisome thing was that the same thing happened to the high seeker himself.

One day, mysterious things were happening to him.

He was experiencing abilities that would not be possible unless he was a truly divine being, rather than simply being a strong superhuman.

He heard people's thoughts.

He predicted the next day's weather.

Once or twice, he dismissed it as just his mood or luck.

It was a phenomenon that could not be explained in words, simply because he was strong or because he was a superhuman.

As soon as the high seeker stepped down from his throne, he went to where his intuition pointed.

He wants to learn more about the mysterious phenomenon that is happening to him.

[Let's go west.]

said the sword.

The high seeker shook his head.

[Why, you can't go up anyway.]

He will be able to climb.

The high seeker thought so.

His own intuition was still pointing to the plateau of the Blue Mountains.

He could feel it.

He knew that someone would be coming to lead him up the plateau.

[It's because I'm getting too old... I'm senile, senile. Or is it dementia?]

The sword was pouring out curse words.

However, the inn's door swung open in spite of the swearing.

The identity of the visitor standing with his back to the sunlight.

it was a rabbit

Long bunny ears hung above the head.

But, except for those ears, it looked no different like a normal person.

Plain travel clothes.

Not only the clothes, but also the eyes, nose, and mouth on the face were nothing different from those of a human being.

It was just the ears.

It was strange that she was carrying a large backpack that looked like it had to be pulled by a cow or a horse rather than a person.

The bunny-eared girl gave the high-seeker look when their eyes met.

“Hng!”

It was a feisty rabbit.

The rabbit, who had snorted, raised its head and strode into the inn.

It would have been if it had not been for the fact that she was carrying a backpack that was three times the width of the inn door.

“Kyang!”

The rabbit, who was walking around without expecting the backpack to get caught on the door of the inn, fell over with a strange sound.

The backpack ruptured and the items inside spilled out.

The high seeker got up to help the rabbit who had fallen, even though he was embarrassed by what had happened because of their eye contact.

Fortunately, the high seeker was able to quickly make friends with the rabbit.

There wasn't any particular reason.

He gave her sugar as the sword had advised, and the rabbit liked it.

The high seeker asked her if she could take him over the plateau after she left.

The rabbit flatly refused.

It was such a firm refusal that he did not even think about asking again.

Instead, the rabbit asked for help on her journey.

The rabbit said she had come down from the plateau and went to the cities of the human continent to get the supplies she needed.

She said she could take him to the plateau if he could guide her to the city.

It wasn't a bad deal.

The high seeker accepted the offer.

The rabbit was also very happy.

It seems that she was feeling anxious about visiting a human city.

The rabbit introduced herself as Kirikiri.

“Ummm...”

Does the story continue this far?

I was listening to it just in case, but in the end, even Kirikiri appeared.

After this, all the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple will come out in attendance.

“What the hell is that planet? All the gods I know are gathered there. It’s a completely stagnant planet.”

It’s not just one or two.

Most of the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple were being talked about as if they were from that planet.

[Many people from there survived.]

Survived, he said.

That was an interesting word.

It’s not just that the planet has produced many gods.

It’s just that many gods from that planet have survived.

I thought that maybe the story of Ahbooboo would go beyond the human days of the God of the Sky and lead to the war of the gods that followed.

[Haha, well, it is true that there were many gods. My hometown is pretty amazing.]

Haha, what do you mean ‘haha’?

Ahbooboo seems to have taken my words of ‘why there are so many gods there’ as a compliment to his hometown.

It was never one.

A neighborhood with a lot of gods can never be a good neighborhood.

Moreover, the times were serious.

It's like a world full of crazy people who are willing to do anything to become a god or a higher deity.

Even before the birth of the Hundred Gods Temple, there will be no system or rule to control the gods.

The high seeker in the story was worried about the arrival of the gods.

But, in my opinion, it's already too late.

Those close to God must have tried to eat mortals on sight to become gods somehow.

Even the vague deity must have been struggling to be reborn as a more powerful deity.

Strong gods eat each other, weak gods eat mortals.

There will be nothing other than hell.

[Yeah, it wasn't like that back then, though. When a little more time passed there, that was a real problem.]

It seemed so.

I got up.

[Are you leaving?]

“Yes.”

Now it was time to move again.

Ahbooboo's story was interesting enough that I was curious about it, but now I really had to move.

[Hey, listen a little more. It's fun. You'll be curious.]

Ahbooboo persuaded me.

Surely, Ahbooboo's story was certainly interesting.

It was very exciting and it did stimulate my curiosity.

But now I have a reason to move quickly.

"I have to settle it as soon as possible."

[Is there really a need to do that?]

There is.

Exactly, it just happened.

"Hochi is here."

I felt Hochi's existence.

I don't know what the hell he was thinking of coming here.

Hochi won't last long here.

Even if Yongyong or Grandma came along.

Even if he no longer comes in from the beginning.

There was a limit to how long he could last.

A week, no matter what.

Now, I couldn't turn back and go save Hochi.

I've come too far for that.

To save Hochi, I had to face forward, not backward.

The God of Order had to be slain before the damn Hochi died here.

“Shit”

I was struggling to death because it was already hard, but I suddenly got a time attack.

Side Story 32

Hochi (5)

A narrow and dark passage.

I felt like I knew where this was.

1st floor of the tutorial.

It looked similar there.

[You have entered the Trial Hall.]

According to Lee Ho-jae's memory, I remember a message saying 'Welcome to the Entry Hall' appearing here.

Again, it didn't look exactly the same as the tutorial.

He entered this space that was created to limit the God of Order so he could approach the God of Order.

Safely.

Although the Old Man was breathing hard and our Yong-yong was crying, no one was hurt in any way.

"Hoo."

A deep sigh came out.

The theme of the first floor of the tutorial was an arrow trap.

Arrows will not fly in the same way from here in the trial hall.

Perhaps much more awaits.

However, the outline structure was the same.

‘For example, there is no danger at the beginning.’

I remembered the information Kirikiri had put in my head.

Looking back at the memories, I shuddered again.

Kirikiri handed over the information about this place.

It was not communicated verbally, nor was I given a handwritten note.

She just put the memory of ‘information’ into my head.

Thanks to this, I was able to recall information about this place in my head as if I knew it originally.

That’s why I remembered the deadliest warning that Kirikiri had ever given.

‘That’s what I designed. But the God of Order must have remodeled it after it got out of my control. Much more deadly’

I felt suffocated.

Judging from the information on the ‘Trial Chapter’ that Kirikiri gave to me, the difficulty level was so extreme that it could literally dismiss the Hell difficulty of the tutorial as a ‘tutorial’.

There must have been a modification from the God of Order added to that.

The purpose of this ordeal was ultimately to subdue the God of Order.

If the God of Order, the target of suppression, touched the difficulty of this place.....

It's obvious.

It must have been made so that it would never be cleared.

Perhaps we may not be able to feel safe even in the beginning.

With that thought in mind, I looked at myself.

My physical condition and magical powers remained the same.

[Eye of the Sky]

[Not available.]

The power could not be used.

The power to borrow the power of another god.

It's not my own divine power, so I thought I might be able to use it.

It wasn't.

[All kinds of divine powers are sealed.]

The message confirmed it.

'All kinds of divinity and divine powers are excluded. The same goes for power. Even if it is not one's own divine power, the power itself is the ability to represent the identity of a certain god.'

Kirikiri's advice that I remembered in my head said the same thing.

Does that mean I have to get through this place without divinity?

I sighed again.

"Old Man."

The old man lifted his head and looked at me.

“Are you okay? How are you?”

“It’s okay.”

The Old Man said so with a face that didn’t look all right.

“It’s just that I consumed too much power. If I rest a little, I’ll be fine.”

Surely Old Man has consumed a lot of energy.

In the days of being a god, no matter how much power was consumed, it could have been restored casually, but now the Old Man that has lost godhood will be fatally exhausted.

“Yong-yong...”

I was going to ask if he was okay.

I didn’t think there was any need to ask the crying child with his face in my chest if he was okay.

Yong-yong wasn’t okay.

I barely managed to stop sighing again.

Kirikiri didn’t let us go well.

Kirikiri, who was talking with Yong-Yong, said she would check something and suddenly tried to attack me.

I couldn’t even respond and stood dumbfounded, but Old Man and Yongyong were different.

They immediately blocked Kirikiri and counterattacked.

It was a gruesome sight.

A battle that was difficult for me to understand continued.

Kirikiri defeated all obstacles and eventually succeeded in attacking me.

Twice.

Kirikiri's golden blade, which cut the lava giant sword of Old Man in two and annihilated all the illusions summoned by Yong-yong, did no harm to me.

The second time she swung the golden blade at me, the golden blade broke instead of ripping through my body.

‘Undying mortals.....’

Kirikiri muttered like that.

And she sent us here.

What did it mean

Is it the same as the story that Yong-yong kept telling me that I have no causality?

I couldn't figure it out

What is certain is that none of our party was injured.

But the Old Man was very tired, and Yong-yong was upset.

“Yong-yong, it's okay. Stop crying.”

I patted Yongyong on the back.

Yong-yong couldn't stop crying.

Like a little child, he was sobbing quietly, exhausted from crying.

He mumbled sometimes.

“...Kirikiri is naughty.”

Yes, she is naughty.

Who knew she would attack so suddenly.

“I’ll scold her...”

Yong-yong, I think that would be a bit difficult.

She was a lot stronger than I thought.

She wasn’t just a rabbit who likes cakes.

The battle between Yong-yong, Old Man, and Kirikiri was immense.

It’s hard enough for me to understand properly.

But I could see who took the initiative in the battle and who had the upper hand.

In the end, Kirikiri overcame Yong-yong and Old Man’s interference and succeeded in attacking me.

I still have the feeling of the golden blade hitting my neck.

I was appalled.

Yong-yong continued to pour out his resentment towards Kirikiri.

They weren’t bloody words, they were just the kind of stories a child who had been taken away would whine about.

“Yong-yong liked Kirikiri though.”

“No.”

No? What is it?

Every time they met, they held hands and went round and round and liked each other.

“No, I hated her from the start!”

So, that must have been the case.

“It’s true. Sniff.”

As Yong-yong was talking, he raised his cries again, probably because of his sorrow.

As soon as he got his energy back, he started crying again.

A very loud wailing.

“Dad hates Kirikiri too!”

Yong-yong shouted loudly.

I don’t think so.

I hugged Yong-yong tightly.

I knew why Yong-yong was crying so sadly.

It wasn’t that he was suddenly attacked.

It wasn’t even because he was betrayed by Kirikiri, whom he was close with.

In order to prevent Kirikiri’s attack, Yongyong was forced to reveal his true self.

Not the appearance of a small child, but the appearance of a dragon that has matured.

Yong-yong hates showing his true self.

From a young age, he thought he was strictly a child, but as time passed, that aspect became more prominent.

He hadn't been a hatchling since he learned polymorphing and took human form.

However, by blocking Kirikiri, Yong-yong had to reveal himself.

In the end, Yong-yong, who revealed his true self during the battle, continued to look at me.

Thanks to that, there was a gap.

A gap that was clear enough for me to notice.

Kirikiri dug into that gap and stabbed me with the blade she swung.

Maybe that's why.

Why is Yong-yong crying?

"Uncle, I'm sorry..."

As expected.

It was a kind of guilt.

I was going to tell him that I'm fine.

"I'm not cute..."

"Uh.....?"

"I'm not cute. I'm sorry, Uncle..."

Yong-yong said that, and he started crying again.

This time he bawled his eyes out.

I'm sorry I'm not cute.

Then, who is this cute child who is cuddling and crying in my arms?

I stopped trying to tell Yong-yong, 'No, Yong-yong is cute'.

We, Ho-jae and I always told Yong-yong that he was cute.

Because he was actually cute.

However, the compliments we gave to Yong-Yong at that time were not just compliments.

Yong-yong's existence at that time was hope, salvation, and rest for us.

It was more desperate than warmth.

We hoped that this little one could guide us.

Perhaps the word cute for Yong-yong was not just a compliment, but more like a compulsion that he should be like this.

Each time, I thought of the burden this child must have felt, even if it was late.

I have felt the same pressure.

At that time, I hated the burden and ran away.

I felt guilty and sorry.

I hugged Yong-yong even tighter.

"Yong-yong, you don't have to worry. Dad and Uncle love Yong-yong. It's not because you're cute, but because you're Yong-yong."

I don't know.

How will my heart be conveyed?

I hugged Yong-yong and comforted him.

Yong-yong was a blessing to us by his very existence.

I also wanted to remain that kind of person to Yong-yong.

He will always be by my side, a good family I can trust.

“So don't worry.”

Yong-yong's breathing slowly calmed down.

“...and Yong-yong is cute.”

This was the eternal truth.

It will be the same even if our Yong-yong becomes a giant dragon bigger than Mount Tai.

Yong-yong fell asleep.

I shook him slightly, but there was no sign of getting up.

“Is he asleep?”

Old Man asked.

I nodded.

“Hmm...”

The Old Man, who had been silently watching from the side, raised his hand and patted Yong-yong on the back once or twice.

Then he lifted his hand again and leaned against the wall as if nothing had happened.

When I looked at the Old Man, he coughed and avoided my gaze.

As Yong-yong fell asleep, the atmosphere suddenly became quiet.

There were uninvited guests who seemed to not like the atmosphere.

It was a spider.

Of course, spiders aren't a threat in themselves, but those spiders are a little different.

First of all, it is the size of a human being, and it fills the walls and ceilings with their large numbers.

The problem was that the spiders had golden blades of familiar colors attached to the tips of their paws.

Isn't that what Kirikiri was wielding?

Last problem.

Kwakwakwakwang!

A shock wave hit my body.

I had to roll myself and Old Man on the floor.

Protecting the sleeping Yong-yong, I quickly got up from my spot.

Shit.

The peaceful hallway suddenly turned into hell.

The terrible magic felt from the spiders made us realize what kind of disaster they were.

There are a lot of people who can destroy the world with just one attack.

‘A dimensional species of spider that inhabit the dimensional rift. There is no threat of a surprise attack because a shock wave is generated when they tear through the dimension, but because they are monsters that survive the pressure of the dimension gap... It’s just very risky.’

Kirikiri’s information replayed in my head.

Among Kirikiri’s information, there was no mention of the golden blades on the front paws of those spiders.

This means that it is a setting added by the God of Order.

“How long does it take for the child to wake up!”

Old Man asked.

“I don’t know!”

I really don’t know.

Yong-yong was still a hatchling’s age.

Hatchlings can’t control their sleep.

Ho-jae reduced the sleep time as much as possible with a magical treatment, but it did not completely eliminate the sleep time.

Of course, if I force him to wake up, I can wake him up.

Because Yong-yong wasn’t the usual hatchling.

However.

I didn’t want to push the child who still wanted to remain a child.

I handed Yong-yong to the Old Man.

Old Man hugged Yong-Yong in an awkward way.

Old Man has not yet regained his power.

Yong-yong is asleep.

“What are you going to do!”

Ignoring the Old Man’s cry, I moved forward.

Undying mortal.

Those who do not belong to the causal category.

What those words meant, I understood.

One day Ho-jae said

‘You are me. At the same time, you are not, I don’t know how this happened, but you’re important anyway.’

The spiders began to approach me, releasing hostile magical energy as I approached them.

I had no powers, and the magical powers that I had were not particularly special here.

It was self-explanatory what I had to do to fight those monsters.

I didn’t want it to look like this.

But now that Yong-yong is upset for the same reason, I can’t just keep holding on to my weakness.

‘I’m sorry, but you are nothing. Fortunately, you can be anything.’

Ho-jae said.

‘But why do you keep imitating me? Do you feel bad? Do you want to die?’

Well, you damn bastard.

I once again cursed Ho-jae in my memory.

Okay, it’s time to put this down for a while.

Ho-jae’s face, Ho-jae’s body shape, everything started moving with him and my body.

Soon my body was out of human form.

To defeat the enemy, I had to become the most powerful being I knew.

It wasn’t hard to remember.

The Old Man said, Kirikiri’s golden blade is the same as that of the God of Order.

In appearance and performance.

The God of Order was said to be a machine god with numerous blades and mechanical legs with blades attached to them.

I had never seen it with my own eyes, but it was enough information to imitate.

[Kieek-]

The cries of spiders.

Even those little creatures were perplexed.

I imitated the golden mechanical god, said to have transcended all gods.

Side Story 33

Kirikiri (1)

Kirikiri was squatting.

She was about to jump, but then she shook her head.

The ground around her had been dug out too much for her to run around.

“Oh dear.”

The uprooted flower by her side as she sat in a squat was pushed by the wind and rolled over.

Kirikiri picked up the flowers and buried them well in the ground.

She patted the ground so that the wind wouldn't blow it away again.

Kirikiri looked around.

It was a gruesome sight.

The soil was dug up, the grass was uprooted and swept away by the wind.

The hill disappeared, and a huge pit was dug in its place.

It was unknown how long it would take the fields to regain their original shape.

Kirikiri was upset.

A field like this reminds her of her bad past.

It's been a long time since she became a god.

But the painful memories of the past are still not erased.

She may not be able to forget the memories because she has become a god.

Also, perhaps because it is her memory of the day she was reborn as a god, it may not be forgotten even more deeply.

Kirikiri picked up the soil around her and patted it to fill the dug up ground.

She did not know how long it would take for the fields to return to their original peaceful appearance.

Kirikiri let out a sigh.

The resistance from Yong-yong and the lava giant was fierce.

The lava giant on the 61st floor showed the ability to far exceed the power on the 61st floor, even though he lost his divinity.

In Yong-yong's case.....

She could understand why Lee Ho-jae showed strange confidence every time he talked about Yong-yong.

That wasn't the ability of a hatchling under 100 years old.

Kirikiri shuddered slightly.

Her ears fluttered.

[God.]

someone has called

Kirikiri soon noticed who the owner of the voice was.

There weren't many beings who called her a god.

[I'm here after being called.]

Kisearin.

A dragon who acts as an advisor to challengers in the second half of the 50th floor.

The 50th floor section is a section where the challenger recognizes the apostles, the godhood, and the origin.

It can be said that it is one of the most important sections, so she placed Kisearin as an advisor there.

The identity of that dragon was a challenger who had cleared the previous tutorial Hell difficulty and was chosen by Kirikiri.

A challenger from Hell difficulty who was cultivated to clear the Trial Hall, but couldn't be put into the Trial Hall because the Trial Hall was too dangerous.

Kirikiri's original plan was to gather several challengers like Kisearin and bring them together to challenge the Trial Hall.

It was a plan with a slim chance of success as the ordeal was changed dangerously by the God of Order.

It was a plan that became useless as the irregular Lee Ho-jae came out.

"I'm sorry."

Kirikiri apologized to the dragon.

When Hochi and Yong-yong insisted that they enter the ordeal without breaking their stubbornness.

Kirikiri was going to accompany Kisearin.

That dragon was well aware of the trial hall.

Because it was raised for that.

She believed he could play a great guide.

“They went in first.”

Hochi, Yongyong, and the lava giant on the 61st floor went in without even waiting for a guide.

Perhaps they are too powerful to be guided by the dragon.

The two are gods or beings who were gods.

One was a mysterious existence that escaped causality.

No, the reason they didn't wait for the guide was not because of their strength.

It was because of Kirikiri.

Because she attacked their party, the guide she prepared was also uncomfortable, so they went in on their own.

After hearing that Hochi was out of causality, Kirikiri tried to check it out herself.

Somehow, she tried to attack Hochi herself.

Immediately, the dragon and the lava giant stopped them, and there was a battle.

A battle to the extent that her holy land was devastated.

At the end of the battle, Kirikiri was finally able to reach Hochi.

The result was this.

Golden metal shards were scattered around.

A golden blade that destroys all ideals and enforces only established principles.

The golden blade, feared by all gods in the world, shattered as soon as it touched Hochi's neck.

Yong-yong's words were true.

Hochi had no causality.

If someone is stabbed by the golden blade, they're just stabbed.

No god could escape from that truth.

He does not twist causality, but stands outside the boundaries of causality.

A body that exists as a separate entity.

It was a strange being.

[Then I.....]

The dragon, who was quietly waiting for an answer, said.

“Go back.”

[All right.]

The dragon quietly retreated.

He seemed rather relieved.

He has been preparing for the trial hall for a long time, but he

probably won't want to go into it.

Those who went there on their own feet are strange.

Lee Ho-jae, who went in alone to save the world, and Hochi and Yong-yong, who just went to see their family.

Kirikiri thought she was a little jealous.

She was a little envious.

Even though there is a risk of death, there are family members who come to see him just because they want to see him.

Kirikiri scratched behind her ear.

She also had a family.

Her family were all buried under these fields when her adventures began.

It was childish and lowly jealousy.

Kirikiri shook her head.

What is important now is that a variable that even Kirikiri herself cannot predict has entered the ordeal.

Kirikiri predicted that Hochi, Yong-yong, and the Lava Giant would die with a high probability.

Of course, Hochi is an exception.

However, immortality was not useful in all situations.

When they were subdued by the God of Order,

Hochi may experience more pain than death.

Nevertheless, Kirikiri stood by them.

She warns of the danger, but doesn't dislike the fact that she eventually opened the door.

Because of the variable.

She had to put in variables to twist the fortune-telling.

And now she has put the best variable.

Kirikiri once again prepared fortune-telling.

She prepared a smooth stone rolling on the floor.

The straight pedestal she had previously used was shattered by Yong-yong.

She put a pearl on a stone, and struck it down with another stone.

The remains of the pearl informed Kirikiri of the fortune-telling.

It was a terrible thing.

* * *

The hind legs of rabbits are longer than the forelimbs.

It is rather long compared to the body.

It is normally folded, but when running forward, the legs are straightened, allowing them to leap far.

Kirikiri watched the children run and play through the window.

They were running well.

When they squat, their long legs fold up, and when they run again, it

stretches out like a spring.

Her feet were chubby.

Kirikiri looked down at her own feet.

She had short, white feet.

There was no fur.

Just above her feet were her ankles, followed by her calves.

It wasn't long for her to recognize her knee.

The knee was bent like a rabbit, but it was clearly different from the rabbit's leg joints.

Above all, it was too long.

It wasn't a rabbit's leg, it was a human leg.

Kirikiri scratched behind her ear.

She looked out the window, made sure there were no people around the house, and squatted down.

She jumped and jumped.

Like a rabbit.

She unfortunately couldn't do anything as far as the rabbit.

Moreover, after only a few squats, her knees quickly got tired.

She also had a hard time balancing.

Kung kung!

It was a knock on the door.

Kirikiri stood up in surprise.

She opened the door and saw the lady next door.

The lady next door was holding a package of food.

The aunt gave the package to Kirikiri and told her to deliver it to the neighborhood a little bit higher.

Today's food delivery was the lady's job.

When Kirikiri asked about that, the aunt said that the neighbors a little further up said that Kirikiri had to deliver the food today.

It was strange.

Kirikiri took the bag and headed a little further up town.

Her hometown consisted of three villages.

She lives in the downstairs neighborhood.

It was a neighborhood where young rabbits who usually prepare food by gathering fruits and vegetables from the mountains lived together.

Next up is upstairs.

It is a town where a lot of old rabbits live and artisans who make clothes and make wooden furniture live.

Finally, a little bit higher.

This was a town where rabbits who saw divinations and conducted prayers for the tribal gods lived there.

Neither fruits nor herbs can be found in the upper town, which is high

in the mountains.

The downstairs neighborhood had to prepare food and send it to them.

Kirikiri was able to get to the neighborhood a little further up.

The priest rabbit was there to meet her.

“Hello, Miss Kirikiri!”

“How are you, Sir Hara.”

Hara, the rabbit in charge of the priesthood, was already over 200 years old.

On the outside, he looked like a child.

Hara pointed to the sack that Kirikiri was holding, and asked what was in it.

Kirikiri knew what kind of answer Hara wanted.

It means what is the sweetest thing in the bag.

“Carrot.”

Carrots are sweet.

Carrots grown in the alpine region were small and unobtrusive, but they were sweet enough.

Hara jumped and asked for one carrot.

“One for me!”

“No. You have to eat together at mealtime.”

Kirikiri refused, raising her arms and placing the sack over her head.

Hara continued to jump and try to get his hands on the bundle, but he couldn't take it from Kirikiri, who was almost twice as tall.

It wasn't that Hara was short.

Kirikiri was exceptionally large.

It was big enough to not look like the same rabbit.

If Kirikiri doesn't have rabbit ears on her head, people would believe she's a human and not a rabbit.

Kirikiri and Hara entered the priest's residence.

She placed the bag of food in the corner and asked.

"You can't eat it by yourself again. Eat it together later."

"Okay. Hehe."

It was a purely sinister laugh.

"Come over here for a moment."

Hara grabbed Kirikiri's hand and led her somewhere.

Still, Kirikiri was curious as to why she had to come today, so she meekly followed Hara's instructions.

The place that Hara took Kirikiri was the innermost part of the priest's residence, where he could see the divinations.

Kirikiri had also been there a few times.

But it had a slightly different impression than the last time she visited.

What was the point?

“Oh my God... what is all this, Sir Hara.”

It was just that the room was too messy.

The floor was littered with white shards.

It looked like white sand.

“Is this... a pearl?”

“That’s right.”

Pearls are gems used by priests for fortune-telling.

Usually about three are used a year, but looking at the rubble on the floor now, it looks like at least hundreds of them are cracked.

“The pearls are all gone, so I guess I’ll have to buy a new one.”

Hara said, looking at Kirikiri.

“I think you should buy it.”

“Yeah... someone has to buy it.”

Pearls were essential gems for rabbits.

And it was a gem that could not be obtained on the mountain.

Someone has to go down the mountain to get the jewels.

It was understandable that that someone would be Kiriki.

It would be better for Kirikiri to go than for other rabbits to go.

Kirikiri herself thought so.

“You have to leave today.”

Kirikiri stopped at those words.

“Tomorrow... is the festival?”

Tomorrow is the day to hear the voice of the tribal god once in ten years.

It was the biggest festival for rabbits, and it was a very meaningful festival.

“You have to leave today.”

Hara said sternly.

* * *

Hara said it was a gift to Kirikiri, who was confused, and looked at the fortune-telling with the last remaining pearl.

A new start.

It was good fortune telling, and he urged her to leave the village immediately while the fortune telling remained.

Kirikiri was upset and burst into tears, but she could not disobey the priest's words.

She returned to her own home in the lower neighborhood to pack up for the trip.

The priest Hara sat down again.

He sighed heavily.

Perhaps the poor Kirikiri thought he was kicking her out of town before the festival to ostracize her.

Hara looked back at the fortune telling he had last seen in the wreckage of the shattered pearl.

Hara said it was a very lucky fortune telling.

It was a lie.

It was a bizarre fortune telling.

The same meaning was repeated over and over.

It was a fortune telling that a new life would begin for Kirikiri.

The fortune-telling in a positive sense was correct.

However, the new direction of life to unfold for Kirikiri did not point to a positive meaning.

The future of Kirikiri, which the fortune teller was talking about.

It was a terrible thing.

Side Story 34

Kirikiri (2)

Kirikiri was an unfortunate rabbit.

She herself thought so.

Perhaps the most unfortunate rabbit in the world,

Throughout the past and the future.

It was a belief that she always had.

Today, on the eve of the festival, she was kicked out of town, and her belief was confirmed.

Kirikiri was an unfortunate rabbit.

Kirikiri was well aware of the use of pearls and their importance.

But the day she has to go on a trip to the human city to get pearls, why does it have to be today, the day before the festival?

She didn't even know why the priest Hara shattered hundreds of pearls in a matter of days, which was normally enough for ten years.

Kirikiri thought that the priest Hara may have deliberately kicked her out of the village.

Because they can't keep an ominous rabbit like her in the town where the festival is held.

It was a baseless suspicion, but she also had no basis to deny the suspicion.

She left the village with a backpack the size of her own body, full of travel items.

As she went down the stairs outside the village in sorrow, her eyes turned bright red several times and she could see a few blurry faces...

She kept sniffing, trying to hold back the tears, but the tears eventually broke out.

As she sat down on the stairs and cried, the sun was setting.

Looking at the sunset, Kirikiri thought,

I want to go home right now.

I'll make some sort of excuse for something.

'It's too late, so I'll leave tomorrow!'

She wanted to find some reason not to go.

Naturally.

Get a good night's sleep and leave tomorrow after the festival is over.

She wished that she could do so.

But Kirikiri could not disobey the priest's orders.

She eventually started going down the stairs again.

She had to go down the mountain until the sun went down completely.

At the entrance to the village, at the end of the stairs, there was a pot.

Kirikiri, who was walking down the stairs in a daze, couldn't find the pot.

Eventually she stepped on the pot and fell.

Fortunately, the pot was not hot.

The pot was half-burnt and full of sugar.

It was precious sugar, but Kirikiri fell on it and overturned everything.

The sugar was mixed with the soil.

Other rabbits would start eating the sugar regardless of the dirt, but Kirikiri didn't.

Instead, she became even more depressed when she recalled her situation while looking at the mixture of dirt and sugar.

Her backpack was falling down the hillside.

It looks like she dropped it when she fell.

Kirikiri sighed as she looked at the backpack that was rolling down in the distance.

Kirikiri went down the hillside to pick up her backpack.

If it had been another rabbit, she would have jumped down, but Kirikiri had to crawl down gently so as not to fall down again and fall down the hillside.

Human limbs were not suitable for climbing mountains.

Fortunately, the backpack was rescued without any problems.

When she got her backpack back, the problem was that the sun had completely disappeared from the sky. It was night.

It became difficult to go down the road.

She had to walk, relying on the moonlight, carefully watching the ground.

After walking like that for a while, her feet hurt so much.

She stopped and looked at the soles of her feet.

It was dirty with dirt and bits of grass.

When she brushed it off, the soles of her feet were swollen.

When she went to the human city, she felt like she had to get shoes first.

There is no need for shoes in the village.

The roads in the village were so well-made that even Kirikiri, who had soft and fragile soles, could walk around with confidence.

Of course, the other rabbits won't need shoes outside of town either.

Their feet were strong enough to hop around on a rocky field.

She made shoes by wrapping the soles of her feet with large leaves and tying them with tree trunks.

She started walking again, stuttering.

As she walked, she arrived at the human village.

After thinking for a while, Kirikiri entered the village.

It was too late to see the way, and she was too tired.

She seemed to prefer to sleep in the village rather than in the camp.

The small town had neither walls nor doors.

The smart Kirikiri remembered the human language she learned from her parents as a child.

She soon found a building that said it was an inn.

As soon as she stood in front of the inn door, Kirikiri became anxious.

In fact, this was the first time Kirikiri had left the village alone.

Because she was so sad that she had been kicked out of town she had forgotten about her other worries, but then they finally came rushing back.

She wasn't even sure if she could safely go to the human city with just one map.

She was also worried that she might meet a scary person.

A long time ago, her father said, "Humans are different on the outside, and there are many lies in their words."

And he proved that to her.

By leaving Kirikiri in the village and disappearing alone.

The village's older rabbits said that a good man impresses even the heavenly gods with his goodness, but an evil man, like a full-bodied bear, deceives and harms those who are weaker than him for no reason.

Kirikiri was determined.

She thought that if she showed strength, the humans would not see her in vain, nor would they dare to deceive or harm her.

Just then, a human voice came from beyond the door.

Kirikiri slammed the door open.

The man inside the inn looked at Kirikiri and the loud sound of the door.

It was the High Seeker who stayed in the hall drinking wine even though the innkeeper had gone to sleep.

Kirikiri, who made eye contact with the high seeker, snorted loudly.

“Hng!”

Then, she moved into the inn with confidence.

It would have been if her backpack hadn’t hung on the inn door, and she hadn’t tripped over.

“Kyang!”

* * *

It was a rather embarrassing encounter.

Kirikiri picked up the items from the high seeker and put them in her backpack, she could feel her face burning red.

Kirikiri adhered to a wary attitude towards the high seeker, but the high seeker accepted it all with a smile.

The two quickly became friends.

The vigilance of the rabbit was too shallow.

Just by listening carefully and giving a little sugar as a gift, the alertness disappeared.

“You’re a really nice person!”

Kirikiri was convinced.

She thought that the high seeker was a good person, and that good people were trustworthy.

She took the sugar the high seeker gave her and ate it without any doubt.

She dipped her fingers in sugar and sucked them up.

It wasn't as much as the other rabbits, but Kirikiri also liked sweets.

Perhaps it is a geographical reason rather than a characteristic of the rabbits.

It is difficult to find sweets on the plateau.

At least a bit of a bitter raspberry.

It was not strange that the rabbits who were used to eating bitter grass liked sweet things.

[It's strange, the rabbits I know didn't look like that.]

The quiet sword whispered to the high seeker.

The sword said, the rabbit on the plateau, is a beast much closer to a rabbit than a human being.

However, the Kirikiri in front of them was a beast that had no difference from a human except for her rabbit ears.

The high seeker thought he'd ask later when he had the chance, so he saved the question posed by the sword for later.

The conversation eventually led to the purpose of the high seeker's trip.

The high seeker said he wanted to climb the plateau, speaking frankly.

Kirikiri clapped her hands and said.

“Sugar!”

“Sugar?”

“The sugar pot in front of the stairs!”

Kirikiri remembered the pot left in front of the stairs.

She tripped herself and fell.

The high seeker burned sugar to summon the rabbits, but they didn't respond, so he left it alone.

“Heheng, that's the old way.”

“Is that so?”

Kirikiri explained.

“In the past, humans could be invited with sugar. Not these days.”

It was just as the sword had told the high seeker.

[Look, I was right. In the past, you could enter only with sugar.]

The High Seeker asked Kirikiri why the rabbits no longer allowed humans.

As the high seeker who had to climb the plateau, he had to know why.

“We don't invite humans anymore.”

Kirikiri said with a suddenly darkened face.

“They make a family in the village and then suddenly leave. Our village is too boring for humans. If they disappear like that, all the remaining rabbits will be sad.”

Kirikiri quickly became pale.

The high seeker looked at the sword unconsciously.

The sword was silent, not saying anything.

The high seeker didn't ask in detail.

He asked why she had left the town instead.

Kirikiri meekly said she had some things to get in the human city, and the high seeker volunteered to guide her.

In return, he said he would like to visit the village for a while.

After thinking for a while, Kirikiri accepted the offer.

Other rabbits wouldn't like to invite humans, but she thought it would be okay if it was just to watch for a while rather than settle down.

Kirikiri was delighted.

She has a good human friend who leads the way to the human city.

Kirikiri gulped and drank the wine that the high seeker poured.

She hated it because it was bitter at first, but when she added a little honey, she got excited and started drinking it.

“Heheng.”

Kirikiri felt better.

Kirikiri, who was drunk for the first time, was excited and began to unpack her story.

Kirikiri, who had confided her words, quickly slammed her forehead onto the table and fell asleep.

The high seeker laid Kirikiri on the bed in the room he had reserved, and then went back to the inn's hall and started drinking the remaining wine.

The high seeker thought about the stories Kirikiri was talking about while drunk.

[As far as I know, the fortune-telling of rabbits has two meanings. The degree and direction of luck.]

Kirikiri says, was given a fortune telling signifying a new beginning.

She didn't tell him the extent of that luck.

[It's obvious when they tell you the direction of your luck, but if they hadn't told you about the extent of it, it'd be obvious, well, you've had a lot of bad luck.]

And Kirikiri was told that the priest had ordered her to go on a trip the day before the festival.

[If bad luck strikes, it's worth sending out on the eve of the festival. How anxious they would be if there was a person with great bad luck in that sacred festival.]

He thought it was too much though.

The high seeker felt sad as he heard Kirikiri drunk.

He could see how heartbroken she was because she had been absent from the festival.

[Because it is an important day. It is to face the god of the race of beasts. Say hello to that god and talk to each other. Talk about what has happened in the past, and discuss what will happen in the future. It is the most important day politically, religiously, and emotionally.]

It's a face to face with God.

The High Seeker wondered what it would be like if there was a festival where he could face the God of Light.

It's going to be a mess.

Some devotees may go crazy and say let's burn the continent to celebrate.

If it were the brothers and sisters of the church that he knew, it would be more than that.

[Anyway, be careful. If she received the fortune-telling of bad luck as she expected, and if she was sent out before the festival, all sorts of dog shit things will happen to that rabbit from tomorrow.]

It seems that what the sword wanted to say was this request.

The high seeker nodded his head saying he knew.

He thought that he might have met the rabbit at the inn, perhaps it was good luck.

Any misfortune can be prevented.

It was an illusion.

The next morning, the greatest misfortune began with the high seeker.

Side Story 35

Kirikiri (3)

“Uhhhhh.....!”

As soon as she opened her eyes in the morning, Kirikiri was tormented by a headache that seemed to crack her head.

The High Seeker was surprised to see that.

He's never seen anyone in the world suffering from a hangover after drinking two glasses of wine.

‘It’s because she’s a rabbit.’

The High Seeker became a little regretful.

Had he known this, he would not have recommended wine.

He poured it little by little for her to taste it.

“Ukukeuk...!”

In the wake of the morning commotion, the innkeeper, who was sleeping in the room, came out alone.

As soon as the innkeeper saw Kirikiri, he was greatly moved.

The owner of the inn, who grew up hearing stories about rabbits from an early age, was amazed that a rabbit stayed overnight in his inn.

He had come late in the morning, so after hearing the High Seeker's explanation that he had given him his room, he nodded his head saying that it was really good.

The innkeeper, who had been searching the kitchen for a while, left to visit the market.

In the inn hall, only Kirikiri and the High Seeker were left.

Kirikiri gripped her fiery hair and suffered, but did not lift her vigilant gaze from the High Seeker.

The High Seeker laughed inwardly.

She was observing himself with an openly suspicious eye, so she looked funny rather than offensive.

To him, it was like seeing a child pretending to be very serious.

The High Seeker was worried.

He thought they had become close enough yesterday morning, but that rabbit's vigilance was quickly restored.

‘What should I do?’

The High Seeker was worried.

Do we have to be friends again from the beginning?

He gave away all his sugar yesterday.

What should he give her this time?

When the High Seeker was struggling with such a thing, he saw the sword calling out.

[Uh-huh, this is why you're single even when you're old.]

He suddenly hit the pit of the High Seeker's stomach.

[Look carefully at what I can do!]

The sword was full of confidence.

The High Seeker handed the sword to Kirikiri as the sword had said.

The High Seeker thought it was a good opportunity anyway.

If she was going to accompany him, she should know the sword as well.

Otherwise, she may see himself talking to the sword from time to time and mistake him for a strange person.

Kirikiri looked at him with puzzled eyes, asking why he suddenly pulled out his sword.

She was very suspicious.

As soon as Kirikiri took the sword, she was startled.

As soon as she grabbed the sword, a voice began to ring in her head.

[Heyyo! I'm Aubutz hing! Nice to meet chuu!]

It was a lively greeting.

Kirikiri was startled and frozen for a moment, then looked at the High Seeker with strange eyes.

To avoid misunderstandings, the High Seeker had to explain that it was not his own ventriloquy

Kirikiri's strange eyes moved towards the sword again.

"Is the person in here a rabbit by any chance?"

Kirikiri asked.

The High Seeker told her that the sword spirit contained within the

ego sword was of ordinary human origin.

Kirikiri returned the sword with an uneasy expression.

“Eh... tell him my name is Kirikiri. To that... human sword.”

The High Seeker shrugged and took the sword with embarrassment.

[.....]

The sword was also silent for a long time, as if embarrassed.

* * *

High Seeker and Kirikiri were able to become friends again soon.

It wasn't a big trigger.

While eating the food prepared by the innkeeper, they became friends while he taught her how to use a knife and fork.

The rabbit quickly regained vigilance, but it was easy to get acquainted again.

The two had a conversation.

It was a story about travel.

He looked at the map, checked the route to the city, and calculated the time it took.

For the most part, the High Seeker explained, and Kirikiri nodded her head in agreement.

The High Seeker asked Kirikiri how she was planning to purchase pearls.

Pearls are precious gems.

It was unlikely that a rabbit living on an empty plateau would be able to purchase several pearls.

[Idiot, all rabbits are rich.]

The sword said to the High Seeker.

As if to prove that statement, Kirikiri took out a large stone from her bag.

“I can buy it with this.”

The thing that Kirikiri took out proudly was shining blue.

It was a magic crystal.

“Is this enough?”

“Yes, that will be enough.”

The High Seeker could be sure.

The magic crystal that Kirikiri drew out was very large.

Even the High Seeker had never seen such a large magic crystal.

‘If that is released in the market, the magic towers will be in an uproar.’

To the wizards, magic crystals were like extra lives.

In order to obtain that crystal, wizards would happily sacrifice their disciples’ lives, if not their own.

He’ll have to think carefully about where to sell the magic crystal.

He looked around.

The innkeeper was watching the hall.

Neighborhood children watching Kirikiri while clinging to the outside of the inn window.

They all had eyes to see.

The High Seeker told Kirikiri to put the magic crystal in the bag.

It is said that it is better not to show it outside as much as possible.

It is not good to blindly doubt people you do not know, but it is also bad to believe blindly.

The wisest thing to do is not to give the people around them the opportunity and circumstances to become evil.

Kirikiri said the trip had no deadline, but the High Seeker wanted to get the pearl and return as soon as possible.

His intuition was still on that plateau.

Rejecting the innkeeper's request to make Kirikiri's portrait, the two left the inn.

It would be convenient to ride a horse-drawn carriage like when the High Seeker came here, but there were no horse-drawn carriages in this small town.

The carriage the High Seeker was riding in had already gone back.

So they walked a little out of town.

Kirikiri was depressed as she looked back at the village and the green mountain ranges that were gradually moving away.

Even then, when she saw the sunshine for the first time, she realized that she liked the light.

The High Seeker soon learned that this rabbit was simply very emotional.

“Huhuhu, stop.”

It was a bandit.

A bandit appeared as if it was natural.

‘If you want to live, give up all you have!’ They didn’t say anything like that.

The boss who smiles slyly.

There were a few grunting bastards following the boss.

Some were holding weapons with tense faces.

They knew.

The fact that Kirikiri has expensive jewels.

It was clear that they had been chasing the two of them from the village.

Considering the weapons they had, it wasn’t a big deal.

A long stick attached to a sickle.

An axe whose blade resembles ones that had been diligently cutting down trees until this morning.

There was also a hammer.

The High Seeker sighed.

It is not easy to meet a thief in such a remote place.

A robbery basically requires the presence of a victim to be established.

Even if they want to be a robber in a very deserted place, they couldn't be.

Their occupation could not be robbery.

A woodcutter who lived in a nearby village, a hunter, and a farmer plowing the fields.

They must have impulsively heard about a man and a woman holding a large jewel in the village.

Maybe this isn't the first time.

But it must have been like that in the beginning.

An impulsive crime.

The High Seeker was worried.

He doesn't know how to deal with them

If he was young, he might have subdued them and then given them a whole bunch of lectures.

To live a good life.

It is not right to live by causing harm to others.

But now he knew that such lectures were not very effective.

If he gives them such discipline after suppressing them by force, they will leave only the thought that they failed because they attacked someone with strong power.

If he was young, he would have subdued them all and dragged them to a big city.

Because it was a time when he had a high reputation, all the criminals he had captured went straight to prison.

It was also not a wise move.

When entrusting punishment to an official, a due process must be followed.

Administrative powers should always be minimal and flexible.

Therefore, it would not be correct to take them and arrest them, claiming they were thieves, without any evidence.

There was also no guarantee that the city's prisons would function properly.

Repentance and punishment are not easy things.

Prison facilities were usually among the most underdeveloped facilities in the city, and were an area full of petty corruption and absurdity.

[Isn't it okay to just beat them? You are still frustrated. No, I think you're getting more frustrated as you get older.]

The sword kept talking, but the High Seeker did not stop worrying.

It may be a meaningless worry, but the High Seeker did not give up.

Thinking that one day he might find a 'correct answer' that would satisfy everyone, he pursued the best way to do everything.

As soon as the High Seeker stood still, Kirikiri stepped forward.

She took a step forward, and Kirikiri, who hid the High Seeker behind his back, shouted.

"I'll protect you!"

Very confidently.

The High Seeker felt a strange feeling.

It was somehow touching.

It seemed like it had been a long time since he had heard someone say that they would protect him.

No, he wondered if he had ever heard of it in the first place.

The High Seeker was always on the side of protecting someone.

The High Seeker grabbed Kirikiri's shoulder and tried to stop her.

At that moment, Kirikiri's body disappeared.

The High Seeker's hand, which was holding Kirikiri's shoulder, floated in the air.

The High Seeker and novice thieves were silent for a moment as the person suddenly disappeared.

"Aack!"

One of the bandits grabbed his crotch and fell.

He was the one who kept talking dirtily.

"Some, something hit me!"

Confusion began.

The thieves looked around, but couldn't see anything.

Hit.

"Uh... uh...?"

One of the thieves grabbed his stomach and made a dazed sound.

There's a hole in his stomach and he's bleeding.

The thieves who saw the blood now began to feel fear.

They tried to block the invisible enemy by swinging their arms in all directions, but it was in vain.

One by one, holes began to form in the thieves' bodies.

"It's a curse...! It's a fairy curse!"

Someone screamed and ran away.

When one escaped, all the thieves started to run away in confusion.

The thief, who was the first to be hit between the crotch, had no one to help, so he had to crawl away by himself.

Even the High Seeker was as perplexed as the thieves.

The High Seeker could notice an archmage's invisible magic and a secret assassin's hideout at a glance.

He still didn't understand where Kirikiri was and how she got out of his senses.

After a while, as the bandits fled far out of sight, Kirikiri reappeared.

"Hng!"

A loud snort was heard.

Kirikiri was right next to the High Seeker.

A small sword was in Kirikiri's hand as she stood dignifiedly like a general who defeated the enemy, and looked to the side where the

thieves had escaped.

It was a sword shining golden.

Side Story 36

Kirikiri (4)

Seeing Kirikiri smiling and proudly showing off a golden sword, the high seeker had to be a bit perplexed.

So many surprises in such a short amount of time.

He was also amazed at her ability to suddenly disappear, but the sword in Kirikiri's hand was even more amazing.

He became the king of a country, and had many opportunities to explore all kinds of rare and mysterious treasures.

In the palace warehouse from which he left, numerous treasures that were still in his possession were piled up like a mountain.

But this golden sword that Kirikiri is holding.

[Kyaaak! Get it away!]

As the golden sword was pushed closer to him, the sword tied to the high seeker's waist was repulsed by it.

The High seeker felt the same way.

He wanted to tell Kirikiri, showing off her golden sword, to please put it away.

It was a strange feeling.

It's not even a cursed magic sword.

[This is not a curse! That's.....]

The sword said as if screaming.

The high seeker could also guess the history of that sword.

That's probably

‘The Source.’

The power to bring miracles to the world.

The most powerful and greatest particle.

Magical power.

The high seeker had a considerable amount of magical power.

In terms of the amount of his magical power, he may be the best on the continent.

At least, among humans that is.

The high seeker's magical power was being pushed out as the sword pushed in.

It was pushed out and his magic was leaking out of his body.

His magical power, which had gone out of his body outside his will, lost control and was scattered in the air.

It was a permanent loss of magical power.

“It's pretty!”

[Kyaaaak! I'm dying, you bunny!]

it seems that the golden sword was worse for the ego sword than the high seeker.

He screamed like he was going to die.

The high seeker hastily asked her to put her knife away.

Kirikiri rolled her eyes and put her sword in her bag.

“Sorry.”

“No. It’s a really great treasure sword...”

A sword shining with beautiful gold.

However, the fact that it was gilded did not even feel worth it.

It’s a metal that pushes out magical power just by being there.

Who would dare wield such a weapon?

[That rabbit is wielding it, you idiot.....]

Yes, only that rabbit can wield it.

Only that rabbit without a handful of magical power.

The high seeker thought that Kirikiri would be weak.

There was no magic in her body.

Even an ordinary farmer who has been farming all his life has a small amount of magical power.

The magic of nature naturally pools in the body.

Even those who have not accumulated magic through training have a very small amount of magic.

But that rabbit didn’t even have a handful of magical powers.

Naturally, a person without magical power cannot use magic of course.

So it's natural that the rabbit without magical powers looked weak.

But instead of having no magical powers, she was able to wield a truly ridiculous weapon.

The high seeker advised that as much as possible, the golden sword should not be drawn out in front of others, as was the case with the magical crystal.

Kirikiri nodded her head eagerly.

[Dedicate it.]

Suddenly he heard a voice.

The high seeker didn't care.

As usual, he only thought the sword was speaking.

But the voice was different.

[Dedicate it to me.]

'Oh, dear.'

The high seeker was silent for a moment.

Truly, the voice of God he hasn't heard in a long time.

'God of light.'

[My paladin, dedicate it to me.]

The voice was pointing to the golden sword that Kirikiri had just put in her bag.

The high seeker felt uncomfortable.

[Burn that sword and offer it to me.]

‘It’s not possible.’

He abruptly refused.

The high seeker somehow felt guilty.

He may be guilty.

He dared to refuse what God wanted.

‘God, it’s impossible. It’s not even my thing. You cannot take other people’s things and offer them to the gods. That’s not right.’

People would have argued that he was crazy if anyone else saw him, but the high seeker was unstoppable.

[It’s okay, that is right.]

‘No, it’s not right.’

[My words are absolute. My will is the rule of the world, and my words are the law of the world. Follow me, my paladin.]

The high seeker shook his head.

God was particularly insistent today.

‘There’s no such thing as that. What is not right, is not right.’

God was silent.

Did you finally give up?

It was when the high seeker was thinking so.

[Just once! Just once!]

What do you mean only once?

Are you asking me to do the wrong thing just once?

For yourself, God of Light?

If you are a paladin who can't help but love God, it's a request you'll have to accept.

'It's not possible.'

[You are really too much!]

At the sudden word of the God, the high seeker wrapped his arms around his head.

He felt a strong headache that felt like his brain was exploding.

[I will punish you!]

The God of Light put a tantrum.

The High Seeker felt like he wanted to sigh.

Of course, his sigh in this situation was a grave blasphemy, so he had to endure it.

'If you punish me, I will die.'

The high seeker said quietly.

It really was true.

No matter how superhuman the high seeker was, he could not afford to survive the wrath of the god.

‘Are you all right with that?’

The God of Light was silent.

The high seeker knew his own worth.

He knew all too well how much the God of Light loved him.

It was natural

Every time he practiced the sword of light, he was excited to hear the voice of The God of Light chirping and chattering, and he could easily notice how much the god liked him.

[That’s not allowed.]

The God of Light said sullenly.

The high seeker thought he was lucky.

God’s punishment was terrible.

It was enough to inflict more pain and despair than death without having to kill anyone.

However, the punishment of this God of Light he worshiped was simple and powerful, but not insidious.

Probably, it would be about as much as a huge thunderbolt fell when the punishment was given.

Of course, being struck by lightning will kill the high seeker, but that’s not what the God of Light wants.

[Disappointed.]

The God of Light, who confided his own feelings, disconnected from him.

Then the high seeker sighed.

Conversations with gods were always burdensome.

[I think it was a really good choice for you not to be baptized every time like this.]

The sword said teasingly.

It was mean.

* * *

A brief commotion passed, and the journey continued again.

Kirikiri still looked bright.

Her appearance came as a bit of a shock to the high seeker.

He knew a lot of children who had a sudden accident after spending their whole life in a peaceful village.

She had only been looking at places like that in the first place, so it must have been natural.

The thieves she met suddenly.

The ensuing battle.

There were no casualties, but it was a battle that was obviously bloody and noisy with screams.

Kirikiri, who had driven out the thieves, did not seem to have any appreciation for the thieves and battles.

Rather, she seemed relieved and in a good mood.

[It's a rabbit.]

Could the lack of fear of blood and killing be explained by being a rabbit?

The high seeker was questioning it.

[Their race is basically a demigod. It's not like the innkeeper was making a fuss for nothing. It would be better not to treat her like a child just because she looks like a child.]

The Sword pretended to know again.

The High Seeker then asked if he was aware of the ability used when Kirikiri suddenly disappeared earlier.

[I know of it.]

'Is that so?'

[Sure. One of rabbits' two most famous abilities is crossing dimensions. The reason I went to the rabbits in the first place was that my colleague, a summoner, wanted to learn dimension magic from the rabbits, and her ability from earlier is probably the half-dimension.]

There were signs that the old story of the sword had begun.

The High Seeker was not interested in the Summoner's story, so he asked The Sword to explain the abilities of the rabbits in detail.

The sword was a little uncomfortable, but he explained it well.

[As the rabbits explained, there is a small gap between the dimensions. The gap between that dimension is called a half-dimension. It's not a dimension divided by perfect boundaries, and it's not even the same dimension.]

Hearing the sword's explanation, the high seeker could understand a little.

He was told that the Fairy Queen of the Lake of Silence had similar

abilities.

[Probably the same ability.]

It was an embarrassing remark.

Each member of the race has the power of being a fairy queen.

[So she is also treated as a fantasy existence in a fairy tale.]

The sword said sternly.

[The one at the entrance to the village is also a dimensional barrier.]

What the sword was talking about was the stairs leading up to the plateau where the rabbits lived.

The high seeker went up and down the stairs for nearly a week, and eventually gave up and came down.

‘Is that a dimensional barrier...?’

[Hmm.]

The sword answered so clearly.

‘Why didn’t you tell me earlier?’

Thanks to him, the High Seeker had a week of hard work.

[I told you. You can’t go up with your ability.]

‘No..... ’

The high seeker didn’t understand.

He would have given up sooner if the sword had said, ‘you can’t climb on your own because there is a dimensional barrier’ instead of ‘you

just can't go up!'

Instead of going through it for a week.

[What do you mean by saying this? Are you upset, you narrow-minded boy?]

'I don't want to be upset. And narrow-mindedness is your nasty sign.'

[Little boy, that's ugly. If you're old, be somewhat like your age!]

The sword was sharp.

'You are three times older than me.'

The high seeker did not lose.

The Human and the sword approaching the ages of one hundred and three hundred, respectively, began to fight childishly.

* * *

A day passed.

The two of them had to camp because they couldn't get to the village before nightfall due to some commotion.

Kirikiri's huge bag also contained a prefabricated tent.

The two were able to sleep comfortably

The problem was the next morning.

Apparently she slept peacefully until last night, but Kirikiri woke up in the morning and started to be wary of the high seeker again.

The high seeker was perplexed.

Fortunately, Kirikiri's mood quickly dissipated.

It was because of the hive that the high seeker had brought.

A simple biscuit coated with honey to eat, Kirikiri was happy.

The high seeker could immediately see that Kirikiri's vigilance was quickly dispelled.

'Is this because it's a rabbit?'

It's a rabbit

For a simple reason, many questions have been answered with that answer.

The sword solved the high seeker's doubts.

[Other rabbits are worse. They have no boundaries at all.]

He told the High Seeker some anecdotes about the black rabbits.

It seemed like it could be possible.

It is said that rabbits are good and innocent, and always lead a peaceful and quiet life.

In addition, their ability is so great that there is no need to worry about external threats.

Where in the world could an enemy invade them beyond their dimensional stairs?

Naturally, their vigilance will disappear.

[That kid named Kirikiri is particularly wary. For a rabbit]

The high seeker gradually developed an understanding of Kirikiri and

the rabbit race.

Every morning when she woke up, even though Kirikiri showed a vigilant figure, she waited for him without being surprised.

After a few days, Kirikiri went to sleep and woke up, but she was no longer wary of the high seeker.

The two became steadily closer over time.

It made the conversation easier.

The High Seeker sometimes wondered if he would have a granddaughter of her age if he had settled down and started a family.

The trip was enjoyable.

Contrary to what the sword had warned of bad luck, a peaceful, monotonous, and even enjoyable journey continued.

So the two arrived in the human city.

Side Story 37

Kirikiri (5)

Kirikiri stomped on the floor and walked.

A hum came out of nowhere.

Her new shoes, which she bought in the village she had recently stopped by, were fluffy.

Even when she walked on an uneven dirt road, the floor felt as comfortable as in the rabbit village.

It was also nice to see a pretty butterfly fluttering and flying while she was walking down the street.

The rabbit village was a good place, but it was too high up.

The creatures that could live there were limited.

Everything she had seen when she left the village was new.

The sadness of being kicked out of the village on the eve of the festival was soon forgotten, and she was fully enjoying this trip.

It was not that there was no anxiety in her journey.

The old man with the eccentric name of High Seeker with her was a good man.

But her father was also a good person.

Enough for the rabbits to welcome him into their family and provide a house on the other side of the village.

Her father betrayed everyone and left without any warning one day.

She cleared the ground for the camp and pitched a tent.

Kirikiri's large backpack was full of all kinds of camping gear.

Rabbits thought they should always have no shortage of sleeping and eating.

Kirikiri was the same.

She had that thought as she lay down in the tent and fell asleep.

She felt like she was getting closer to her father who abandoned her when she was young.

It wouldn't be wrong to say that he left the rabbit village and came into the human world.

Perhaps it was because of that feeling, Kirikiri was often disturbed in her sleep.

It was a hazy dream that she couldn't even remember properly when she woke up, but it strangely felt bad for her.

Every time she had such a bad dream, Kirikiri thought that it's not good for her to be so relaxed.

She also didn't want to be betrayed, as she knew nothing.

She gave strength to her eyes and opened them.

Like a seasoned hunter, she cleverly searches for clues and traces of her prey.

The high seeker smiled awkwardly.

What is that face?

Yes, he must have been flustered by her own cleverness.

Kirikiri continued her observation.

“Do you like meat too?”

The high seeker asked.

She thinks she will eat meat for breakfast.

Kirikiri was excited and she answered ‘yes!’.

She can’t eat if she doesn’t have meat.

The high seeker smiled and walked away saying that he was going to go hunting.

Kirikiri even waved her hand and said to go and come back quickly.

After the high seeker’s figure disappeared through the trees, Kirikiri belatedly noticed her own mistake.

‘This isn’t it!’

Kirikiri’s picture of herself as she imagined was a bright, intelligent, and shrewd rabbit.

So she shouldn’t have easily relaxed!

The high seeker returned quickly.

Kirikiri, contrary to what she had promised, was delighted to be able to eat meat.

She was sad to see the dead deer.

The piece of meat that has been slaughtered and roasted made her rejoice again.

“It’s good to see you eating well.”

The high seeker said.

After she took a bite full of meat and was happy, Kirikiri was shocked again.

‘Oh! This isn’t it! It’s really not it!’

Why can’t she be serious?

It was deplorable.

The same scenery continued the next morning.

“Kirikiri.”

“Hng!”

The high seeker wasn’t even surprised by Kirikiri, who was now on the verge of limitless vigilance.

“We ran out of honey.”

.....!?

Kirikiri widened his eyes as if how in the world could that be.

It was the most shocking news.

“Fortunately, there is a beehive I saw yesterday.”

The high seeker asked if she would like to go and pick a beehive.

Kirikiri was excited today as well and followed the high seeker.

‘Oh, not this again!’

The two finally reached their destination, the city.

Kirikiri raised her head and looked up at the wall.

She's been to human villages and small towns a few times, but it's the first time she's seen a city with such high walls.

The high seeker said she could get enough pearls here.

Kirikiri also looked at the wall and agreed.

The high seeker took out the large robe he had prepared in advance.

It was to cover Kirikiri's ears.

The legend about the mysterious rabbits living on the plateau of the Blue Mountains is not widely known here.

Even if they know someone, they wouldn't think of the rabbits in the fairy tale when they see Kirikiri.

She will probably only look like an ordinary and pretty rabbit magical beast.

They had to be careful.

Kirikiri is a naive beast who is easy to deceive, and she also possesses a magical crystal large enough to shake the continent.

Even in the village at the beginning of the Blue Mountains, where rabbits were sacred, thieves chased after seeing Kirikiri's magical crystals.

In big cities, they have to be extra careful.

It was better not to be seen by people as much as possible.

Fortunately, Kirikiri did not show any characteristics of a beast except for the ears.

The problem was this.

Pop!

“Wow!”

Kirikiri looked at the city’s market street and shouted.

She was so surprised, her ears popped, and it stood up.

The hood of the robe was removed as the long, droopy ears pointed towards the sky.

The high seeker hurriedly put the hood back on, but it was still in a state where the ears were standing still.

Only after the high seeker warned did Kirikiri’s ears falter again.

“Whoa!”

Kirikiri shouted again.

A man was walking with a bag of bread in his arms.

The bread had a sweet aroma.

Kirikiri’s ears soared with a force to pierce the sky again.

This was repeated over and over again before entering the inn.

Afterwards, the high seeker felt like a bit of an idiot continuing to put the hood on Kirikiri.

Kirikiri liked the inn.

It looked very different from the inn at the beginning of the Blue Mountains.

The hall used as a restaurant was also really big.

The rooms were on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

Kirikiri was led by the high seeker to the third floor while still glancing at the hall and dragging her feet.

He always thought she was fed enough, but the rabbit's appetite was more than he thought.

The high seeker was relieved only after bringing Kirikiri to the room.

The High Seeker once again reminded Kirikiri to be cautious in the city.

There are many people in the city.

There were good people, and there were bad people.

There were many people who were very clever in speech and words.

Slaughtering one of the seemingly inexperienced beasts was not even a matter.

Kirikiri widened her eyes as if she wasn't a seemingly inexperienced beast.

The high seeker was still anxious.

He gave the warning again and stood up.

The high seeker thought it would be better for him to decide where to buy the pearls alone, rather than go out to search for pearls with Kirikiri.

Just before leaving the room, the high seeker looked back at Kirikiri

one last time.

Kirikiri opened her eyes as if not to worry.

‘..... Let’s go as soon as possible.’

With that promise, he left the inn.

The high seeker soon regretted it.

After only two hours, the inn’s room was empty.

It wasn’t very empty.

There was also Kirikiri’s large backpack, and an unidentified letter on the bed.

But, most importantly, Kirikiri herself was not seen.

The high seeker hastily read her letter.

The letter was written in a crooked font.

[Hello, Mister High Seeker.]

From here on, the high seeker became anxious.

Why am I called ‘Mister High Seeker’?

She calls him uncle comfortably these days.

Is it because it was in writing?

He then continued to read the letter.

[I went down to the dining hall.]

‘...Don’t go down.’

Apparently he had made such a request several times, but Kirikiri seemed to have gone down alone as if it was natural.

[It smelled very delicious.]

Do you think that's a good enough reason?

That must have smelled delicious.

It's late in the evening.

It's fine if she went down to the hall.

If only she hadn't left the inn.

However, the high seeker did not see Kirikiri even in the inn hall.

[I went down to the restaurant and met good people.]

The high seeker at this point had to feel a strong urge to stop reading the letter.

[Good people introduced delicious food.]

Yes it would be.

He doesn't know who they are, but they chose the best way.

If they had tried to scare her in moderation or entice her with something else, Kirikiri would have been wary of those people.

At least they're trying to trick her with something to eat.

[It was said that there is more delicious food in the houses of humans. I'll go to the human's houses.]

At the end of the letter were these words:

[I'll bring you something to eat!]

The letter ended like that.

Unfortunately.

The high seeker understood the situation.

Kirikiri, who smelled the food, went down alone, met humans there, and got fished on the pretext of delicious food.

[...I think she will get caught.]

said the sword.

The high seeker couldn't deny it.

"I'll try to track her down first."

If she was really lucky, the people who took Kirikiri might serve food with really good intentions.

Rather, they were more likely to have approached her with ill intent.

Of course, considering Kirikiri's physical abilities and her many mystical powers, which he discovered during the travels, she won't be easily overpowered.

But when she was obsessed with food, he couldn't be sure of anything.

"Please take care of me."

[Ha, is it this body's turn to go out again?]

The sword exclaimed so and performed tracking magic.

It's been a while since he's been doing magic, so he struggled a bit, but the sword was able to catch the traces of Kirikiri soon.

The traces of Kirikiri continued uninterrupted.

Even the high seeker who did not use tracking magic could see the traces with the naked eye.

He was so excited that the footprints of running around were very clearly visible.

[It's getting a little serious.]

said the sword.

The road was blocked, by soldiers with spears.

The traces of Kirikiri continued.

It was leading into the lord's castle where the lord who ruled this city resided.

It was already evening and the sun had gone down, so the gates of the castle were tightly shut.

Soldiers were stationed in front of the closed door.

[What should I do?]

There were two ways.

The high seeker reveals his identity and enters the residence legally and proudly.

Or, he enters the castle illegally and proudly without revealing his identity.

[Isn't it enough to sneak in and find just the rabbit?]

That wasn't the High Seeker's style.

He could have been caught and pursued for nothing.

He had enough reasons and justifications to break through the lord's castle.

He just boldly went in and secured Kirikiri.

It was neater for him to negotiate with the lord.

Of course, if caught, he will be arrested immediately and rot in the cell for the rest of his life or receive harsh punishment.

If he had transcendental powers, it would have been better if this side wasn't complicated.

and

[Hmnhmm.]

His god also favors this side.

The God of Light was already happy because he expected to see the sword of light after a long time.

Unfortunately, the high seeker had no intention of using the Sword of Light.

He did not intend to hide his power, but he did not intend to expose his identity as the king of a country.

The high seeker drew his sword and stepped forward.

The soldiers who were guarding the gates approached due to the suspicious behavior.

[Hey, why is this body so good?]

The sword trembled.

Unlike usual, the high seeker simply listened to the sword's self-compliment.

“Stop! This is the lord's castle! Those who are not permitted to enter...!”

There was no intention of convincing the soldiers from the beginning.

It was of no use stating that he had come to visit his abducted colleague here.

It was questionable whether he would even be taken to the upper level after talking to the soldiers.

“If you come any closer...!”

The soldiers repeated their warnings, but when the high seeker got too close, they stopped him and raised their spears.

The composition of the soldiers' weapons was simple.

A small shield and a spear in light armor.

It was the most basic and most powerful configuration.

The high seeker was also a former soldier who used to run around the battlefield wearing that kind of outfit.

The spear was smashed.

The spear blade did not reach the high seeker.

The moment the soldier wielded the spear, the blade part was cut into pieces and fell to the floor.

Thud.

The soldier swung his shield, blaming the old spear and the lord who always budgeted only a small budget for the guards.

The high seeker lightly blocked the shield with his hand.

There was a noise of scraping steel in the air, and the shield the soldier was holding shattered into pieces in a checkered pattern.

Looking at the remnants of the sharply cut and falling shield, the soldier could tell that the spear had been cut off by something rather than a worn-out tip.

The soldier was startled and stepped back.

The high seeker approached the gates of the lord's castle instead of dealing with the soldiers pointlessly.

It was a strong gate.

A thick gate that seems difficult for an adult male to open alone.

The high seeker beckoned.

Accordingly, the sword unfolded his skills.

[Space Rift Mind Slash.]

The gates and the walls began to crumble into small pieces.

The wall that collapses at the touch of a single person.

At the transcendent sight, the soldiers felt fear and froze.

Now, the wall that stood in front of the high seeker has collapsed.

The high seeker entered the lord's castle over the remains of the castle wall.

Side Story 38

Kirikiri (6)

Groooowl.

The sky murmured.

It looked like he was going to be struck by lightning.

Bang!

It actually went down.

The high seeker had to dodge the shards of stones that were thrown by lightning.

It was the will of the God of Light.

Every day, he says, 'Wonderful punishment, wrathful punishment,' and he suddenly drops lightning.

The high seeker was freaked out.

The reason was that he did not wield the sword of light.

After becoming king, he sat on the throne for a long time and devoted himself to government affairs, so he did not wield the sword properly, let alone the sword of light.

The God of Light, who had been watching with excitement because he had a chance to fight after a long time, was greatly disappointed when the High Seeker depended on the ability of the Ego Sword.

It looked like so.

Bang! Bang!

Lightning kept falling.

The high seeker had to dodge the shards as he shuffled his feet.

It was threatening, but the high seeker decided to ignore it.

The sword of light is a famous technique that proves itself.

If his identity is exposed, and if he wields it recklessly, most of the territory will be swept away.

It was an unnecessary killing.

The high seeker hurriedly went inside the lord's castle.

The guards didn't even try to stop him.

With only his gestures, he breaks down walls, and when he approaches, their armor and spear are cut off by an invisible sword.

There was even a thunderbolt falling one after another, protecting him (or that was what the soldiers saw it as).

The traces of Kirikiri led to the interior of the lord's castle.

After subduing a few more guards, the high seeker was soon able to arrive in front of a door with traces of Kirikiri.

Without hesitation he opened the door and swung it open.

A large table was spread out, and Kirikiri was sitting in the center of it.

It was exactly opposite the door, so as soon as the door opened, Kirikiri and High Seeker met each other's eyes.

Kirikiri, who made eye contact with the high seeker, stopped her mouth that was murmuring hard.

“Honey!”

It was a weird exclamation.

Kirikiri, whose eyes widened in surprise, perhaps not expecting the high seeker to come, swallowed what was in her mouth.

“Delicious!”

“...that’s what you have to say to me.”

The high seeker murmured as if it were nonsense.

He had to feel embarrassed as he listened to Kirikiri telling him to eat quickly because it was delicious.

* * *

Fortunately, Kirikiri was eating well and playing well.

Of course she thought so.

The lord ordered the soldiers to bring Kirikiri.

Buying her something to eat, enticing her by saying that there is more food.

This act of bringing in a child while there was no protector was clearly a kidnapping.

No matter how well he treated the kidnapped child or was feeding her delicious food as promised.

Of course, the question remained as to whether the high seeker was Kirikiri’s guardian.

The high seeker thought he was the protector of that innocent rabbit.

Whatever Kirikiri thought or not, the lord was kneeling in front of the high seeker.

“Forgive me!”

The Lord immediately fell flat on his face.

It was a strange attitude.

The high seeker was embarrassed as he had seen many nobles who died while holding a useless vain pride, even in a situation where their head was going to be cut off right away.

He decided to listen to the lord’s excuses.

“Divination?”

“Yes, my son hasn’t gotten out of bed for four years.”

It is said that the son of the Lord was weak from an early age.

However, since he became seriously ill four years ago, he has been living in bed.

Neither the doctors nor the priests could reveal the name of his disease.

He continued to be cared for, not knowing when he would get better or when he would die.

“Rabbits can foretell the future. So...”

The lord seems to know about the rabbits that live in the highlands of the Blue Mountains.

So, as soon as he heard a report that a rabbit beast had entered the estate, he had the soldiers bring her in.

If the purpose was to ask for fortune-telling, it made sense to bring Kirikiri and feed her well.

But if that's the reason, he could probably invite them properly, why did he entice her with something to eat?

"Yes... because it's a rabbit..."

[Right. It's best to just offer the rabbit something to eat. Hey, that friend, he seems to know a lot about rabbits.]

The sword said.

It was noisy.

The high seeker decided to understand the lord's action. It was wrong, but still understandable.

And even if there was an impure intention, it was true that he was treating Kirikiri well until the high seeker came.

The High Seeker decided to compensate for the cost of the collapsed wall.

The high seeker had a lot of money.

The emergency fund he carried was enough to compensate for the collapsed wall.

The High Seeker gave Kirikiri a brief explanation of what had happened to her.

"What?"

Kirikiri's eyes widened.

"You deceived me! You were bad people!"

Then she jumped up from her seat.

She puffed her nostrils as if she was going to scold them.

The high seeker had already told her that he had already done a good job of scolding them.

“Aha.”

Kirikiri sat back down and continued her meal.

She was spontaneous, as if nothing had happened.

‘So gullible by food.....’

It seems that all the words that he told her to be careful when entering the city were to no avail.

* * *

The High Seeker and Kirikiri did not return to the inn, but stayed in the lord’s castle.

It wasn’t good for the high seeker and Kirikiri to go out while the lord comforted the citizens and the soldiers who were startled by the collapse of the walls.

The lord announced that the wall collapse was an accident caused by lightning.

After the accident was over, the lord made a formal request to Kirikiri.

To predict the future of his son who can’t get up from his sick bed.

“I’m not good at it. I’ll try.”

Kirikiri accepted it as if it was nothing.

The lord was delighted and he said that he would arrange the pearls she needed for the divination.

The high seeker thought that things were going well.

And the next day, he got bad news.

“The pearl cannot be obtained.”

The Lord said with a sad expression on his face.

“I found out through the precious metal merchants that it’s been a long time since they’ve seen a pearl recently. It seems the mermaids are having a problem.”

Pearls are produced by mermaids that inhabit the shores.

There were also pearls that were naturally generated, but they were few in number compared to pearls that were created through the care of mermaids, and their luster and size were incomparable.

Therefore, pearls were considered to be gems made by mermaids.

If the distribution of pearls is suddenly cut off, there is a very high probability that the problem is related to the mermaids.

“I’ll send people to see what’s going on.”

Pearls were the main distribution product of this estate.

Pearls produced on the East Coast were precious metals that were hard to come by.

It had to be traded in big cities, not on the coast.

This estate was the link between the wealthy aristocrats in the center and the producers on the coast.

Since pearl trading was one of the main sources of income for the estate, the lord took this matter seriously.

The High Seeker and Kirikiri decided to go directly to the beach and

check the problem.

The people sent by the lord may investigate the problem, but they will not be able to solve it right away.

It was not the style of the high seeker to spend time sitting down in the castle of the lord because of an unknown issue.

Kirikiri also agreed to go see it in person.

Apparently, she thought of all of this as an exciting and fun trip.

“The trip will be longer than I thought, will it be okay?”

To the high seeker’s question, Kirikiri replied that it was okay.

It was a deadline-less trip.

All she had to do was get a bunch of pearls at any time and return safely to the village.

It was a very peaceful tribe.

The High Seeker and Kirikiri headed to the coastal town.

* * *

A lot has happened.

Solving the problems of the mermaid village.

Scolding the evil lord.

The power of the gods descending to save the city from disaster.

Crossing the Lake of Silence.

Overcoming imperfection, becoming a god, and defeating the monster

that was trying to burn the continent.

Saving the village from dragons.

The two were caught up in all sorts of surprising events.

It may not be correct to say that you are caught up in it.

When the high seeker was told there was some problem nearby, he could never ignore it.

He was mesmerized in everything and every case, trying to help with the problem.

Kirikiri didn't complain about the long journey caused by the high seeker.

There were hard and difficult times, but the trip was generally enjoyable, and Kirikiri did not hesitate to take the opportunity to help people.

When the two returned to the estate, the atmosphere had already changed.

They returned with many pearls, but the lord did not welcome them.

The lord's son was already dead.

There was no reason left for a divination.

The day the lord's son died was the day the two of them left the estate.

At that time, the lord may have expected to some extent.

That his son, who had been bedridden for a long time, had little time left.

So it would have been even more difficult.

The High Seeker and Kirikiri set off towards the Blue Mountains.

They went through many events together.

Kirikiri has become more mature.

The relationship between the two grew closer.

What used to be a relationship between an immature child and a guardian, but now they have become really close friends.

“It’s difficult.”

Kirikiri said.

The high seeker didn’t respond.

“There is no perfect world. There is no perfect order, no perfect rule and no rules.”

That was the conclusion Kirikiri came to while traveling with the high seeker.

It might be some kind of meddling.

A high seeker is an old man who has lived his entire life for one thought.

It will be difficult for him to change and let go now.

But now that their journey is coming to an end, Kirikiri wanted to say something.

“Because value is subjective and relative.”

Can a perfect and inflexible law really be justice?

Should the lord who kidnapped a rabbit to know his son’s future be

punished or understood?

Should the uncle go to jail for stealing bread for his starving nephew?

Is it right to eat someone else's baby to save my own baby?

No such answer existed.

"You can't save everything, Mister."

The high seeker did not respond this time either.

It was a word he had heard many times over a long period of time.

From people, colleagues, and subordinates.

[That's right.]

Even his own sword said so.

What the high seeker wanted was simple.

He wanted to help everyone.

It was a very rustic and simple wish.

But it was not an easy wish.

By saving one, he gave up the other.

Both could not be saved.

In order to kill a demon stronger than himself, he had to burn the city.

If the killer is drowning in the river, and the victim's family is watching the killer drown across the river.

Just saving the killer will hurt the victim's family.

The high seeker found the law as a way to resolve the contradiction.

Judgment by law, punishment by law.

But there were inconsistencies in the law.

“I can do it.”

The high seeker said.

It was an issue he had been thinking about for a long time.

He was not expecting that he will have an answer himself, but he leaned on the hope that one day he will be able to find an answer.

“How?”

And after a long thought.

The high seeker found a way.

He answered Kirikiri.

“I will become a god.”

Side Story 39

Kirikiri (7)

Becoming a god.

The High Seeker believed it was possible.

He was convinced by the journey this past year, while meeting the spirit creatures who claim to be gods from all over the continent and those who have been reborn as truly divine beings.

There were two conditions for becoming a god.

Transcendent power.

The reverence and worship of all peoples.

The High Seeker was confident that both conditions could be met.

[It doesn't matter what kind of god you become.]

Can you achieve your ideals by becoming a god?

Think of the most familiar God of Light.

No matter how powerful the God of Light may be, he will not be able to achieve the ideal of the High Seeker.

[Can you?]

The sword asked.

The High Seeker didn't know either.

But he could try.

It was well worth the challenge.

[You can save a lot of people.]

There are many times when he was faced with the limits of being human.

He solves a problem at the eastern end of the continent, but cannot solve the problem at the western end of that continent.

Even if he found a wizard who could travel through space, he could not go back and forth constantly between the continent's ends.

There was a limit to magical power.

If he becomes a god, those limitations themselves will disappear.

[But if that's the end, it's no different from being an incredibly strong superhuman.]

It does not stop at solving problems.

During his decades of ruling the kingdom, he learned a lot about governance and sociology.

The majority of human motives stem from a lack of fulfillment.

But if a great god pours out all his power to support the world, there will be no shortage.

No one will be hungry.

If only he could create enough food for everyone to be satisfied.

Envy will disappear.

If everyone could have all the jewelry they want.

There will be no fights and no wars.

They have no enemies.

There will be only reconciliation.

In their monotonous life, the only stimulus that will remain is the relationship with people.

Elevated consciousness and morality will lead them to higher places.

They will explore the power of creation and contemplate a world smaller than them.

That was the world the High Seeker dreamed of.

[It may not be the world I like.]

said the sword.

He was a weapon.

He was like that even when he was a human.

He was still like that even when he became a swordsman.

He was there to kill someone.

His purpose is to protect and save someone.

What has not changed is that it is essentially a tool for reinforcement of armed forces.

[If the world were like that, I wouldn't be needed in it.]

It will be.

[And you won't be needed either.]

A perfect world.

Perfection was such a law.

If the High Seeker becomes a god, he will be able to lead such a world.

But in a world that has attained perfection, there will no longer be a need for the High Seeker.

“What's the big deal?”

There is no regret in becoming useless after achieving your ideal.

Rather, you should be rejoicing.

“I want to be that kind of god.”

It was the answer to the sword's question.

Kirikiri was quietly listening to their conversation.

* * *

The High Seeker and Kirikigiri soon arrived at the beginning of the Blue Mountains.

It was exactly the first time in a year.

Just one year had passed since the day Kirikiri met the High Seeker at the inn and, they went on a trip together.

Kirikiri was excited.

The big rucksack was now filled with dried fruit and sugar she had prepared for the other rabbits rather than camping gear.

She also got a lot of pearls, which was the purpose of the trip.

Kirikiri was proud.

Her steps up the mountain were full of strength.

When she arrived at the front of the stairs leading up to the plateau, Kirikiri was so excited that she unknowingly made a scream.

She hummed as she circled the High Seeker.

It was really crazy, but the High Seeker didn't stop Kirikiri and laughed.

The High Seeker was also happy to see the stairs.

In the beginning, he couldn't go any further up the stairs, so he went back to the village, where he met Kirikiri and traveled for a year.

Finally, he was able to climb the plateau he had been aiming for.

When the High Seeker and Kirikiri were rejoicing in their own way, there were people coming down the stairs.

It was the rabbits.

"What? Kirikiri!"

"Really Kirikiri!"

"There is a human too!"

The rabbits that were going down the stairs found Kirikiri and ran towards them.

"What? Huh?"

When Kirikiri met the rabbits under the stairs, she was both puzzled

and happy.

The rabbits called with joy at the reunion after a long absence, the High Seeker was a little perplexed.

“Are they really that small?”

The rabbits that suddenly appeared were really small.

Most of them were small in stature, not even reaching Kirikiri’s waist.

Although they were in the form of a human, the legs and hair on the face and body looked more like a rabbit than a human.

There’s a reason people call them a rabbit, not a rabbit humanoid beast.

[Those are kids. Adult rabbits are a little bigger. Yes, still smaller than Kirikiri.]

He already knew that Kirikiri was beyond a human-rabbit beast

But looking at it this way, there was a really big difference between the rabbit and the Kirikiri.

Only their ears were the same.

“What’s going on here?”

Kirikiri asked.

Rabbits don’t come down stairs very well.

Rarely does it happen that these young rabbits come down with each other.

“The adults asked for it!”

“They asked us for it!”

There is a place where apple trees are in full bloom!”

“They told us to pick apples from there! This much! This much!”

One of the little rabbits said, showing a basket.

Kirikiri tilted his head.

Procurement of food is the job of the village below.

It’s something the villagers do together.

It is, of course, the job of adults to go to places far away from the village to gather food.

She couldn’t figure out why they had to send the children alone.

But it was soon ignored.

She thought that some of the children had begged them to go down to the bottom of the mountain.

“Then we’ll take care of you.”

They took the children to the place where there is an apple tree and decided to go back to the village together.

Even the High Seeker thought it would be better to help the children and enter the village together.

The High Seeker, who had visited many remote villages, knew that in order for foreigners to be welcomed, he had to put in a lot of effort.

He started walking towards the apple tree with the rabbits who had been making a lot of noise for a while.

As soon as they left, the rabbits became quiet.

The rabbit's impression he heard from Kirikiri was very loud and very distracting.

The High Seeker told Kirikiri that the rabbits were more docile than they thought.

Kirikiri smiled awkwardly.

"They must be trying hard."

The little rabbits who went out on a picnic outside the village couldn't be quiet.

They were chattering through telepathy.

"Before, I was just talking with you."

It is said that all rabbits have a mental connection, and through it they can communicate.

As long as they are in the village, they can talk as if you were right next to you, no matter how far away you are.

She said that it is not only possible to convey words, but also to understand the feelings and emotional intentions of the person you are talking to.

It was no different than having a face-to-face conversation.

It was amazing.

He wondered if that was possible.

They don't use magic, they just connect their minds as soon as they are born, and telepathy is possible.

Even the telepathy used by wizards has a higher level of telepathy that

is difficult to compare with.

[Because they are basically demigods. It is not a race that developed through evolution from the beginning, but a race that was born by being derived from a god. Maybe the whole race is one individual.]

Said the sword.

[Perhaps that's why their minds are connected. Oh, this is not my opinion. That's what my colleague, the summoning wizard, said during my lifetime.]

It's a race that was born out of a god.

The High Seeker looked at Kirikiri involuntarily.

“...I can't.”

Kirikiri said as if embarrassed.

Unlike other rabbits, this means that she couldn't use telepathy...

The High Seeker thought as he walked.

Contrary to what he thought, the Rabbit Village seems to be quite quiet.

Of course, the rabbits might be chatting with excitement.

It would be a very quiet world for those who do not have telepathic abilities.

Probably the same for Kirikiri.

He looked at Kirikir's back in front of him.

He started walking again.

There really was an apple tree in the place the little rabbits were talking about.

A bunch of ripe apples were hanging.

The small baskets brought by the children quickly filled up.

They couldn't even fit all the apples from one tree.

In the end, they had to crumple the apples into the space left in Kirikiri's bag.

After diligently picking apples, they headed back to the village.

The young rabbits were walking well, then suddenly turned back.

"Let me eat one of our apples."

"No."

Kirikiri was adamant.

The young rabbits opened their eyes and looked at each other, but Kirikiri didn't even nod.

Ignoring all requests, persuasion and pleas, the rabbits jumped up and tried to steal the basket Kirikiri was holding.

Kirikiri lifted the basket over her head, and no matter how much the little rabbits jumped, they couldn't get their hands on it.

Eventually, the rabbits whined and hurried their steps again.

The High Seeker, who felt sorry for their pitiful appearance, said.

"Let's go eat a few."

It was an apple that he was only going to take away in a basket anyway.

With more apples in Kirikiri's bag, He thought it would be okay to eat a few apples in the basket.

“Good human!”

“A gentle human!”

The little rabbits cheered.

Kirikiri quickly threw herself away and sighed as she watched the rabbits clinging to the High Seeker they had never seen before.

“Yes. Then.”

There was a flat, large rock around it.

She gathered there and began to share an apple.

Kirikiri also grabbed half of the apple and ate it.

It was sweet and delicious.

Kirikiri, who left her hometown and returned after eating all kinds of sweet and delicious food in a foreign country, was really happy about the sweet and delicious apple.

The little rabbits who lived in the rabbit village, where fruits are scarce, loved it as could be seen from their wide eyes.

The High Seeker looked at her and had a question.

Why did the adult rabbits give only one small basket to the children?

There were only about a dozen apples in one basket.

If close to ten children ate them one by one, they would soon run out.

Did they think that the children would not eat the apples on the way to the village?

The rabbit that the High Seeker knows is a race that eats when hungry and sleeps when sleepy.

And they even consider that to be the right reason.

After eating half of the apple, he decided to ask Kirkiri something he had been curious about for a while.

Why did they tell the children to pick apples with each other?

The place where the apple tree was hidden was quite far from the village.

No matter how the children wanted to go outside the village, it was a street that adults had to accompany.

“Adults are busy. Hing.”

One little rabbit answered Kirikiri’s question.

“Are you very busy?”

“Yes. Today is a festival day.”

Kirikiri tilted her head.

“The festival day was last year.”

“Yes. Last year was a festival, this year it’s like a festival.”

The village festival is an event held once every ten years.

The festival held last year will not be held again this year.

However, according to the little rabbits, it seemed that the festival was held one after another this year.

It suddenly became an annual event.

It was hard to understand, but it was good news for Kirikiri.

It was a festival that she couldn't participate in to buy the pearl.

If the festival is held again this year, she will be able to participate right away without having to wait ten years.

Kirikiri was excited and moved on with her steps.

She got excited and went ahead, enough for the little bunnies to whistle not to go too fast.

Kirikiri's reckless steps were blocked in front of the stairs.

“...what.”

The entrance to the village was blocked by a transparent barrier.

Side Story 40

Kirikiri (8)

“It’s blocked!”

cried the little rabbit.

The rabbits were just as curious.

“Amazing!”

What an innocent race.

The High Seeker thought so.

The way back home was blocked, but instead of being anxious, they were curious and amazed.

The entrance to the stairs was blocked by a wall.

It was an empty space where nothing could be seen, but when they put their hand on it, they could feel the transparent and hard wall.

The High Seeker looked at Kirikiri, but Kirikiri didn’t seem to know anything about the wall either.

So did the little rabbits.

[They say they are in the middle of a festival, so maybe it’s preventing outsiders from coming in.]

said the sword.

“No.”

The High Seeker answered.

There is no way the rabbit village will install a transparent wall just because it wants to block outsiders.

Outsiders cannot climb the stairs without the rabbit's help.

Even the High Seeker tried to climb the stairs alone but gave up and came down.

It was unlikely that other humans would be able to climb the stairs on their own.

Moreover, it did not make sense to leave the young rabbits outside the village and block the entrance.

If it were a human, it would be considered an error that occurred during communication, but it was not a mistake that rabbits could make because they were connected with their minds and could communicate at all times.

[What are you going to do?]

The sword asked.

The High Seeker didn't answer right away.

He thought he should have climbed straight up when he met the little rabbits earlier.

The High Seeker looked at the little rabbits.

The little rabbits were looking at the stairs blankly, then looking at each other's faces over and over again.

And having conversations among themselves.

As they talk, they will come to a conclusion.

The High Seeker thought about it.

That wall is not a wall to block out ordinary outsiders.

It would make sense to think this way.

That wall was built to prevent anyone from going up the stairs at will.

The young rabbits were sent out by the adult rabbits.

What should he do?

Is it right to take the little rabbits and wait for the wall to disappear?

Of course, that's normal behavior.

However, the High Seeker could not stop his desire to climb the stairs and head to that plateau.

From the moment he descended from the throne, his heart was there.

He didn't even know why.

His own sense pointed to the rabbit village above the plateau.

It's been like this since he learned that a mysterious rabbit race lived on that plateau.

Now that he was blocked in front of the stairs, that feeling was stronger than ever.

It was whispering that he should go up right away.

The High Seeker met Kirikiri a year ago and on the day he went on a trip, he was blocked in front of these stairs.

It was the same situation now.

But it felt different.

At the time, it was a pity that he couldn't go up, and it was hard not to know how to do it, but he wasn't impatient.

But right now, he couldn't climb right away, so he was impatient and anxious.

"This doesn't feel good..."

The High Seeker mumbled unconsciously.

Maybe it's just a matter of feeling.

But lately, the High Seeker has been experiencing a strange phenomenon.

Whenever he felt like something good was going to happen, he was reunited with a friend he had met in his youth when he was wandering the continent.

When he thought something bad was going to happen, he got caught up in an unexpected accident.

[Let's break it down and go up. That's not a dimensional distortion barrier of the stairs. It's just a transparent magic wall. If you want to break it, you can break it.]

said the sword.

"...what do you mean break?"

The High Seeker really had the idea to say yes to the sword, but he refused for a moment.

He can't break down someone else's house just because it has a door on it.

Hearing that, the rabbits responded.

“What!?”

“What!?”

They seemed surprised at the radical idea of suddenly breaking the wall.

The High Seeker really tried to explain that he wasn't talking about breaking down the wall, he was just answering the sword's words.

But the rabbits shouted with their eyes shining brightly.

“Let's break it!”

“Can you break it?”

It was a surprisingly enthusiastic response.

The High Seeker was perplexed.

“Break it!”

The young rabbits were violent.

The High Seeker looked at Kirikiri.

Kirikiri did something really unexpected.

She just turned her head and pretended not to notice.

It was a simple idea.

Kirikiri wanted to participate in the festival.

She was blocked by a mysterious and bizarre wall and she didn't want to blow away her chance to attend the festival.

That doesn't mean she can agree with breaking the wall, though, so

she just pretended not to know.

“Break it!”

“Break it!”

The rabbits were shouting to destroy the wall.

[Break it!]

[Break it!]

A certain god, who likes extremeness as much as rabbits, took part in it.

As a paladin and follower of the faithful god of light, the High Seeker decided to pretend he didn't hear the truth.

He asked instead, holding Kirikiri as he turned around and watched the scenery of the Blue Mountains.

“How about using the golden sword?”

If he was really going to break through the wall, it is better to use the golden sword that Kirikiri has than to use the power of the High Seeker.

It was much cleaner and quieter.

The golden sword that Kirikiri had pushed away all kinds of magical power.

He was able to test its performance several times during his travels.

The barriers and magic walls the warlock made were also torn apart like tofu.

Neither the priest's holy magic nor the warlock's curse was affected.

If they use that sword, they will be able to cut through that transparent wall cleanly.

On the other hand, if the High Seeker tries to break the wall, it will make a very loud roar.

Kirikiri had an unwilling expression.

She secretly wanted the High Seeker to break the door, but she seemed reluctant to go ahead and break the wall herself.

“Ugh. This wall must have been made by adults...”

Kirikiri kept hoping that the High Seeker would break the wall, but the High Seeker did not.

In the end, Kirikiri pulled out the golden sword.

“Hara’s sword!”

“Kirikiri seems to be friendly with the priest.”

“Amazing!”

Seeing the golden sword, the young rabbits made a commotion again.

They were consistent rabbits.

The rabbits liked the golden sword because it was pretty.

Only the God of Light complained that he didn’t like it.

Kirikiri fumbled through the air, looking for the transparent wall.

She thrust the golden sword into the transparent wall and swung it around.

As expected, the transparent wall was cut through without any

resistance.

Kirikiri cut the transparent wall and made a hole.

When the transparent wall had been cut, there was no difference on the surface.

But she knew for sure that there was a hole in the wall.

As soon as there was a hole in the wall, a strong energy was pouring out.

It was an ominous and terrible energy.

It was coming up from the rabbit village on the high plateau through the stairs that followed.

“...let’s go up quickly.”

The High Seeker could only say that.

The little rabbits ran up the stairs eagerly on their own.

The High Seeker went up holding hands with Kirikiri.

Unlike when he went up alone, as he went up the stairs, the surrounding landscape changed.

And the ominous energy emanating from the village grew stronger.

[This is bad.]

said the sword.

Yes this was bad.

The High Seeker has experienced all kinds of hell.

He also experienced the underground city that summoned the Great Demon through personal exaltation.

He once invaded the stronghold of the warlocks who created all kinds of plagues.

There were times when tens of thousands of people were killed on the battlefield.

However, the ominousness flowing down from that rabbit village was not like that.

It was beyond the level of ominousness that could be evoked through human corpses and death.

It is the power of a god, not a mortal.

It also has an ominous energy that makes you shiver.

The High Seeker grabbed Kirikiri's hand and ran forward.

He intercepted the rabbits that were going ahead.

“Guys.....”

The High Seeker thought he shouldn't send the little rabbits up there.

Never.

He would send the kids down the stairs, and he thinks that only himself and Kirikiri should go up and solve the problem.

He was going to say that.

Before the High Seeker could say anything, the rabbits made eye contact with each other and then suddenly disappeared.

They have crossed the border of the dimension used by rabbits.

“...I can't catch them either.”

Kirikiri said.

The High Seeker clenched his teeth.

The two started running up the stairs again.

At the end of the stairs, the village began to appear.

They arrived at the lower village where Kirikiri lived.

The village was empty.

They passed the lower village and headed towards the upper village.

A strong smell of blood.

It was full of the smell of blood that had not yet decayed.

It was wet.

The High Seeker soon noticed that the moisture in the air was soaked with blood.

After a long, long uphill road, they finally arrived at the upper village.

At the entrance to the village stood the young rabbits who had gone ahead.

Whatever they saw, sharp claws flew out and grabbed the young rabbits that had been standing idly and carried them away.

The High Seeker, who was still going uphill, tried to stop it somehow.

He was unable to catch the young rabbits in a few moments.

The village the rabbits call the upper village was spread out on a wide

plateau.

The plateau that should have been originally green was dyed red.

A monster.

There were no words to express it other than that.

A pair of gigantic eyes gleamed in the haze of blood.

Beast eyes.

Hundreds of long and gigantic arms.

At the end of such an arm, there was a hand that looked strong and plump.

The rabbits were held in each hand.

A strong, gigantic hand was squeezing the rabbits.

Blood was leaking out of the skin.

Unable to withstand the pressure, the body bursts.

Blood gushed out through the ruptured hole.

The rabbit did not die easily.

In a situation where a human should have died suddenly, the children continued to bleed and suffer.

They didn't even scream.

Even the High Seeker couldn't help but be taken aback by the silent hell.

He soon remembered that the rabbits were screaming through their

minds, not their voices.

Among them, there was only one rabbit that was spewing out words.

Kirikiri recognized the rabbit.

It was the priest Hara, who had sent her out of town.

To the pain that squeezed his body.

He couldn't speak properly because of the suffocation.

Kirikiri could understand what he was trying to convey.

Why are you back

Run away

A huge hand flew through the mist of blood.

Kirikiri, who had been white, couldn't even think of avoiding that hand.

The High Seeker hurriedly tried to block it, but a huge hand blew the High Seeker away and grabbed Kirikiri.

It wasn't the hand.

It was the will of the Tribal God.

The will of a god that held Kirikiri pulled Kirikiri.

Kirikiri met the big eyes of the Tribal God right in front.

The god's eyes looked at Kirikiri silently.

Yellow eyes.

Black and red pupils.

[Be in more pain.]

God's will flowed into her mind.

That was the will of the Tribal God.

I gave birth to you.

Now be a part of me again.

Be my food.

The Tribal God, who was looking at Kirikiri like that, then said.

[You are not a rabbit.]

Side Story 41

Kirikiri (9)

[You are not a rabbit.]

Said the yellow eyes.

The Tribal God she encountered for the first time in her life denied her identity.

In fear, Kirikiri understood and accepted.

If anyone else had said that, Kirikiri would have refuted it.

She could have shouted that she was a rabbit.

But she could not even dare to question the Tribal God, the birthplace of all rabbits.

[Your blood is mixed.]

All the rabbits that were born from the Tribal God were part of the Tribal God.

Although the number has increased through breeding over the generations, all members of the tribe share the same source of the Tribal God.

The only exception was Kirikiri.

[Hmm.]

The Tribal God looked at Kirikiri and agonized.

In front of the giant Tribal God's eyes that looked around her, poor Kirikiri could do nothing but tremble.

[It doesn't matter.]

The Tribal God has decided.

Now, even a speck of strength was a pity.

The human blood is low.

Numerous spirit creatures and demons are trying to gain rank using humans.

It would be fine to eat at least one half human.

[Let's connect first.]

The Tribal God was a different being from the insignificant monsters who gathered power while using human bodies.

It was a being that was truly classified as a god.

He was a being who knew how to use his power as a god.

He was also cruel and cunning.

To the extent that he gave up a part of himself to create a beast race, and re-absorbed the beast race that had increased in number through breeding. This was the method he came up with to increase his power.

Because he was such a Tribal God, he did not cut off Kirikiri's head and immediately chew her corpse like a wild beast.

Instead, he took a slightly nobler method.

The Tribal God's hair grew long.

The tip of his hair, which moved like a giant snake, was as sharp as a spear.

The hair turned behind Kirikiri and stabbed the back of her neck.

Kirikiri's body dropped.

* * *

[You are not a rabbit.]

Said the Tribal God.

Said the priest Hara.

Said the rabbits.

Said the rabbits from the upper village and a little higher village.

Said the rabbits of the same age.

[Kirikiri doesn't understand what you're saying.]

[Suffocating.]

[Kirikiri looks different from us.]

[Strange.]

[Kirikiri is not a rabbit.]

Said her mother, who she had never seen her face in her life.

[Kirikiri is not a rabbit.]

Said her father, who had suddenly left one day, leaving Kirikiri alone.

[We are not rabbits.]

She couldn't remember the face.

It was obvious.

No one had ever said anything like that to Kirikiri.

The kind and gentle rabbits knew Kirikiri's troubles.

No matter how young and immature the rabbit was, they did not speak words that would hurt Kirikiri.

Neither her mother, whom she had never seen, nor her father, who she could not remember the face, said so.

[I am not a rabbit.]

Kirikiri was talking to herself.

It was her anxiety, her sense of inferiority.

The memories passed quickly.

As she recalled each of the troubled and agonizing moments, her consciousness sunk deeper.

Kirikiri, who pulled out the memories sleeping unconsciously, soon reached what had been sleeping at the end.

Kirikiri's consciousness, who reached the source, was connected with it.

[Kirikiri? It's a pretty name.]

[Kirikiri.]

[Kirikiri.]

[Can you hear me?]

[She can't seem to hear it.]

[I think we should call her out with our voices.]

[Wow. It's been six years since I spoke with my voice.]

[Excited!]

[What should I say?]

[How about this. Welcome back to your hometown]

“Kirikiri. Welcome back to your hometown!”

Said the priest Hara.

Kirikiri realized.

She knows that the memories of seeing herself are the memories of when she first came to the Rabbit Village, ten years ago.

Priest Hara stared at her for a long time, and then he shouted welcome.

The young Kirikiri was terrified.

[Kirikiri!]

[I picked up raspberries!]

[Come and eat quickly too! They'll all be gone by the evening.]

[You idiot. Kirikiri can't hear you. You have to go and tell her.]

[What do we do? Kirikiri lives in the village below. She'll run out of raspberries before I bring them in.]

[I have to hide a few.]

One day, adult rabbits picked up a basket of raspberries.

Kirikiri only found out about it in the evening.

In the evening, all the raspberries were gone.

Kirikiri was disappointed.

She was so upset that she felt shocked.

While she was the only one unaware, she was so saddened that the rabbits from all over the town were eating raspberries.

When she returned home with some raspberries hidden in her hands that Hara the priest had brought her, she wept alone and ate the raspberries.

[Will Kirikiri be annoyed with us?]

[I do not know.]

[Because she can't hear my heart.]

The rabbits were also worried about communication.

Kirikiri was the only one who couldn't read the heart in Rabbit Village.

In front of an emotional stranger they encountered for the first time, the rabbits were shy and anxious.

The conversations of the rabbits continued to be heard.

It was like reading old letters in a mailbox.

They were conversations stored in a spirit world.

Even the thoughts and emotions that the rabbits felt at that time

remained the same.

She recalled conversations that had been so long ago, but Kirikiri had not heard yet.

Among the conversations of the rabbits, there was also a story about Kirikiri's parents.

[In the end, even a human doctor could not save her.]

[It was a very dangerous birth.]

[How pitiful.]

[How old is she?]

[Five years old.]

[He wants to live in the village with her daughter.]

[Good. We should be family to both of them.]

[I like it too.]

[Me too.]

These were the stories the rabbits did not tell.

Kirikiri's father didn't even tell her.

[Humans die too easily]

[Is she ill?]

[He shouldn't be allowed to stay in our village. This place is too high for humans to live.]

[...How do I explain it to Kirikiri?]

[Huh.....]

It was a story Kirikiri had never heard of.

Her dad actually suffered from altitude sickness.

[I can't speak.]

[The child lost both her parents. She may not be able to endure.]

[We.....]

That he didn't abandon her and left.

The conversation continued.

[God is back.]

[We can't refuse.]

[Let's run away.]

[Where. How.]

[Let's hide the children. If we have a few children, even God will not notice.]

[Not everyone can hide. God will find out.]

[What about Kirikiri?]

[I have to get her out of town.]

[Kirikiri can run away.]

The conversation in the spirit world shared by the rabbits continued.

Continued and continued.

From the past to the present.

She was able to read not only the conversation but also the memories the rabbits had experienced.

The closer she got to the present, the clearer the memory.

Kirikiri saw the memory of the next door aunt Rabbit knocking on her door.

She saw the fortune-telling that Hara the priest saw as he broke hundreds of pearls.

She looked at Hara's memories as he watched Kirikiri weeping as she sat down on the steps in embarrassment.

Kirikiri felt a chill as she turned the memories of the rabbits in reverse chronological order.

Left behind was an ominous feeling, followed by horror.

The festival was held.

A year later, the festival was held again.

The Tribal God appeared on the plateau.

Priest Hara could not contain his agitation.

Every rabbit in town read his thoughts.

He soon foresaw that death was approaching them.

His prediction was only half right.

Their god had no intention of killing the rabbits right away.

Hundreds of gigantic, strong hands spouted out and grabbed the

rabbits and shook them.

As if extinguishing a torch by rubbing it on the ground, the rabbits were pressed against the ground.

Tossed, hit, and rolled to the ground like a ball.

He ripped their arm with his fingers and pressed their stomach to make them vomit blood.

The rabbits screamed in pain.

Kirikiri could feel all the things as if they were her own senses.

Kirikiri couldn't do anything because of the pain that was transmitted through her mentally.

She was tired of the cruelty.

There were other emotions hidden in the pain.

There was satisfaction.

She felt a sense of proudness and fullness.

Only then did Kirikiri understand.

Kirikiri was not connected with the minds of the rabbits.

She was connected to the Tribal God.

The Tribal God was satisfied with the suffering of the rabbits.

Kirikiri couldn't comprehend it.

In her own suffering, the suffering is enough to lead to death.

She feels the pain of all the rabbits in the village who are like her

family.

She had a foreboding of her own death, and she also foresaw the death of other rabbits.

It was beyond cruel.

The rabbits felt betrayal, fear and despair towards the Tribal God, who is the parent of all rabbits.

She felt a mixture of so many evil emotions that she couldn't even comprehend.

Is it possible to feel and be satisfied with all of this?

Just as the Tribal God was like parents to rabbits.

To the Tribal God, rabbits are children, and they are no different from his own limbs.

This was beyond arrogance.

'How... Seeing, hearing and feeling all these things, to be satisfied with that.'

Kirikiri's doubts reached the Tribal God.

Like all other rabbits, it was also possible for Kirkiri because she was connected with the Tribal God.

The Tribal God answered Kirikiri's question.

[That is the most powerful force. Mixed breed.]

The Tribal God moved the hand holding Kirikiri so she can look better at the suffering of the rabbit.

It was different from feeling through the mind and seeing it with your own eyes.

The wide plateau has always been the pride of rabbits.

The rabbits used to say that they live in the most beautiful place in the world.

When they looked at the end of the wide plateau, it seemed as if it was the end of the world.

There was no mountain on the continent as high as the Blue Mountains, and the only place higher than the plateau where the rabbits lived was the top of the Blue Mountains.

Turning around once in place, it seemed as if this plateau was the whole of the world.

The green field and the blue sky were close to each other like a blanket.

Although it was an alpine area where no mountain animals could walk and no delicious fruit was produced, this was the reason the rabbits did not abandon the plateau in the end.

It was such a beautiful place.

It was a special land that the rabbits considered sacred.

The blue world was dyed red.

Pieces of flesh rolled on the floor.

The rabbits with strong vitality spewed out a surprisingly large amount of blood.

The blood that flowed out was so wet that the ground was wet.

Their homeland was no longer beautiful, warm, or comfortable.

[Suffer more. Be more angry and frustrated. That resentment is the most valuable thing you can throw out.]

Kirikiri felt as if the world was falling apart.

In fact, it was the end of the world for her.

In her despair, Kirikiri saw a light.

It was too big and intense to turn away.

According to Kirikiri's awareness, the Tribal God also noticed the light's existence.

The human he thought he had killed a while ago was still alive and awake.

He sure must have exploded and died.

What the man had in his hands was a power so great that it was hard to believe that he was a human.

The Tribal God had no choice but to panic.

[Human... how.....]

The high seeker, who had blood all over his body, had a face more like a demon than anyone else in the world.

He was holding a sword shining like the sun.

Side Story 42

Kirikiri (10)

‘Am I too old?’

The High Seeker opened his eyes.

He sensed aging.

It was a monotonous and direct attack.

When the Tribal God of rabbits tried to snatch Kirikiri, the High Seeker blocked it.

The hand of the Tribal God blew away the High Seeker as if he was a fly.

There was no finesse or complicated form in that movement.

So the High Seeker thought.

While he wasted time sitting on the throne, did his superhuman body eventually grow old?

It wasn't.

The High Seeker got up and thought.

The Tribal God's finger stroke was simple, but it was more powerful than that.

The High Seeker always had confidence.

He had even cut the head of a mad giant who said it would kill people

who broke their promise.

He had even hunted the creatures who were rioting and wanted to become a god.

But that Tribal God was different.

It wasn't a monster who wanted to become a god, it was a real god.

It was different from the enemies he had encountered before.

It was powerful enough to turn the High Seeker nervous with a single stroke of a finger.

His vision was dark.

He could see the surrounding landscape beyond his incomplete field of vision.

The surrounding land was all dug up.

Even if an Archmage used explosion magic with all his power, such a huge crater would not occur.

The madness of the Tribal God was heard from afar.

His body's magical power fluttered.

The magical power oscillated as if it wanted to follow that voice, trying to escape from his body.

It took concentration to regain control.

The High Seeker grabbed his sword with his slightly trembling hands.

The sword roared.

The familiar swords reassured the High Seeker.

[Are you okay? You are absolutely bloody.]

“...it’s not okay. I can’t see well, and it’s difficult to breathe. It seems that all my internal organs in my body have burst out.”

[Yes, I see. But I’m glad your head did not explode.]

The sword said calmly.

He wondered if he had forgotten about the pain the human body could feel because he had lived as a sword spirit for so long.

[I should have been baptized.]

said the sword.

It refers to the baptism of the God of Light.

It’s an old story.

It was the story of when the High Seeker was still a boy.

The priests who believed in the God of Light liked the High Seeker’s sword.

He had been offered to be baptized by the God of Light to make it the holy sword of the church.

If the sword obtained a divine spell using divine power along with vast magical power, the sword could become an unprecedentedly powerful ego sword.

The sword refused.

Since he already had a master, he could not serve God.

“Don’t regret it.”

There was nothing to regret.

It was the pride and support of the High Seeker.

He had no intention of denying or blaming his choice.

The High Seeker did not intend to die so easily.

The magic that had been fluctuating like crazy was put under the High Seeker's control.

Although his eyes and ears were not normal, the use of his magical power could replace the human senses.

The devastation of the field was seen again.

He could see the rabbits suffering from all over the field in the red blood mist.

The rabbits did not die in torture.

There was also the rabbits' excellent vitality, but in reality, it was because of the will of the Tribal God who was torturing them.

The power of the Tribal God was constantly reviving the rabbits even while torturing them.

It was a brutal sight.

Even the High Seeker who had been accustomed to blood for a long time thought so.

The yellow eyes of the Tribal God flashed in the red mist.

Why?

How could a god with so much power be so savage and cruel?

It wasn't just a monster with powerful abilities.

He was a god who manipulated the world and projected his will through the gaps.

If he wanted to, it was a miraculous existence capable of spreading out a better world.

It was selfish.

Why doesn't he care for others?

With that ability, it is possible to bring overwhelming happiness and peace to tens of millions of others that cannot achieve these things on their own.

Why is god not unselfish?

The rabbits sincerely followed and loved their Tribal God.

Traveling with Kirikiri, he was able to hear how much their god meant to her.

The High Seeker thought that if he were to become a god, he would like to be like the god of rabbits.

Taking care of tens of millions of humans would be different from governing dozens of rabbit villages.

But ultimately, he wanted to create a world like a rabbit village where everyone lives peacefully and happily without any worries.

The appearance of the rabbit village I heard from Kirikiri was the utopia that High Seekers dreamed of.

The utopia was being destroyed by its creator.

[There is a way to escape.]

said the sword.

The High Seeker shook his head.

[You idiot. It's you, not me, who dies. I died three hundred years ago, and I'm just a soul clinging to the sword.]

The sword did not stop his persuasion.

[Look at the story in the legend. There is no story of a human being who cut down the gods anywhere. It's impossible in the first place. Even in human imagination. There are stories of knights who tamed dragons, stories of warriors who killed giants and sea monsters, and stories of paladins who defeated demons, but there are no stories of humans who killed gods.]

The High Seeker laughed.

From dragons to giants and sea monsters to demons.

“They're all things I've killed once.”

If so, isn't it time to cut down on God?

If it's unprecedented, then I'll be the first.

[...I hope you don't die here. You have some ideals that you haven't achieved yet. When you die, that will become nothing.]

“Yes. You can't achieve your ideals when you die.”

[Of course.]

“But I think it is an ideal that cannot be achieved by compromise.”

He didn't want to scale it.

He didn't want to pick one and throw the other away.

[...fucking little boy. You never let me win once in my life.]

The air began to boil.

His vision was distorted by the excessive heat concentrated on the sword.

A strong light emanated from the tip of the sword.

[Is this the third time?]

This is the third use of the light sword.

He's been training all the time, but he seldom uses it in practice.

It was a technique that was unavoidably brought out in a desperate situation that could not be overcome by ordinary methods.

It is a skill that was discovered by chance while practicing the skill that the sword had handed down.

At first, it was used only as a shining sword.

Monsters accustomed to darkness suffered whenever the flashing sword was swung.

It was also good to get people's attention.

However, as the development progressed, it became a difficult technology to use easily.

The power was too much

The High Seeker, who often fought to protect someone, could not use the light sword that burned all over the place.

He also had a problem with hurting people around him, but his own body could not withstand the heat of the light sword.

He needed a few months of recuperation after one use.

Despite the care of the priests, the High Seeker's body was full of dark burn marks.

The light sword was too heavy for his sword as well.

[I'm sure I will melt this time.]

The sword sensed his own end.

When it was used before, the sword had barely withstood the heat.

If it hadn't been for the ego sword that could use magic to protect itself, it would have melted away earlier.

That Tribal God was the worst opponent in comparison to the enemies they had encountered before.

They had to get the maximum output.

Still, they weren't sure they could win.

"It's fine. You won't melt."

The High Seeker said.

"Even if I sat on the throne, I did not neglect my training."

The High Seeker was clearly aware of the problems with his own technique.

He was always looking for a solution.

[Can I help you?]

A voice whispered.

There is only one person who would give a helping hand to the High Seeker.

The God of Light.

‘Thank you. God. But that’s fine.’

The High Seeker declined that help.

Instead, he focused on the light on the tip of the sword.

That light is his.

Shining solely towards his enemies according to his will.

It’s his light.

The Tribal God noticed the High Seeker in the light and heat.

The High Seeker swung his sword without delay.

As the sword was swung, the light on the sword was radiated forward.

Kwaaaang!

The world rang.

The loud noise resounding from the plateau located in the highest mountain range on the continent spread all over the place.

The grass, which had been soaked in the blood of rabbits, burned up.

A mist of blood burned.

The light sword struck directly at the bright yellow eyes of the Tribal God.

[Kaaak!]

The god screamed.

The blood mist disappeared, revealing the face of the Tribal God.

The Tribal God looked like a giant wolf.

It was a monstrous figure with a wolf's face, odd, ragged nails, and hundreds of hands.

[How can a human.....! How can this kind of fire burn my body!]

The whole area was a sea of fire.

In the midst of the craze, the High Seeker stood upright.

He didn't even fall down in the aftermath of the light sword.

His skin didn't burn.

The sword he was holding didn't even melt.

Even the rabbits caught by the Tribal God were not affected by the heat.

The fire that burned even the body of a god followed the will of the High Seeker and burned only his enemies.

[I might be the first sword in history to kill a god.]

said the sword.

Although the consumption of magical power is enormous, a light sword that can be used without any recoil.

He thought there might be a chance.

“Concentrate. Let's go again.”

[Okay.]

The two of them joined forces once again and began to wield the sword of light.

* * *

[Kaaak!]

The Tribal God screamed.

It was a terrible pain.

It was a terrible feeling.

It was the first pain he felt since being a creature with reason that appeared on the continent and became a god after receiving the envy of countless life and death.

The agony he had forgotten for tens of thousands of years awakened his mortal fear of death.

[This little bug!]

Discomfort, embarrassment, and fear were mixed.

This is how humans feel when they see a killer wasp entering a house.

The survival instinct takes away composure, but inspires activeness.

The Tribal God did the best he could at that moment.

He was hit directly by a huge light and his face caught fire.

As soon as he saw the mysterious human wielding his sword once more, the Tribal God ate the rabbits.

He didn't eat them all with his mouth.

They were creatures under the will of a Tribal God.

When the will was manifested, the rabbits' bodies disappeared as they were.

Only their souls were drawn and absorbed by the Tribal God.

[Be my strength.]

[Be absorbed.]

Rabbits were part of the Tribal God and were the seeds sown for harvest.

Faced with an unknown enemy, the Tribal God, who was urgently in need of strength, tried to recover those forces.

[Be me again.]

The souls of the rabbits that had been sucked into his body melted one by one and began to become one with god.

In it, there was a rabbit who resisted becoming one with god.

Kirikiri said to her god.

'No.'

Side Story 43

Kirikiri (11)

‘No.’

What Kirikiri spat out was a clear refusal.

The price came quickly.

Kirikiri’s ego, which had already become a soul and was being absorbed by the Tribal God, was feeling excruciating pain.

Having lost her body, she lost her sense of physical pain.

So instead, the Tribal God reassembled Kirikiri’s memories during her lifetime, allowing her to experience mental pain.

Kirikiri felt the feelings of the Tribal God in her pain.

Unacceptance.

Bother.

Petulance.

Hassle.

That was the feeling the Tribal God was feeling.

To the Tribal God, Kirikiri was a worm that had to die when she was crushed.

He was doing the same when watching Kirikiri trying to maintain her ego to survive.

In the pain, Kirikiri endured a mixture of all her painful memories and experiences without breaking down.

She didn't want to just disappear, as the Tribal God intended.

But she was fleeting.

She would only prolong her time of suffering pointlessly, but Kirikiri was holding out.

[You're bothering me.]

The Tribal God was annoyed.

He was annoyed, and at the same time impatient.

One mixed breed, who has already been eaten and may have her ego clouded, is interfering with the absorption.

It would have been better if she was human, but she apparently also had rabbit blood.

It was really annoying.

Normally, it would have been rather interesting to torment that stupid soul.

But not now.

The Tribal God shook his head.

The bright yellow eyes turned forward again.

There was a man who set the world on fire.

The fire that burns the plateau makes even the sky dyed red.

It couldn't even be called a plateau anymore.

The blue mountains were burning like a burning wreath.

The fire flew like waves.

Flames wriggling unnaturally like a living snake surrounded the man.

It was a sight that clearly showed that the flames and heat filled here were moving according to the will of that person.

It was truly a marvelous sight.

Is that a human or the one who rules the spirits of the world?

He couldn't tell if it was the Spirit King or not.

But that wasn't the problem.

Humans who freely handle flames and heat, and their destructive power, were not a problem.

The real problem is that the Tribal God is being damaged by that fire.

The Tribal God swept and touched his face.

He forcibly ripped off his beard and fur that had been burned by the fire.

The body of the god was burned with firepower.

It's impossible.

Divine power exists above all powers.

No physical force can exceed the position of divine power.

In front of divine power, it was no different than a pebble thrown by a child towards either a stream or a meteorite falling from the sky.

Only the same divine power could harm divine power.

Does that man have a god on his back?

If not,

Was he stepping into the realm of God himself?

He didn't know. It could be both.

Given that crazy sight, it was most likely both.

He was taken aback by the sudden attack.

He was startled by the pain that he had forgotten even existed.

However, once the embarrassment passed, the Tribal God was able to examine the situation calmly.

Greed aroused within him.

That's it.

He has to eat that.

That human was a different kind of food from raising rabbits and eating them.

A human with divine powers.

It wasn't an easy match.

In order to eat it, the chaos that existed within the Tribal God himself had to be put to rest.

'I'm Kirikiri!'

Kirikiri, who persisted in asserting herself, was like a thorn in his

mouth.

How could it be that he couldn't absorb that tiny being?

If that little being is part of god, the story is different.

All rabbits were part of the Tribal God.

That hybrid rabbit was also part of the Tribal God.

It was not good for a part of the Tribal God, no matter how small it might be, to keep saying things that denied his will.

His divinity responds sensitively.

[You are not a rabbit!]

The Tribal God made a quick rebuttal.

He denied her identity as a rabbit in Kirikiri.

If only the human, not rabbit, were left, then Kirikiri could not do anything but argue within the Tribal God.

[I am a rabbit!]

However, Kirikiri did not give in despite the constant pain.

She did not abandon her identity even before the god who created the race.

The impatient Tribal God summoned all the memories he knew.

In the memory of the Tribal God, which had been built up for aeons of time, the times of suffering that were like all kinds of disaster were recorded.

[You are not me!]

Kirikiri persevered.

The Tribal God, whose eyes had turned to the High Seeker in front of him, came up with a special measure.

He completely gave up on absorbing Kirikiri.

He denied part of himself.

Immediately after the Tribal God's declaration, a small piece of flesh fell from the Tribal God's body.

It was as if an eyeball had been pulled out of the eye.

The flesh was connected by a thin thread and hung on the body of the Tribal God.

The Tribal God exclaimed as if he was relieved.

[Finally dropped!]

The High Seeker, who was swinging his sword towards the Tribal God, while raging in flames, stopped.

That bizarre piece of flesh that suddenly appeared was in the shape of a rabbit.

And the shape looked like the Kirikiri the High Seeker had seen every day for the past year.

[Haha.]

The Tribal God looked at it and laughed.

He remembered that the hybrid rabbit and that man had climbed the plateau together.

It was not difficult to guess the relationship between the two.

The Tribal God threatened the High Seeker by putting forward the flesh on which Kirikiri was hung.

The High Seeker took a step back.

[You are a man of great skill in handling fire. I'll show you I can do that too!]

The Tribal God shouted.

The High Seeker was controlling the fire everywhere.

However, the Tribal Gods knew.

That man is not resistant to fire.

He actually knew that if he was set on fire, he would die as shabby as a fly in a campfire.

The transcendent divine power that that man was showing was only because he was surrounded by flames he had created himself.

A strong vibration was felt from the ground.

There was a sound like thunder.

It was all coming out of the ground on which he was standing.

The Tribal God that existed since ancient times remembered that the mountain they were standing on was originally a volcano that spews out lava.

The Tribal God laughed with satisfaction.

He wanted to see if that human would be able to stand aloof even if the blue mountain range was submerged in lava.

[Let's see where you can withstand lava.]

[You are not a rabbit.]

[You are not me]

The Tribal God said

In the past, she might have agreed.

She was immersed in a feeling of inferiority and was always anxious and passive in everything.

If she hadn't ventured with the High Seeker for a year, she probably would have stayed the way she was.

It was an eventful journey for her.

It was not that there was a moment of great change within her in that adventure.

But she gained experience.

She went around with the High Seeker and she got to know the world.

The vague appearance of the world became concrete.

She came to understand society.

She learned about people's relationships and communication again.

The more she broadened her knowledge, the more she came to know herself in front of the world.

In a huge and mysterious world, Kirikiri was a very small existence.

Just like all other beings.

She became aware of her own smallness.

She was able to correct her self-consciousness that way.

She wasn't perfect.

But she was her.

In front of the Tribal God's will, which is the answer to her world, Kirikiri was able to speak of her own existence.

'I'm a rabbit.'

'I'm Kirikiri.'

It was a rebuttal of the divine will that created her race, that was her source, and that was the answer.

God said she was not a rabbit.

God said she wasn't 'her'.

Kirikiri returned her own answer to the Tribal God.

'You are not my god.'

Kirikiri, who existed as part of a Tribal God, denied the Tribal God himself.

The Tribal God couldn't handle it.

* * *

The vibration of the earth, which seemed to split a huge mountain range in two, subsided.

Instead, the body of the Tribal God was collapsing.

As if there had been an earthquake, the skin was cracking and falling to the ground.

[This crazy thing...]

The Tribal God looked at the flesh that had fallen from him with hateful eyes.

The flesh, whose shape was somewhat unclear, had the appearance of a complete Kirikiri.

‘You are not my god.’

Ungrateful thing.

You wouldn’t be able to repay the kindness I’ve created for you, but how dare you say that.

He was offended.

But it was even more disconcerting.

The Tribal God never imagined that a single word from Kirikiri would shake up his divinity.

To him, rabbits have always been subject to his will, so he never thought about what would happen if they didn’t.

[You are not my God.]

The problem was getting even worse.

Things that had been sleeping inside were awakening.

The shape of Kirikiri, connected with the Tribal God by a thread, was distorted.

Kirikiri’s neck split in two, and a new head appeared.

It was the face of another rabbit.

The rabbit's face said.

[You are not my god.]

The Tribal God felt terrified.

The faces of rabbits appeared from Kirikiri's back, neck, stomach, and arms.

[You are not my god.]

These little things.

They were leaving him and moving to that mixed breed rabbit.

Each of those souls was his own strength, and they were a part of it.

It had nothing to do with the rabbits' souls leaving.

Each time, his power disappeared in a mass.

His divinity was shaking precariously.

The Tribal God hastily found a way.

The last strand that connects him and Kirikiri.

A thin thread caught his eye

The Tribal God tried to cut it off.

He grabbed it with his hand and bit it with his teeth.

There was no divine dignity to be found in that action.

It was nothing more than a dog devouring tough meat.

[No... No!]

In the meantime, all the souls of the countless rabbits that have existed have gone out.

The huge body of the Tribal God began to collapse.

Abandoned by his worshipers, the god gradually turned into a shabby and small figure.

The appearance of the rabbits, which had been divided into hundreds or thousands, was soon arranged into a single individual.

In the place where the flesh had been, all that was left was Kirikiri's figure again.

Representing all the rabbits, Kirikiri said.

[You are not our God.]

At the same time as her words, the thread that connected the Tribal God and Kirikiri was cut.

No matter how hard the Tribal God tried, the thread that could not be cut was cut too easily in front of the will of the rabbits.

[No! This can't be!]

The Tribal God screamed, but no one listened to it.

His divinity chose the rabbits.

[What are you doing? Smash it now!]

Cried the sword.

The High Seeker was hesitant.

The sword looked at the High Seeker and shouted.

[This crazy bastard. Are you going to leave him alone until he dies because you don't want to kill her with your own hands?]

The sword was strongly criticizing him, but the High Seeker did not move.

Eventually, the thread that connected the Tribal God and Kirikiri was cut.

As soon as he saw that, the High Seeker did not hesitate any longer and swung his sword.

* * *

What happened that day became a myth.

As a result, the two who survived there became gods, so it could be said that the myth was correct.

The rabbits freed from the Tribal God became gods themselves.

Kirikiri, who contained all the rabbits in one body, and at the same time was also Kirikiri.

The High Seeker also became a god.

All the people of the eastern continent watched the gigantic blue mountain range on fire.

That achievement was added to the phenomenal feat.

The High Seeker, who was already a superhuman close to God, began to show off his truly divine abilities.

People worshiped him as an apostle of the god of light.

The people of the kingdom where he was king began to worship him

most fervently.

He was worshiped by all people and became a god.

A long time has passed.

Many things happened.

The relationship between High Seeker and Kirikiri continued even after becoming a god.

They shared the same purpose.

They followed a similar path and continued the conversation.

Kirikiri remembered all the many conversations she had with the High Seeker.

“You have to stop the gods.”

The power of God was the power of miracles, but it was also the power of disaster.

As gods, they wanted to stop the evils of other gods.

Humans had morals and laws.

But there was no such thing with the gods, and they were committed regardless of merciless slaughter or cruel play.

The High Seeker and Kirikiri agreed that even the gods needed a minimum of rules and order.

“Have you heard of the God of Origins?”

They found out about something.

About a certain god that was born at the same time as the beginning

of all universes.

One day there was a rumor that the god would come to the world and everything would go back to him.

It wasn't a rumor.

It was a story circulating among the gods.

The gods were repeating the saying that before the world came, they had to obtain even a little more divinity so that they could be together with their father who was to return.

It was as if the size of their divinity would guarantee that they would maintain their egos when everything was devoured by the Primordial God.

This was the reason why spirit creatures struggle to become gods, and why the gods riot to gain greater power.

“Come with us.”

Since it was impossible to face all the gods alone, the High Seeker and Kirikiri set out to find beings with whom they would share their will.

‘Get lost, you newcomers. I am training to become an apostle of the God of Devotion.’

‘It’s impossible. If that really comes to an end, all I have to do is prove myself.’

There were times when they succeeded and times when they failed.

A long time passed again.

The gods started a war.

To prevent greater power, to prevent more sacrifices.

The wars of the gods were huge and cruel.

The gods, who seemed to be immortal, disappeared one by one.

There was no sacrifice in that war.

“...the sword is broken. Can you fix it?”

The High Seeker didn't answer.

“Let's find another sword.”

“I'll use the spear.”

“Spear?”

“I have only ever used one sword in my life. Rather than finding another sword, I will use a spear.”

The High Seeker said.

“I was originally from a who used to hold a spear. If become a god and hold a spear again, it will fit my ideology.”

There was a god who talked about himself before becoming a god.

Even in his most humble time.

The High Seeker forgot his sword and again he concentrated on what he had to do.

It was unfortunate.

The High Seeker has set his own justice to the absolute banner.

In front of that banner, the personal loss of each individual had no value.

The same was true in the face of his own loss.

It wasn't that he didn't express his sadness.

He could no longer feel sorrow.

Time has passed again.

The war was running towards its end.

The appearance of the God of Origins who was said to be the origin of the universe, which everyone had only guessed about its existence, began to appear.

The end was soon.

“Kirikiri. What are you doing!”

The God of Sky shouted.

There were two options.

The world is preyed upon, and everything stops forever.

Or, to destroy the world first.

After that, sealing the God of Origins and restoring the world again.

Looking at the spear thrown at her, Kirikiri thought.

The God of Sky is a god who can't choose either of the two options.

But Kirikiri had a choice.

Kirikiri acted again.

Kirikiri lay flat on the floor.

The fields that Yong-yong had dug up could not be restored.

Maybe she won't be able to tell if she tries hard alone.

It will take time.

A new sprout grows in the place where the grass had been pulled.

Time to fill in the dugs of wind-swept soil.

If she uses her divine power, it will be restored in an instant.

Kirikiri didn't want to do that.

Her time was a time of continuous choices.

At the crossroads of her choices, Kirikiri always pushed her own choices without hesitation.

But she's always wondered what she would be like if she had made a different choice.

She even had regrets.

As the years passed, she even thought that the choice she regretted was actually the right one.

There were many adventures.

There have been many successes and failures.

Is it good?

Is it wrong?

She couldn't figure it out.

It was a pointless question.

Until now.

The result of her choice can only be known at the end of every fork in the road, only when the adventure is over.

Because her adventure is not over yet.

She could not yet decide whether the choices she had made were right or wrong.

She turned her head.

The remnants of the pearls reflected in the corners of her eyes.

She remembered the day when she was called by Hara the priest and went to the village above.

She thought that maybe it wasn't about Lee Ho-jae's victory or defeat.

Kirikiri had a gut feeling that the end was coming.

Side Story 44

101st Floor (2)

“Hey, you talk too much. Really.”

As an act of anger, I stabbed Ahbooboo into the dragon’s corpse.

Oh, he likes blood.

I pulled him out again

Ahbooboo was very talkative.

This damn talkative sword should be a bit moderate.

How can he chat without taking a break the whole time we fight?

It wasn’t an easy fight either.

The difference between victory and defeat was a very narrow margin.

The enemy that appeared this time was a dragon.

Wearing golden armor that neither magic nor divine power works, it wields the power of the God of Order.

There was no enemy I could deal with without my divinity.

Again, I had to fight while creating divinity in the short term.

Even so, it was a battle with no guarantee of victory.

Listening to the chatter of Ahbooboo who was fluttering in the middle of the battle was a nuisance.

It felt like I was studying intensively for the entrance exam, and someone was playing a song that was banned next to me.

It would have been better to ignore it altogether.

The story was unnecessarily interesting, and I couldn't ignore it because it was such important information.

As soon as the battle was over and concentration was released, the divinity disappeared.

Damn it.

What the hell would they create an environment that would destroy your divinity?

After the weakness came the pain.

The body that had embraced the divine was screaming.

I pinched my forearm strongly.

I felt nothing.

I became insensitive to external pain and excessive pain felt inside the body.

This was the problem.

The pain is familiar, but the senses could not be paralyzed.

No matter how much I lost my powers, my sensory skills, including pain tolerance, would still be there.

The pain I had while gaining divine power was enough to ignore all those skills.

[Still, it was fun. Yes?]

Yes. Ahbooboo's story was interesting.

It was very interesting.

If it hadn't been for that, I would have given Ahbooboo a silencing spell right away.

In the past, Ahbooboo's magic skills were superior, so to stop Ahbooboo's mouth, I had no choice but to throw Ahbooboo into the inventory.

But now that wasn't the case either.

A very simple measure could be used to silence Ahbooboo.

[This story is from my point of view, so it may be different from the truth, but it is almost correct. Where would you go to take another history class like this? This is history before the world was destroyed once. No one knows it.]

That was it.

This is the story before the world is destroyed.

Of course, there were no records left.

Few would know.

It must be a story that even the God of Hope doesn't not know.

The God of Hope said that he was born at the end of the cataclysm, at the end of the world.

He didn't even know about the stories that had been going on before that.

There must be a reason why there was always a gap in the description of the God of Hope.

[Haha.]

Haha what is haha.

“By the way.”

[Yes?]

I stole Ahbooboo from the God of Sky.

I thought that the fact that Ahbooboo existed in the tutorial was proof that he had been abandoned by the God of Sky.

And as soon as he was recovered, I saw that he was divided into several pieces, put back together, and was used as a test object, so I decided that I should bring him back.

However, the relationship between Ahbooboo and the God of Sky was very different from what I had expected.

“Well, I can return you later.”

[If possible, I would like you to pay a little rent.]

It was a funny joke.

[I'm not joking.]

I started walking forward again.

The feeling returned.

I still had numbness and intermittent convulsions, but I was able to move.

It would be good to start off in good condition with plenty of rest, but thanks to Hochi coming in with me, I couldn't do that.

There wasn't much time.

The door appeared.

Since someday, this door has been appearing over and over again.

When you open the door, certain situations and enemies appear.

After defeating everything and walking for a while, a door will appear again.

It reminded me of the 13th floor of the tutorial I went through a long time ago.

A temple of goblins made up of over thirty rooms.

It was also a place that suited the theme of the gateway of trials.

It was probably made after seeing it there.

[The 13th floor. I haven't been there. A very, very long time ago, when I was a human, I went to the temple of goblins. Oh, I didn't tell you then, did I? Can I do it now?]

Again, again.

There were signs that chattering would begin again.

“Concentrate. You break if you don't concentrate like that. Then you die.”

It really was.

It's not like a sword can't be broken.

No matter how holy a sword was, it was not strange to break in battle.

If it wasn't for the sword Ahbooboo knew how to protect himself, he

would have been shattered sooner.

As much as I was fighting the battle, Ahbooboo had to concentrate.

[Fine. What is there in life, no, swordsmanship? I have to do what I need to do right now and do what I want to do.]

He suddenly became a liberated sage.

Did he even come as a sage now?

[Because I have already died many times. Do you know that ? Dying isn't as bad as you think. It feels like a light load. If you have a chance, I recommend that you try to die at least once.]

I understood.

When you let go of your attachment to life, many things become easier.

The choices are wider

But it was impossible.

“You idiot, once I lose, I'm done.”

My divinity is extreme.

There is only one chance.

Even if the resurrection is planned, it is impossible to try to die once.

It was unclear how my divinity would interpret death.

If it is judged a defeat, I end there.

[The more extreme the divinity, the more dangerous it is.]

said Ahbooboo.

Who doesn't know that?

After the first sprouting of divinity, you can realize it immediately.

I thought this would hold me and shake me.

It was unavoidable.

My divinity was extreme.

That was because my situation was desperate at the time.

Enough to destroy everything around me, including myself.

[Oh. I'm the one who experienced it, and it wasn't a pleasant experience.]

"Shut up."

If Lee Yeon-hee didn't come into the tutorial.

What if Yong-yong and Hochi had not been my family?

I thought about it sometimes.

I would have probably skipped the tutorial.

It would have taken a lot longer though.

And when I came out like that, I would have gone crazy.

[What still.....]

I decided not to respond.

Instead, I opened the door.

Glittering gold was the first thing that caught my eye.

Damn it.

After leaving this place, it seems like I will hate gold for the rest of my life.

What the hell was the gold containing the power of the God of Order made of?

What is the point of destroying magic and ignoring divine power?

Its performance is so deceptive, it's almost unbelievable from an opponent's point of view.

Ignoring the gold, there was no choice but to harm the wearer directly.

Trying not to rub against that gold somehow.

I saw the enemies with golden armor and golden spears.

Those monsters.....

No, could you call those things monsters?

The identities of the enemies were the little rabbit beasts.

It looked similar to Kirikiri, but it was a little different.

If Kirikiri looked more like a human, those rabbit beasts certainly looked like tall, bipedal rabbits.

They were like the rabbits of the village where Kirikiri lived, the story of which Ahbooboo had been talking about.

They are rabbits.

It was quite meaningful.

The one we killed in the previous room was a dragon.

“Isn’t it a sea monster we killed in the previous room?”

When I opened the door, there was a beach where mermaids appeared.

A huge sea monster was protruding from the shore.

Of course, he was armed with gold containing the power of the God of Order.

Before that, fairies who ridiculed ideals appeared.

A group of human thieves appeared without end.

A long time ago, I even killed the Great Evil.

It was the same order as the enemies in the High Seeker’s journey that Ahbooboo had told of.

At this point, I could be sure.

When Kirikiri made this place.

She seemed to think that if someone challenged this place, they would surely be the God of Sky.

In fact, Ahbooboo said that the God of Sky had prepared to attack this place.

It was interesting.

Knowing the tangled secrets made it even more interesting.

What was more interesting was the behavior of the rabbits.

The rabbits suddenly threw their golden spears to the ground.

I was taken aback by the action.

I thought they were definitely going to throw it at me.

The rabbits stood in a line and folded their arms.

And lay down as it is.

It looks like... It seemed that all of them who went to a protest were lying on their back with their arms folded.

“What are you doing? You guys.”

I asked so without knowing.

The rabbits heard me and cried out in a loud voice.

“You can’t go beyond this! If you want to go, step on us!”

“That’s right. If you’re going to go, you have to step on us!”

I couldn’t help but ask.

“Why can’t I go over there?”

The rabbits explained.

“All powers must have rules. Even the gods must have rules. No matter how insensitive you are, you must not break the rules.”

So that’s it.

These are the words to the challenger who came here to control the God of Order.

At the time when this place was built, did they not think of the

possibility that the God of Order would run rampant and destroy the world?

“I’m sorry, but I have to pass.”

“Don’t do it! If you’re going, step on us!”

“I’m sure you won’t be able to step on us with those big feet!”

They were funny rabbits.

The golden spear and the sword are thrown away and they are protesting.

If someone is stepping on it, why can’t they step on it?

I staggered forward.

The rabbits got up from their seats in amazement.

“Really, really, I was going to be stepped on!”

“How could you do that!”

“Barbarian! How mean!

No, you told me to step on you.

The rabbits did not open their arms.

“If you’re going over there, kill us!”

“Don’t go there!”

“Yes, don’t!”

It’s fun, it’s fun.

It was definitely fun.

Even I was curious.

What choice did the God of Sky make when he arrived here after losing his divinity?

[I don't know either.]

Even Ahbooboo wasn't sure.

One thing was certain.

I could kill rabbits, with or without divinity, and pass by.

I drew my sword.

No, I tried to pull it out.

The condition of the rabbits was strange.

Yes. This place was no longer a place of ordeal created by Kirikiri.

It was the realm of the God of Order.

The gold attached to the rabbits' bodies like armor and scales began to hum and resonate.

They slowly opened their arms.

They picked up a weapon that had fallen on the floor.

They started coming towards me with a strange noise.

It was expected.

Because it was like this in the previous room where the beach appeared.

There was no shock or embarrassment because the people of the coastal town, who appeared neutral, had experienced the rush to wield the golden sword.

It was regretful.

Those bunnies must have been born with the fate to be controlled by evil gods.

“I’m sorry... run away...”

The rabbit swung the spear.

The tip of the spear containing the power of the God of Order had the power to create and destroy the universe itself.

Sorry what?

I’m more sorry

I swung my sword at the rabbits.

* * *

I opened the door again.

As soon as I opened the door, someone approached me.

It was my divinity that was asleep.

It is not the divinity that was created and swung temporarily during battle.

It was the one I got myself on the 61st floor,

It was my divinity that I cared for and nurtured until I came here.

As soon as I became aware of the existence of the divine, I became a

god again.

I explained it to Ahbooboo, who was bewildered by the sudden change.

“My divinity is back.”

[Yes?]

My divinity, which this place had been holding back, was released.

That fact was confirmed again through other changes.

[I want to eat sweets.]

Seregia, who had lost her divinity and was silent, spoke her first words after a long time.

As soon as she becomes a god again, the words she says are sweet treats.

“It seems that there is no divine restraint from here on.”

It was incomprehensible.

Why did they suddenly return the divinity?

There is one thing I felt when I came here.

The being who created and designed this place really hated divinity.

There was a clear sense of malice.

Somehow they tried to reject and exclude the divine.

It was more than obsessive and persistent.

As I face the ordeal for control of the god of order.

If there is a divine nature, objective and correct judgment cannot be made, so the very idea of having to go through trials and judgments while removing the divinity was like that.

It was a strong disbelief in the divine.

[I want to eat sweets.]

“I heard you, Seregia. I’ll get you some sweets as soon as I get out of here.”

Serezia was quiet at that moment.

Seeing Seregia who had turned into a candy ghost, I also thought that the designer’s thoughts were not so wrong.

Divinity may be a factor that adversely affects intelligence and judgment.

Anyway, it made me wonder why such a designer would now come and return the divinity.

“I know two things.”

[What is it?]

Ahbooboo asked.

“The end is near.”

Not much left.

The existence of the God of Order was felt very close.

It was almost close.

[What about the other one?]

As soon as I became a god, I tried to check Hochi's status, who entered the entrance.

Soon after, I could see Hochi, Yong-yong, and the old man following me.

I know Hochi and Yong-yong, but I didn't know that the old man followed me.

I don't know why he, who was not even strong enough, came all the way here.

They were in danger.

Yong-yong even took out his true self, unusually.

Even the spirits were fighting hard, wielding a greatsword with an ungodly body.

Even Hochi was fighting with a bizarre look I had never seen before.

But it didn't seem like they could last long.

"I don't have much time. I have to finish it as soon as possible and get back to the kids."

Ahbooboo asked me about it.

[Is it very dangerous?]

"Very."

Side Story 45

1400 (1)

‘Can’t we go back to the old house?’

‘Jirji, we’ve already moved. From now on, we have to live here.’

It was an old memory.

After moving to the city, everything was awkward.

He moved from a small town with fewer than two hundred villagers to a city with countless citizens.

It was only natural that a country boy who had to live in the largest city on the planet could not adapt.

There were a lot of differences between life in his hometown and life in the city.

What he wears right now has changed, and what he eats has changed.

The people he met have changed, and the time and places to spend time have also changed.

The boy had to adapt.

‘Jirji Cantabria? It’s tacky, how can a name be so tacky? You must have been born tacky from birth.’

There was also the subtle disregard and bullying of children of the same age.

The boy was embarrassed by many things, but he began to adapt to

them one by one.

He had to use public transport to go to school.

He had to go to the academy with his friends to keep up with the class.

As he got older like that, he made new friends, and soon he was able to adjust to the city.

He missed his hometown, but he no longer wanted to go back.

A boy named Jirji Cantabria became used to city life.

Unfortunately, his family did not.

His father often came home smelling like alcohol.

What day was it?

There was a day when Jirji's father came home with a bottle of wine in one hand.

When his father returned home, he screamed and continued to drink.

That day was the starting point.

His father started drinking at home.

That was the beginning

The precariously maintained home began to shake violently.

Jirji watched his father's drunken days over and over again.

No matter how late he went home, he had no choice but to watch because he had to sleep at home.

His father forgot day and night, spending all his time drinking alcohol.

The only time he was quiet was when he fell asleep drunk.

Jirji always started wishing his father was asleep.

“Damn superhuman bastards!”

Jirji’s father often shouted that.

Jirji knew why his father hated superhumans.

Because they were always talking about it in the news.

The superhumans who prevented abnormalities lost their work.

They were respected superhumans, but they could not remain in society without work.

superhumans began to appear in normal society.

Society also encouraged it.

With the exception of superhumans who occasionally become criminals and the superhumans who stop them, superhumans also began to find work for themselves and find employment in companies.

That was the beginning of the misfortune.

Superhumans could do the work of a hundred people alone.

Jirji’s father lost his job just like that.

His mother always said that he could get another job soon because his father was a capable man.

His father couldn’t.

Some companies wanted skilled workers, but none of them wanted alcoholic workers.

It became more and more frequent that his father scolded Jirji.

Beyond the harshness, Jirji was hurt and frightened.

His mother took his sibling and left the house.

All that was left in the house were his father, Jirji, and the bottles.

Then one day,

Jirji became a superhuman.

He acquired superpowers which was an extremely rare event.

It may be that the time he spent with his father affected his awakening.

Jirji was delighted.

Purely.

The boy was very well aware of the status and value of superhumans in this society.

He ran to his father.

He believed that as much as he was pleased with himself, his father would also be pleased with him.

What returned was the alcohol bottle.

The sticky liquor ran down his cheeks.

A sharp piece of glass was felt on his skin.

He wasn't hurt.

There were no injuries either.

His superhuman was the strengthening of his body.

But the bottle made him feel a lot.

The shards of glass in the broken bottle were cold and creepy.

He felt malicious, he felt murderous.

He was bewildered, but he left behind his father who was already so drunk that he couldn't even get up.

Jirji left the house.

His father hated superhumans.

Because superhumans took his job.

Because the superhumans were more powerful.

Jirji thought that his father would welcome his awakening.

Because his father loves him, his son.

It was a stupid idea.

Jirji found out that the premises he had taken for granted were wrong.

Jirji, who had expected that his father would gain strength and shake off the alcohol due to his awakening, just disowned his family.

It was easy.

He became a superhuman and had to be separated from his family when his compulsory education period began.

After a year of training to control his abilities and improve his morals and social skills, Jirji had neither seen nor contacted his family.

When Jirji finished his education and returned to the city.

He hadn't seen his family in a very long time.

It was nice to see the face of his family after a year, even with all the wounds.

It was also nice to see the scattered families gathered in one place.

The family asked him about the cost of living.

They claimed that those who raised him had a stake in the money that Jirji would earn while living as a superhuman.

Jirji left them again.

But his family pursued him tenaciously.

One day, Jirji impulsively called the police.

After receiving the report, the police rushed to the scene and immediately pointed an electric club at Jirji's family.

Jirji's was startled.

As he tested its performance several times during his superhuman training, he knew just how powerful the electric club was.

It was a weapon that could easily take the lives of ordinary people.

He didn't know that the police who was dispatched was such crazy violent policeman.

Jirji stopped the police.

The police looked back as if asking why.

She was smiling so brightly.

“Is there a problem?”

The family ran away.

The police even gave him her number, telling him to call her anytime if necessary.

Jirji knew that she had a crush on him from her smile.

It took less than five minutes for the police to return, and for Jirji to flush the note with her phone number in it down the toilet in a complicated way.

Having returned to society in that way, Jirji learned that his superhuman problems were not confined to his own family.

The whole society was groaning.

The cycle of discrimination continued without end.

The incompetents were demeaned, and the superhumans were despised.

Jirji remembered his hometown.

There was also a superhuman.

He was Jirji's friend.

He was a friend who made ice by hand, and he was so talented that he could make ice in the shape of flowers.

Everyone envied the boy and gathered around him.

Jirji liked the friend.

He's like all the other kids.

There, the superhuman was a mysterious and notable person.

He was not the object of envy.

Even that superhuman child did not ignore nor looked down on others.

He felt that he wanted to return home.

He couldn't.

Everything has already changed for him.

Jirji began acting as a superhuman.

Instead of getting a job at a company, he started working as a civil servant.

His superhuman work was also tough for him.

Jirji, who had physical abilities and acquired abilities, was an object of subtle humiliation and contempt.

His seniors would quarrel with him for no apparent reason.

He didn't do a good job.

"No, what the hell is the problem! How can you miss the bastard you've caught!"

"...Ha, but if I had rushed in there, that person would have been seriously hurt. Besides, I still don't know who the real culprit is."

His senior was very angry.

“Who cares if they get hurt? It doesn’t matter if they get hurt or not. We have immunity during the investigation, immunity. You, aren’t you trained? And you’re not trying to find out when you don’t know if he’s the real culprit.”

There was a difference between Jirji’s common sense and his seniors’ common sense.

“Ugh, that’s why those born with incompetence are like this.”

As he listened to the words that followed, Jirji hoped that the words of his senior would not remain in his mind and pass without being remembered.

Jirji was assigned to the local police support department.

There was only one superhuman from the support department, who was perceived as a chore due to the poor salary.

He adapted slowly but steadily to the work.

When there is an accident.

When a superhuman was urgently needed to intervene.

However, in an ambiguous situation that did not require violent suppression, Jirji was dispatched.

His role was usually to reconcile people and sort things out.

It was hard work.

He rarely used his power.

He did that because he had to keep facing people and keep an eye on their conflicts.

Jirji was getting busier.

No matter how much he tried to solve it, the problem persisted.

Things became more and more dangerous.

The problems of discrimination and inequality that were latent in society created hatred for each other.

That hatred was so evident that it could at any time lead to violence and murder.

He looked at the sky

A huge asteroid was floating in the middle of the blue sky.

An extraterrestrial asteroid that fell to a planet.

The last anomaly solved by superhumans.

The great superhuman sacrificed himself and sealed the asteroid.

It stopped in the sky just like that.

The existence of that great superhuman was treated like a god.

To the hero who saved the world, people prayed and paid tribute to him.

Jirji grew up learning the story of that superhuman.

But now that asteroid was no longer seen as a symbol of honor and sacrifice.

That was a symbol of injustice.

It symbolizes and maintains superhuman supremacy.

It was the end of the year.

It is the period when the general meeting of the superhumans is held.

During this period, superhumans were summoned on a day to hold a meeting, but in fact, only a few top superhumans were able to participate.

The rest are just spectators.

Jirji sat in the front row of the B-class.

In fact, there was nothing strange about his ability being treated as an A-class.

However, he was not able to rise to the A-class as he had the disadvantages of a physical ability.

There was a clear line.

Unsurprisingly, the agenda of the General Assembly was about the great superhuman.

There were only things like to rescue him, who must have already died, to retrieve his remains, and to build a memorial.

The agenda items to be dealt with at this meeting were not that.

How serious is the problem of superhumans in our society?

Only the superhumans themselves could solve those problems.

But they weren't interested in the matter.

Jirji, who took the matter seriously, did not even have a say.

The meeting has ended.

A week later, he received a call asking him to attend the general meeting again.

This is why he hates the end of the year.

Jirji muttered like that and headed to the conference room.

Someone sat down next to Jirji.

It was the first time

In the general meeting seating, seats are always seated in order of rank, so sitting next to Jirji means that he is of the same level as him.

He has an A-grade level of power, but for one reason or another, he is a very vaguely-ranked person with a B-grade ability.

He felt a strange sense of unity.

“1400?”

“Uh, 1400”

It was just as Jirji had thought.

A thousand four hundred.

That was the score.

The man asked how he knew his score.

Jirji was puzzled.

Usually, they probably don't know the meaning of 1,400 points.

He guessed the situation.

He was born with superhuman powers, but if he hides his abilities like an incapable person and later joins the society of superhumans, he may not be so ignorant of common sense.

Jirji quickly finished guessing.

“It seems like it’s the first time you’ve been to the conference room.”

Jirji explained the composition of the conference room.

“Why are you explaining it so hard? It’s just that you’re sitting in order of the strongest.”

As the man said that, he looked at his seat and the seat next to him, Jiji.

“You and I are on the same level.”

“Right.”

It was a useless curiosity, and it was a joke.

Perhaps he was overly excited because of the sense of unity he had felt in a long time.

So Jirji made a little childish joke.

“If we’re the same grade. I’ll be much stronger though.”

“What?”

Jirji made eye contact with the man.

He was about to laugh at him, who was passionate about jokes, but suddenly his body stiffened.

He felt terrified.

He felt a sudden chill, and Jirji had to panic.

Soon it was proved that his embarrassment was not in vain.

The madman sitting next to him hurriedly slammed his fist towards Jirji's side.

For the first time since he became a superhuman.

No, for the first time in his life

Jirji had to feel the pain of dying.

Side Story 46

1400 (2)

The pain in his side, which had been raging for about ten minutes, passed, and Jirji was finally able to come to his senses.

It was painful enough that he thought he was going to die like this, but fortunately, his internal organs were not hurt and his muscles were stiff because of shock.

It was just so terribly painful.

He wiped the tears from his eyes and looked at the madman sitting next to him.

The madman was staring at him.

Surprisingly, there was no malice in his gaze.

“Are you okay? Why are you pretending to be strong like that? It makes people flutter.”

What did you mean by pretending to be strong?

Because of that silly joke?

Is that why he attacked without saying a word?

He wasn't the usual madman.

In the meantime, he doesn't know why the word “fluttered” was attached.

The context behind the words did not match.

The madman with the short name ‘Ho’ patted Jirji on the back.

The words were patted, patted with the palm of his hand, yet Jirji’s back tingled.

“Hey, 1400.”

“...What?”

Jirji instinctively shrugged.

He thought this madman might hit him again.

He had no reason to hit him.

The reason is that he hadn’t even stabbed his side with his elbow a while ago.

“What superpower do you have?”

It was frustrating.

Jirji had the superpower of strengthening his body,

This superpower is always activated independently of his will.

The madman who stabbed him in the side must have felt it too.

Jirji’s side was harder than any other rock.

Is he really asking because he doesn’t know?

There was no more thought in Jirji’s mind.

Too many embarrassments overlapped.

He just answered honestly.

“It’s, it’s body strengthening...”

“Really?”

* * *

Ho revealed his superhuman type.

He doesn’t really care,

As he showed his ID, it seemed that he didn’t know much about his superhuman type.

Surprisingly, Ho’s superpower was the summoner type.

It was frustrating.

A superhuman who summons beasts beats a physically capable person with their bare body.

He can’t believe it hurts so much

He couldn’t understand by common sense.

Did he read the embarrassment on Jirji’s face?

Ho showed his own abilities.

“Kyaaak!”

“Aackk!”

Jirji suddenly screamed like a girl when a screaming monster suddenly appeared behind him.

He was really surprised.

Really.

It was surprising.

The appearance of the summoned monster was surprising.

The head was a frog-like amphibian.

No, the frog was right.

However, the torso and limbs were mammals covered with fluffy fur.

The fluttering tail looked like a real dog.

“What is that?”

“Is that a frog or a dog?”

The other superhumans around them also murmured in surprise.

Ho said with a somewhat proud expression on his face.

“It’s a transparent dog-frog.” (ahahah this is a bit of a wordplay but idk how to make it into english, so 개구리 means frog but just 개 means dog, so in english it’s frdog? XD dfrog?)

* * *

The frog monster was actually a dog-frog.

It was a filthy name.

A frog’s head is combined with a dog’s body to make it a dog-frog.

Ho explained that dog-frogs have invisibility and that it was the dog-frog who attacked Jirji’s side earlier, not himself.

As if that makes sense.

If you’re going to tell a lie, do it in a better way.

Jirji thought to himself.

Jirji was a body-strengthening superhuman.

Even in this field, he can be proud of being one of the best.

He could tell who had hit him.

It was clear that this madman attacked his side.

Not the frog.

It wasn't even a frog with invisibility.

It was just summoned at that moment.

“Come on, take it.”

Ho said there was some misunderstanding, so they should reconcile.

It was a very cool offer of reconciliation for the bastard.

Jirji bought something to eat at the kiosk.

The meeting is long and boring.

He did it because he couldn't participate, and he wasn't interested in the agenda.

So, he usually spends his meeting time eating.

He usually ate alone, but today, for the first time, he has someone sitting next to him to eat with.

He never saw him before.

“Thank you, 1400.”

“Hey, can you stop calling me 1400?”

1400 points is never a good thing.

It was enough strength to be treated as a B-class, but it is an ambiguous score that was inadequate to become an A-class.

And the reason for the disqualification is this.

‘It’s too low to go up to A-class.’ that’s what it meant

The reason was that the higher grades did not suit Jirji, who had the basic ability of strengthening the body in addition to the acquired ability.

Ho ignored Jirji’s words.

He thought that Ho was going to keep calling him 1400.

Jirji thought about it.

About Ho’s ability.

First of all, he seemed to have two abilities: a summoning-type ability that summoned a frog monster and a physical-type ability that struck his side.

Two abilities.

Superhumans with two or more abilities.

He didn’t understand.

Those who are born with multiple superpowers are greatly favored.

They had no choice but to be so, as it was a talent that stood out even among superhumans who were regarded as nobles.

Among the nobles, it could be called a sacred bone*. (*based on the Silla nobility rank system. Sacred bone (seonggol, 성골) is on the highest level. Read more here https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bone-rank_system*)

What's more, one of those abilities was able to break through Jirji's physical strengthening and inflict a clear blow.

In Jirji's mind, Ho was not a superhuman who would remain in the B rank.

Clearly, he had to be at an A level or higher, that is, among the high-ranking superhumans who were meeting there.

‘Is there something wrong?’

With an attitude as if he didn't know much about superhumans.

Considering his words that he had been here for the first time, he thought that there might be a complicated story behind it.

“Hey, this is delicious.”

He was a very special person.

Ho continued to speak.

He wasn't a talkative person, but at the end of the conversation he threw up new topics one by one.

It's like asking him to tell Ho a little bit more about this.

Jirji told him what he wanted to say.

It wasn't a bad experience.

Jirji, who has rarely had conversations with other people outside of work recently, felt like he was talking to a friend.

As the conversation continued, it was also significant that Ho's

attitude changed to be more favorable.

As their conversation continued, the meeting of the superhumans continued.

Finally, their agenda was finalized.

<SSS-class superhuman Akaiden rescue and extraterrestrial asteroid extinction operation>

“Are you really doing that...?”

It was absurd.

It has already been two years since the great superhuman Akaiden was stuffed into the sky with an asteroid.

During that time, the thought that mankind had on the asteroid was, please, let that time bomb never explode again and sleep forever.

It would be a concern even if it carried out an asteroid extinction operation with military weapons.

That included Akaiden’s rescue operation.

It was clear how the operation was going to go.

The superhumans will be put in.

‘I think they’re going to die terribly, what do you think?’

No, it wasn’t a matter of victims, it was questionable whether the operation was possible.

What were the top superhumans thinking in agreeing to that operation?

It is most likely that they are going to die.

Looking at the contents of the operation, the risk was so high that he thought it was a trap of the administrative government to weaken the power of the superhumans.

Conversely, did it start out of optimism that a world of complete superhumans would unfold if only that operation was successful?

He had no idea whether the administration and the Association of Superhumans or the plans they had could resolve the conflict.

Because he was not included in their society.

He just had to guess.

‘If it fails and the monsters of the asteroid fall to the ground.....’

Everything will fall apart

Jirji left the conference room with worry.

“Where are you going?”

Even after getting up from his seat, Ho, who had been walking with him keeping pace, asked.

“I’m going home.”

Work starts early tomorrow morning.

Jirji sighed.

He was busy taking a day or two off a month, but he felt like he had no more free time to be called to meetings like this.

Ho said, who was staring at Jirji from the side.

“Then I’m going to your home.”

“Huh?”

“I’m going to your house.”

Are you deaf or something? He heard the words, but Jirji didn’t understand.

Why are you coming to my house?

* * *

“Come in.”

Said Ho.

The tone of the talk looked like that of a host welcoming guests.

Jirji was embarrassed.

“This is... my home.”

Why is Ho telling himself to come in first as soon as the door to his house opens?

Jirji took off his shoes and went inside.

“Well.....”

He brought that madman to his house.

Should he have left him out in the middle?

That’s what he thought, but there was a reason why Jirji brought him home.

He was anxious.

He wondered what that bastard was going to do outside.

The human named Ho had no knowledge of superhumans and of this society.

He acted as if he had just come out of the world.

Besides, he beats people at will.

Jirji survived because he was hit in the side, but if that was an attack on ordinary people, a corpse would have been made in its place.

Jirji, who was working hard to keep the city safe, didn't want to let that madman out.

He cannot even designate protection.

Of course, if that guy commits a crime, he'll be stopped by the police.

After he committed the crime.

Jirji didn't want that.

That's why it seemed like it would be okay to have that unidentified superhuman by his side and watch.

His own personal life and time to rest are threatened, however, Jirji, a superhuman full of justice, gladly accepted the sacrifice.

"You're living a decent life."

"Because the salary is not bad."

In fact, the salary was rather poor.

For a job that only superhumans can do.

But by the standard of ordinary people's wages, it was definitely not a small amount of money.

“No, you cleaned up well.”

Ho said that he knew it because he lived alone, but it was not easy to live in such a neat way.

“It’s neat and tidy, but it’s like a house where several people live. It feels like. Did you say you live alone? Do you have a lot of lovers?”

Jirji didn’t have a girlfriend.

But he knew what Ho was talking about.

Jirji put a lot of effort into decorating the house.

Like a house where many people live.

Yes, like a house where one family lives.

It was decorated like that.

Putting his father’s study desk in.

He also displayed pretty plates that his mother loved.

His sibling’s favorite game console was also bought at a high price.

As he was collecting things that were not so necessary, it really looked like a house where many people lived.

Of course, there was only one person living in this house.

It was the furniture he had bought to fill his loneliness.

Sometimes the furniture made him feel more lonely.

Jirji shrugged and scratched his head unknowingly.

He was also a little embarrassed.

He didn't know what it was, but his heart felt hot.

“What is that?”

Ho asked.

“game console.”

Ho was intrigued by the word “game console”, so he went closer and looked at it.

In fact, Jirji didn't know much about the game console.

He wasn't even interested.

He tried it a few times after he bought it, but after a few minutes, he gave up.

Maybe it was because he didn't buy it because he wanted to enjoy the game.

It didn't feel fun at all.

It was a game console that he bought with the intention that his brother, who was always envious of the game consoles at his friends' houses, would like to see them.

Although he had cut ties with his family, he knew that maybe it was a small regret that remained in his heart.

Ho reproduced the image of his younger brother that he imagined in his head when he bought the game console.

There was a twinkling in his eyes.

That excitement and redness.

It was pure joy like a child.

“Why, would you like to try it?”

Jirji smiled without realizing it and asked.

Side Story 47

1400 (3)

“Scared?”

Jirji fell for the provocation.

In fact, he’s never really played the game properly.

Whatever confidence he had or what pride he had, he didn’t want to lose it

And he lost

He lost very badly.

He never dreamed that he would feel so miserable after losing the game.

“Hey, this isn’t your first time playing this game. Be honest.”

“It’s true that it’s the first time I’m playing. I’m playing it for the first time today. I saw this game console for the first time today. You’re not very good at it. Why? Are you angry?”

Ho was a crazy guy, but he was also good at nagging.

Even if it looked like the game was close, he always somehow won.

Thinking that the gap was narrowing little by little, Jirji continued to challenge him again over and over but soon, he realized one thing.

Ho was adjusting the game so that Jirji was barely losing.

The difference in skill was too great.

“Next game? One more?”

“Not anymore.”

“Scared?”

“I am not!”

Jirji got angry without realizing it.

“Oho, oh my world. Are you forfeiting? How many days in total is it now?”

Ho bet on the game.

He bet that if he won, he can stay at Jirji’s house for a day, and if Jirji wins, he would grant one thing Jirji wants.

Jirji was defeated in a straight line.

Ho won a five-day stay.

He thought it didn’t matter.

Anyway, he wasn’t thinking of putting that madman outside, so he had to put Ho next to him instead.

He drank a glass of cold water and his head cooled down, Jirji felt uncomfortable for no reason.

It had been a long time since he had yelled and was angry at anyone because of his own feelings.

He was a little apologetic, and he was also worried that the madman would in turn get angry at him for yelling.

Fortunately, Ho didn't show any reaction.

Instead, he giggled as he watched Jirji get angry.

He looked happy.

No, is it fun to watch other people lose at games and feel offended?

Why is that fun?

He couldn't understand.

As expected, the madman was a madman.

It was late, but he prepared dinner.

As he sat down at the table, he had fifty thousand thoughts.

He couldn't believe that he was such an idiot for first sitting down with him at his own table.

While eating, Ho asked questions one by one.

Just like he did at the meeting of the superhumans.

They were usually questions related to common sense in this society.

Jirji's speculation that Ho seems to have just appeared in society for some reason seemed to be correct to some extent.

Seeing Ho who complimented Jirji's meal, Jirji thought about it.

This madman was more normal than he thought.

He did, except for one or two problems.

That he acts as if he doesn't care about the eyes around him.

That he treats himself too comfortably (to the point that Jirji felt a little embarrassed at first seeing him).

He acts unexpectedly.

He lacks common sense.

His eyes actually have good taste.

He attacks people for no reason.

Come to think of it, it wasn't just one or two things.

Anyway, except for the craziness that popped out, he looked like a normal person at first glance.

Jirji only thought of Ho as a madman who had to stay by his side so he could keep a watch on him.

Little by little, he started to wonder about that madman.

Maybe Jirji, who had been lonely for a long time, was just curious about strangers.

"Your house?"

"Don't have any."

Does that make sense?

He could buy his own house by choosing any of the houses that were sold first to superhumans.

A person with that level of superpower would make a lot of money no matter what he did, so there was no need to worry about money.

"What did you do?"

“I’m not working.”

He was jobless and homeless.

Jirji came up with an idea impulsively.

“Would you like to work with me?”

* * *

Work started in the morning.

Jirji had to regret his decision last night.

Having to roam the city center full of citizens with this madman.

It was the worst decision.

His nerves were on the brink.

He was a man who would attack without hesitation if he ever bumped into a passerby on the shoulder.

He was called to solve a problem, and even when he arrived at the place to which he was dispatched, he was not able to concentrate on the problem as he was paying attention to the madman.

Fortunately, Ho did not cause any problems.

All he did was walk around the city center and ask questions whenever he had any questions.

And,

“How did you do it?”

“Transparent Frog.”

“Kyaaak!”

Ho solved the problem easily.

With the excuse of the invisible frog.

“Are these problems common?”

Ho asked.

The problem that was just solved was a fight between students with superpower abilities at school.

It was an odd thing for the police to come forward.

It was too risky for school teachers to solve (and, in fact, for the police too).

When such a problem occurs, Jirji is contacted, and Jirji, who is a class B superhuman, moderates the situation.

“A lot. It seems to be getting more and more common.”

“Then it’s not temporary. What’s wrong?”

Ho asked.

What’s the problem?

Jirji had no choice but to talk about universally known facts.

Fundamental differences in abilities between the superhuman and the non-superhumans, social imbalance, sense of privilege, and hatred towards each other.

About those things.

Ho listened intently to Jirji.

Jirji had to feel a bit silly while explaining.

These things were common sense, so there was no need to explain them out loud.

The work continued.

And the invisible frog continued to be summoned.

“Kyaaak!”

The frog roared.

Nearby citizens also screamed and walked away.

“I didn’t do it. The Invisible Frog did it.”

“...Say something that makes sense. With so many people, how could that big frog chase us?”

“Our transparent frog can fly.”

I’m sure it does.

Is this really an excuse to believe in?

Surprisingly, people believed.

“Wow! It’s a monster frog!”

A child came screaming.

Jirji clicked his tongue inside.

There was a girl who liked seeing that weird frog monster.

She was a very unique child.

“I’m sorry, can my child take a close look?”

The child’s parents asked.

He tried to refuse that she couldn’t

“Yes. Our frog doesn’t bite.”

Ho didn’t really care and allowed it.

The child even touched the frog’s torso as she looked at it up close.

The frog was really docile.

Soon people flocked in.

It was reported in the media.

The appearance of a superpower that summons a flying invisible frog.

It didn’t look strong and scary.

It was reported that the versatile frog is a great help in various rescue and policing operations.

No one seemed to think that Ho was cheating with the frog.

Jirji realized how mysterious and unknown the superpowers are.

If the frog, the pen name, and the superpowers had become the talk of the town first, it might have been quickly discovered that the frog was a trick.

However, it was first reported in the media and then released to the public.

Even the superhumans who came in contact with frogs and Ho through the news were just amazed that there was that kind of ability.

Maybe Jirji is the only person who has seen that invisible frog from an objective standpoint.

Jirji began to doubt Ho's abilities.

People were amazed that it was a frog that was too versatile to be a B-class summoned beast.

But Jirji, who has been watching her every move, thought a little differently.

It was overly perfect and powerful beyond versatility.

Enough to solve any situation without any problems.

It seemed omnipotent.

On the road blocked by soil and sand, a pile of dirt floated up and flew back to its original location, as if using telekinetic power.

When he saw an injured child, he summoned an invisible frog to lick the wounded area with its tongue, and then the wound healed as if it had been washed.

It put people to sleep and also stunned them.

When it was hot, it made ice and even let the wind blow.

Jirji decided to do a little more research on Ho.

Jirji, a B-class person and a member of the police, had the right to read the personal information of other superhumans.

Amazing results came out.

Ho had no records.

No birth record, no record of superhuman registration, no criminal record, no educational process record, no criminal record, no record of

superhuman activity.

Jirji checked Ho's superhuman registration certificate.

It was not a fake registration certificate.

However, the record of his registration certificate did not remain as data.

At this point, Gird stopped his investigation.

'S-class hiding his identity... Maybe the superpower he has was more than that, a superpower. Was there such a person among them?'

Those with superhuman powers at that level are treated like royalty by society.

Of course, they were completely open to the public.

From appearance to personality to abilities.

But, as Jirji knew, there was no one like Ho.

* * *

"Oh, today was tiring."

As he entered the house, Ho said.

It wasn't really hard, it was just cliché.

"What's so hard about it? The frog did all the work."

said Jirji.

"No....."

"What?"

“Yeah, the frog did it all.”

Jirji held back his laughter.

Jirji took a seat in the living room and started massaging the lying frog.

Ho went to the refrigerator and took out his drink and drank it.

Then he pours another glass and brings it to Jirji.

“You worked hard too, 1400.”

“Call me by my first name.”

“Dog bone.”

A few days have passed since he started living with Ho.

Although it was a short time, Jirji’s life was much changed

It was the same when he went to work and then got back from work and went to sleep.

But staying with someone and moving together was different.

For Jirji, that was a big difference.

Ho hasn’t had any problems since the day he first met him.

Rather, he acted so diligently that he was told that he was an exemplary superhuman.

Only once, when he met an S-class man, did he seem to attack him as the first day.

But he soon stopped.

Jirji remembered Ho's words very vividly.

‘What, he looks weaker than you.’

Could it be?

There was a huge difference between the two grades, S and B.

But somehow Jirji felt better.

And Jirji learned one thing.

When Ho sees a strong superhuman, he wants to fight them blindly.

However, if the person turns out to be weak, he quickly loses interest in them.

It was an ancient gladiator-like mindset.

Ho's abilities that he's seen for a few days were comparable to those of the superhuman association's top talents.

Rather, he seemed overwhelming.

It seemed that there was no superhuman who could feel Ho's fighting spirit.

Jirji felt even more relieved.

“A game before going to bed?”

“I will not.”

Jirji refused.

If he accepted that, he wouldn't sleep all night and would just play games.

Some of the things he learned over time are:

Ho can't sleep.

He suffered from severe insomnia.

If he wasn't a superhuman, his health would have been in danger.

He seemed to lie in bed a few times trying to sleep, but he soon gave up and grabbed the game console, and stayed up all night until morning.

One time, when Jirji tried to buy him a sleeping pill, he refused, saying, "I'm not in the mood to take drugs."

"Really, let's just play one game and go to bed."

"...Yeah, I'll only play one game and then I'll go to sleep."

Jirji stayed up all night playing the game again that day.

His body was tired, but his mood was not bad.

He was very good.

Jirji was thinking this to himself.

He wondered if this would be the case if he had a brother.

He was anxious at times.

When Ho was talking, he was constantly asking questions.

At some point, the number of those questions was rapidly declining.

There was nothing more to ask of Jirji.

Within a few days, Ho had adapted to this society.

He gained the common sense of society and simple historical knowledge.

Jirji was worried as he looked at the issue where the questions had disappeared.

Worried that one day Ho might suddenly disappear.

“Let’s take a break.”

He went out to the veranda for a while and had a cigarette.

Ho didn’t smoke, but he followed him out onto the veranda.

“That asteroid.”

said Ho, pointing to the asteroid.

The asteroid still in the sky was clearly visible even in the night sky thanks to the bright moonlight.

“How do people feel when they see that?”

It was the first question in a long time.

Jirji felt a strange sense of relief and said his thoughts.

Side Story 48

1400 (3)

“Asteroid?”

“Huh.”

Jirji said.

“Respect and gratitude. Well, maybe that’s it.”

Superhumans stuffed into the sky were great men worthy of respect and gratitude.

At lunchtime, there were still many people who looked up to the sky and commemorated the sacrifice of the superhumans.

Some prayed to the asteroid and worshiped it like a god.

“However.”

Jirji said.

It was something he wouldn’t normally add.

“I don’t know if that’s a good thing or not. It’s forever stuck in the sky like that.”

“Why?”

The great superhuman saved the world through sacrifice.

His sacrifice will go down in history, and people of his future generations will remember him forever.

Of course, that's a good thing.

But there is nothing in the world that works perfectly well.

Whenever there is a positive effect, there is always a negative effect as well.

Superhumans feel a sense of reward when they see that asteroid.

In addition to the inherent sense of superiority and privilege, superhumans have changed the world, so they have the illusion that their actions should be tolerated.

For the powerless, it evokes a sense of inferiority and alienation for what they do not have.

Such a symbol is embedded in the middle of the sky, and you can see it with your eyes at any time of the year by raising your head high.

Jirji wondered if the asteroid could ever remain a good symbol for mankind.

Someday, there will be people who look at that asteroid and swear at it.

The asteroid may become a symbol of insult and injustice.

Forgetting the noble sacrifices of the great man.

"That's right. Looking at the social atmosphere these days, I'm worried."

As Jirji released one thing he had in his heart, he felt that his body had become a little lighter.

It was something he could say because the other person was Ho.

It was a story he couldn't tell anyone else.

Probably, the moment it came out, it was clear that he would be socially dead.

People admired and loved the great man that stopped the asteroid, and they will be outraged by Jirji's slanderous and degrading comments.

"That's what a symbol is. Whether it's negative or positive. That's why... they want to... themselves."

said Ho.

Ho's words were not heard well.

Some words were drowned out by the sound of the wind.

The windows on the veranda were closed.

Jirji didn't feel any discomfort or doubt about the kind words he had not heard.

* * *

"Noisy."

"Oh, show me the invisible frog! Show us!"

It was a kid who returned.

Ho frowned.

If it had been just a few days ago, Jirji would have been startled and worried that Ho might attack the child.

"Look at this little bastard talking."

However, Ho did not hit the child blindly, even though he would swear at the child.

It was difficult to say that he was desirable, but he was not a dangerous fiend to the child.

“If the favor continued, they had a right, didn’t you say so? Hey, did you leave the invisible frog? Huh? Did you leave it to me?”

Of course not hitting the child doesn’t mean that he wasn’t scared.

There is a saying that dogs recognize the dog breeders.

It is a story that no matter how ferocious a dog may be when a dog breeder appears, they instinctively feel fear and become terrified.

Jirji thought that was a very plausible statement.

You can tell by looking at Ho.

Oh, this bastard is crazy.

His screws are loose.

When our eyes meet, he gets that feeling.

It was too harsh an impression for a young child to bear.

The child started crying.

Ho suddenly panicked and tried to appease the child.

From the side view, it looked like a madman who couldn’t hold back his anger at all and grabbed the child and beat him.

Ho eventually gave up and summoned a frog to appease the child.

“Wow! Frog!”

The child immediately stopped crying and ran to the frog.

“This clever little boy. He must have pretended to cry.”

Ho murmured.

“No, you can make him cry a little bit. You’re driving people to the trash with this. Do you think it’s easy to soothe the child?”

“Who are you talking to?”

Ho was muttering to himself into the air.

He was a friend who talked to himself often.

But sometimes he felt like he wasn’t talking to himself.

It was just the same case.

He sounded like he was talking to someone, not to himself.

“Huh?”

“Because who are you talking to?”

Ho seemed a little perplexed.

Then, soon after, he found an excuse.

“Transparent Frog.”

“Keeek!”

The frog that was playing with the child roared.

The child was excited to see it.

“Say something that makes sense.”

Jirji was really curious.

On one occasion, he wondered if Ho was talking to someone through a small earphone, and he even looked into his ear.

Who is Ho really talking to?

Does he have any telepathic abilities?

Ho suddenly turned his head.

As he said earlier, Ho's impression was not very good.

He wasn't ugly, he wasn't rough.

The color of the eyes had a great influence on his impression.

When Ho suddenly changed his face and adjusted his posture, Jirji was also nervous.

"Are you curious about the truth?"

Jirji swallowed his saliva and nodded his head.

"I'm sorry, but I can't just tell you the truth."

"Why?"

"It's too dangerous a truth. Truth comes with a price. You have to choose."

What does that mean?

What kind of novel bullshit is this crazy guy talking about today?

Jirji thought so.

But Ho's expression was even more serious.

"Come on, here's the blue pill, and there's the red pill. If you take the

blue pill, the story ends here. You go back to your daily life, and you'll continue to believe in what you believe now. But if you take the red pill, I'll answer your questions. I'll give it to you. I'll reveal the hidden truth."

There was neither the blue pill nor the red pill on Ho's palm. (*a nod to the scene in the Ma*rix)

"What will you do?"

"Alright. If you don't want to tell me, don't. I don't want to ask about something you don't want to say."

Jirji said so.

Inside, he had to feel a somewhat droopy sensation.

If Jirji really wanted the answer to the end, Ho would probably have given the answer.

Jirji knew the answer too.

No, he didn't know exactly, but he was guessing.

However, he had a foreboding feeling that if he heard those words directly, Ho would leave him on that day.

"Hey, are you upset? Should I just tell you?"

"No, that's fine"

"Ah, you bastard. What are you upset about, okay, I'll tell you."

"Because that's fine!"

Jirji raised his voice.

"I'll tell you. Actually, now, look. This is called an ego sword. He knows how to talk, so I talk to him sometimes. He knows how to use

magic, and in fact, all the things the invisible frog has ever done were him. So every time you massage the frog, he gets a little jealous. He speaks like an ordinary old man, but he's actually a little offended. He sometimes shows cuteness while acting unpleasant, and he calls himself the holy sword of the gods, but what they do is just a magic sword... Hey, where are you going?"

"F*** it."

After the invisible frog was the talking magic sword.

Jirji got up from his seat and started walking.

Ho couldn't chase after him because he had to remove the frog from the boy and summon it back.

Jirji had to feel complicated feelings.

He was upset, embarrassed, and a little angry.

He even thought it was a little bit lucky.

"It's really true."

Ho, who was following him, said with a smirk.

* * *

Two weeks have passed.

Another notice came from the association.

It was an official letter to participate in the general meeting of the Superhumans.

Another general meeting in two weeks.

"This is why I hate the end of the year."

This was because meetings were held several times in a row during busy times when there were already a lot of incidents.

Jirji and Ho went to the conference room in simple attire.

Jirji regretted that fact a little.

He should come dressed a little extravagantly.

He came so comfortably.

No matter how much he was only watching the meeting from afar, he was dressed too freely.

Living with Ho, he wondered if he had been tainted by Ho.

“Hey, is that the invisible frog?”

“I heard it also had wings.”

Ho, who calls the invisible frog, has become a celebrity among superhumans.

The rising rookie received surprisingly excessive attention.

Jirji, who was right next to him, had to be exposed to that gaze as well.

Jirji was more shy because of his and Ho’s overly comfortable attire and entered the conference room faster than anyone else.

[Jirji Cantabria]

[Ho]

They were the only B-class superhumans involved in the rescue operation of the great superhuman Akaiden.

Rather than being proud of that fact, Jirji only thought that he had bad luck.

He could be killed if something was wrong.

“Haa, I don’t know.”

He couldn’t deny it either.

Akaiden was a sanctuary.

To be involved in the rescue operation was an honor, but if he refuses?

It was socially suicidal.

“Is that plan possible?”

Ho asked.

“I’m sure it’s possible.”

So, that’s probably why the agenda went so far.

But it will be dangerous.

What’s more, the association’s leadership will not give much importance to the B-class’s lives involved in the mission.

High-ranking superhumans of S-class or higher were also included, and each of them was an important source of national financial resources.

In the meantime, it didn’t seem like they would take special care of Jirji and Ho.

Jirji explained his thoughts to Ho.

Ho thought quietly for a while.

He said this again as if he was muttering.

“Okay, let’s go back now.”

“...what?”

Jirji asked, but Ho didn’t say anything.

The two returned home.

They didn’t feel like working at all.

Returning home, Ho said to Jirji.

I’m leaving now.

Jirji said he knew.

It was a far more lax answer than he had thought.

Somehow, he thought Ho was leaving today.

Maybe it was because he was thinking like that every day.

Jirji asked a few questions before Ho left.

Usually, it was always Ho who was questions and Jirji answering.

Today it was the opposite.

Ho answered all the questions with the utmost sincerity, as Jirji had done before.

Jirji couldn’t understand all the answers.

Unfortunately.

He couldn't hear some words correctly.

He couldn't even ask again about the word that had flowed away.

However, Jirji was able to properly understand what he wanted to know.

“Can I see you again?”

“I hope so, too.”

That was the last question.

With that answer, Ho left Jirji's house.

With no luggage, he just popped out, just like when he first came in.

Jirji was left alone in the living room again.

For just a few dozen seconds, he felt the old loneliness again just by standing in the empty house.

Jirji went out to the veranda as if possessed by something.

He was going to watch Ho leave until the end.

Ho, who he thought was going to leave the housing complex and go to the main road, suddenly began to rise from the ground.

He looked so natural, like a bird or a flying insect.

Ho that floated in the air began to fly somewhere.

He was heading towards the asteroid in the night sky, which was reflected in the moonlight.

It was like a fairy tale scene.

The large moon, the asteroid, and Ho were seen overlapping each other in a row.

Yes, it was a fairy tale time, and he was a fairy tale friend.

One day, he suddenly appeared and joined him.

No one knew who it was, and no one revealed it.

He was a friend who wanted to learn about the world.

Jirji was also able to look around the world once more during that time.

The shape of Ho flying towards the asteroid is now a small dot and is invisible.

Jirji thought that Ho was going to return to where he originally belonged.

Even though he could no longer see Ho, Jirji stared at the asteroid for a long time.

That was then.

A powerful light burst from the asteroid.

Jirji just lost consciousness and collapsed.

* * *

A week has passed.

The rescue operation of the superhuman Akaiden was canceled.

It has been over a month since the asteroid's anomaly occurred, but the cause is still unknown.

The asteroid suddenly radiated light, and everyone on the planet was stunned.

They passed out for at least five hours and then woke up.

It was something everyone on the planet went through.

Some said it was because the superhuman Akaiden was resurrected.

Conversely, some say it was because Akaiden was completely dead and the asteroid monster survived.

Only Jirji had a slightly different view.

The anomaly of that day occurred exactly at the same time that Ho left his home and flew towards the asteroid.

Jirji thought that the phenomenon had something to do with Ho.

Jirji paid a lot of money to buy a telescope.

Whenever he had time, he watched the asteroid through his telescope.

It was his new hobby.

It's been a month since Ho left.

And he's only been with Ho for two weeks.

But that time changed Jirji's life a lot.

When Jirji was peering through the telescope, he didn't feel as lonely, as it was like the two weeks he had spent with Ho.

The large asteroid was a delightful object to watch.

It was so big.

There are many curves and flaws, so even if he looks closely every day, he can find a new place every time.

As usual, looking at the asteroid and seeing a large rock for the first time, Jirji, feeling a sense of small achievement, was startled and had to take his eyes off the telescope.

On that asteroid, where no human could ever survive.

Jirji looked at the man's face.

He even felt like he was making eye contact with himself as he was looking at an asteroid through the telescope.

Considering the distance between Jirji and that asteroid on the planet's surface, it was absurd.

Jirji grabbed his thumping chest and came out.

He had nothing to do with it, and he walked out of the house like he was running away.

Jirji thought back to the human figure he had just seen.

It looked like.

It looked like some kind of girl.

Side Story 49

101st Floor (1)

I stopped walking.

We're almost there.

"Seregia."

[Yes, warrior.]

"Thank you. For following me this far."

Seregia said she was fine.

With her usual tone of voice that doesn't show her emotions.

In fact, I had a lot of regrets.

In the decision to make Seregia a sword and carry her around.

I thought she would be an ego sword with no problems with communication, just like Ahbooboo.

She just loses her body, but she's no different from when she was a human.

There was a vague idea that one day even her body would be recovered.

However, contrary to expectations, Seregia has become a real sword.

I couldn't even communicate properly with her for a while.

When she reached a stable period, she began to think of herself as a sword rather than a person.

Of course, the other Seregia was repeating the tutorial like the repeat sign in sheet music.

But the things she went through were tough enough to think she would have been better off not leaving the tutorial stage.

“And I’m sorry.”

[I said it was okay.]

It was cold.

But there was also an opposite case from her.

[Warrior, for me, for me..... I suffered too. Didn’t you do a lot of bad things to me too? You were rolling me very hard. Put me in your inventory every day.]

Ahbooboo sniffed in.

“Noisy.”

[Wow, you are discriminating against people, no?]

Yes, discrimination is right.

It would have been great if Ahbooboo could cut that chatter in half.

[Hng, it’s because of the lack of cuteness. I know it all. It’s been a while since I’ve done a cute shot. Eh, I... Wow, it’s been a long time since I’ve done this, so it’s not good. Now, let’s try again.]

“Don’t do it. I’m really angry.”

That damn cuteness induces people’s anger whenever they hear it.

Why do I have to listen to you whine in a low male voice?

Ahbooboo chuckled.

[Are there any odds?]

Ahbooboo asked.

I nodded.

“Are you asking something obvious?”

[Oh, you said you became the God of Victory.]

Ahbooboo talked about my divinity.

It was natural.

My divinity was victory itself.

The fact that I was approaching the God of Order while embracing divinity also meant that I had a sufficient chance of winning and believed in my own victory.

[Is that even objectively true?]

Ahbooboo asked again.

It was a stupid question.

In matters involving divinity, if you can distinguish between the object and the subject, you cannot become a god in the first place.

Although he was a being who had been close to the gods for a long time, he did not seem to feel it because he had never become a god himself.

I need to reassure Ahbooboo.

Aside from his belief in me, I'll have to explain the reasons for the victory that Ahbooboo can understand.

“What’s certain is.....”

[Yes?]

“He hasn’t become a transcendental god yet.”

God of Order.

He was not yet a transcendental god.

It certainly seemed close to that, but it certainly didn’t go beyond the scope of a general god.

It was a little different from Kirikiri’s explanation, who said that he was nothing less than a transcendent god.

The reason for the misjudgment was obvious.

It must be because of the powers of the God of Order, including that gold.

The powers of the God of Order were all focused on restraining and attacking divinity.

To put it simply, it was an existence that could be said to be the Supreme Being of Divinity.

It must be because it is a mechanical god created from the beginning to control and restrain the gods.

With such an existence, the God of Order seemed even more powerful to the other gods and seemed closer to the transcendent God.

But I was sure.

The God of Order has not yet transcended everything.

Being so close to its essence that I knew it.

I stood in front of the door.

The huge door had a number written on it.

[101]

In a sense, It's really funny.

It's the 101st room on the 101st floor.

It was a door that had been built up in an empty space.

As I got closer, the door opened.

Only pitch-black darkness could be seen through the cracks in the door.

[...Are you going in that way?]

Of course.

[Should we not think about it again?]

“Noisy.”

Ignoring Ahbooboo's words.

I walked into the door.

The moment I took a step into the darkness that started from the door, the darkness embraced me.

The next moment I felt I was transported to another world.

It was not an unpleasant darkness.

I couldn't see anything, I couldn't feel anything.

Still, it wasn't surprising and it wasn't scary.

Rather than feeling trapped in dark solitary confinement, it felt more like being asleep in a dream.

I have felt this feeling before.

When I went to the temple of the God of Slowness.

Yes, it was then.

As a stage clear reward, I wanted an interview with the God of Slowness.

I had this feeling when I visited the holy land of the God of Slowness.

Is it something common that appears because I am close to the Transcendent God?

Or was the God of Order itself created from the power of the God of Slowness?

I couldn't figure it out

[Challenger.]

A voice echoed in a world where there was nothing.

One eye hung in the air with it.

It was the God of Order.

As the self of the God of Order was revealed, my body, which had been shrouded in darkness, was also revealed.

This was different from the God of Slowness.

The God of Slowness exists in space and has no symbols to express his ego.

The God of Order had the shape of a huge eye.

It was huge, but at first glance, it looked like an ordinary eye.

A huge black pupil in a huge white sclera.

The shape of the black pupil looked identical to the darkness surrounding the pupil, and on the contrary, the ring-shaped white appeared to be contained within the huge pupil.

The pupils themselves did not hide their trust in order.

Having seen the God of Order several times already, I could be sure that it was the God of Order.

“Hoo.”

I took a deep breath.

It was a long, long journey.

And in the end, I came all the way here.

Maybe this is how a climber feels when he is near the top of a mountain.

I said to the God of Order.

“It was like that before. I’ll see you again someday.”

It was something I’ve been waiting to say for a very long time.

For this moment.

“Give me my source, you thief bastard!”

[...Was that what you were talking about?]

Ahbooboo murmured.

This is important.

When I cleared the 59th floor, the God of Order stole the power of the source that I had created at the time.

This bad bastard.

I remember it clearly!

On top of it, that was the first source power I ever made!

[Challenger, you must choose.]

said the God of Order.

Is he not going to talk at all about the thefts he committed in the past?

He was more arrogant than I thought.

[Challenge and abandonment.]

Challenge and give up.

It was just as Kirikiri told me.

The last gateway to seal the God of Order.

This is a question to test the existence of the challenger that entered.

A test to prevent the challenger from bringing more chaos to the world by controlling the God of Order.

It was said to be a gateway to test the sincerity of the challenger.

[You must choose. Can you give up your divinity yourself?]

“What?”

What to give up?

A completely different story from what I had heard from Kirikiri came out.

[Can you keep your will even by giving up your divinity? Please choose.]

The space is distorted.

Beyond the distorted space, Hochi, Yongyong, and Old Man were seen.

They were being attacked by monsters armed with gold.

They were fighting hard, but I didn't seem to have any spare time.

My hands were clenched tightly.

[If you enter that space, you lose your divinity. But you might be able to save your friends.]

“What if I refuse?”

[You can fight me without losing your divinity. But can you do that?]

Damn it

It was a completely different test from what Kirikiri had heard.

No matter how far out of Kirikiri's control, his autonomy was not perfect.

The monsters appearing in between were added with a golden weapon with the power of the God of Order.

Of course, that was a serious problem.

There was not much of a difference between the appearance of this place and the one that Kirikiri had described.

But at the end of the day, a gate like this was added.

I watched Hochi, Yongyong, and Old Man fighting over the gap in space.

I wondered why they followed me.

Perhaps.

“Did you make them come here?”

[I did not. Challengers come here to be tested whether they can give up their divinity. I needed them to test you. They followed you according to logic. They must believe that they came in by their own will. But you’ve attracted them.]

That sounds crazy

The causal sequence was messed up.

[If not, are you going to refuse the test and fight me? That’s not bad either. Wouldn’t it be more convenient for you?]

The voice of the God of Order was filled with laughter.

F***** bastard. He’s getting worse and worse.

It is unwise to refuse the test.

The reason that the God of Order is still here and speaking stupidly is that it proves that he has not yet been able to escape from the role

that Kirikiri has given him.

However, if I, the challenger, ignore the rules, he can be released freely as well.

What's more, if I refused the exam.

A scream was heard from beyond the space.

The Old Man wielding the lava sword was collapsing.

Will they be able to survive while I fight the God of Order, who has freely wielded all my powers?

[Warrior.]

Ahbooboo whispered.

[...Is it really that easy to lose your divinity? It may be a lie.]

“No.”

If I go beyond that space, I will really lose my divinity.

This is not the power of the God of Order.

The fact that I myself took my own steps to the ‘place where I lose my divinity’ declared by that damn bastard will shift my divinity.

If I go into that place and seek Yongyong, Hochi, and Old Man, I will really lose my divinity.

[Warrior.]

Seregia said.

[What are you worried about?]

Yeah, what was I thinking about?

It was an unbelievable worry.

It was a question with a fixed answer from the beginning.

[Have you made a decision? Challenge or abandonment?]

I made a decision.

* * *

Gold-clad birds flew.

It felt like bees were flying all over the place as they touched the hive.

The whole world was filled with golden birds.

“Waaaaaa!”

Hochi inflated his arms wide.

Bigger than a giant.

His huge arm was swung around, and the birds struck by it fell to pieces.

Hundreds of birds died, but there were so many birds that it was barely noticeable.

Hochi swallowed his saliva.

It was an anxious situation.

That damn gold was the problem.

For some reason, that gold did no harm to Hochi himself.

Just like the golden blade that Kirikiri swung.

However, it was fatal to Old Man and Yongyong.

If a powerful enemy appeared or they were fighting in a narrow space, Hochi could block the enemy and fight while protecting Old Man and Yongyong.

However, Hochi alone could not stop the numerous enemies flying in the open air and open land.

Old Man also vigorously swung his sword, and Yongyong, who woke up from his sleep, was holding out by swinging his tail and wings.

But Hochi didn't seem to be able to hold out for long.

Hochi felt like he was about to cry without knowing it.

He was fighting with his best, but he couldn't stop Yongyong and the Old Man from getting hurt.

“Waaaaaa!”

With a meaningless shout, he waved his arm again, Yongyong stopping the birds flying nearby.

That was then.

The space is open.

A familiar face walked out through the gap in the open space.

With the same face as Hochi himself, he was trying to say something.

– Kaaaaak!

– Kaak kaaak!

But because of the noise made by the flock of birds, the voice was not heard.

He picked up the sword and threw it.

A pounding sound like thunder rang out.

The sword was divided into thousands or tens of thousands, and the divided sword engulfed the air.

More than tens of thousands of golden birds were likewise stabbed by tens of thousands of swords and began to fall to the floor.

Eventually, the surroundings became quiet.

“Well, I told you to wait at home. You don’t listen very well.”

It’s been a few months since Hochi has seen him, but he was with the same tone as always.

With such a grunt, Lee Ho-jae approached.

Hochi wiped the water from his eyes because of the relief, joy, and regret that he was alive.

Side Story 50

101st Floor (2)

It is an unavoidable choice.

There was no way back.

That is what divinity was.

It could be changed according to God's interpretation.

Even if I lose, if I believe that it is a stepping stone for my final victory, it is not a defeat.

But if I choose for myself what has been confirmed as a defeat, there is no way to get it back no matter what I do.

Defeat is confirmed as defeat.

[Is that your choice?]

It was the voice of the God of Order.

Yes, this was my choice.

[I have been watching you for a long time. I knew you wouldn't let them go.]

You did very well.

The time the God of Order was able to watch over me would be before I completed my divinity on the 61st floor.

At the time I would have been willing to abandon someone close in

exchange for victory.

I guess he didn't watch me properly.

[No, I saw it right. How much stability and comfort you needed.]

The God of Order kept talking.

It was a couple of times, but whenever I faced the God of Order, the God of Order kept his words to the utmost minimum.

He didn't utter words unless they were necessary.

He never even explained his own thoughts, befitting a selfless machine god.

But now, the God of Order was speaking unrequired words.

[That was your motive. "Desire" was the fuel you needed to move forward. After the desire was met, it was no longer possible to proceed as recklessly as before. That became your new weakness. like now.]

Yes, it was a weakness.

Abandon either family or divinity.

There was only one way to override this option.

It is about defeating the God of Order and saving Hochi, Yongyong, and Old Man before they die.

It was the perfect answer.

Except that I'm not sure Hochi, Yongyong, and Old Man will hold out until I go.

Except for that, it was the perfect answer.

In the past, I would have challenged this answer without hesitation.

Without relying on probabilities.

Then it could be.

Because the stakes were so low.

My life wasn't worth it.

But now it was different.

I couldn't gamble over my family.

[It was a strange thing.]

The God of Order did not stop his words.

Is the God of Order's chattering evidence that that machine god is being completed toward transcendence?

Or is that something I have to tell you?

[But fulfillment has made you complete. You could become a god only after you got what you so desperately wanted. I watched the process. So it was predictable. Which one will you throw away?]

Yes, it was an easy choice.

Even if I throw away Hochi, Yongyong, and Old Man and defeat the God of Order, the result after that will result in my defeat.

The answer was fixed.

[However.]

The God of Order continued his words.

A little hesitantly though.

[I wanted you to transcend.]

“Yes.”

I understood.

What the God of Order wanted me to do.

What was the reason you called me to come in here?

[I wanted you to show me the way.]

“You’re also tied up too.”

Like all other gods.

The God of Order was not free from his divinity either.

Even the God of Order is a machine god created by intention.

To him, divinity would have been nothing but redemption.

[But you also did not transcend.]

[Now there is only one way left. The only answer would be to devour the world and stand outside of all laws, as the God of Origins did in the past.]

The God of Order has declared to me.

[Get lost, you gave up. and don’t come back. When we meet again, you will die.]

[This is the order established by me, the God of Order, and there will be no way to reverse that order.]

“Dad!”

I picked up the running dragon and hugged him.

Our Yong-yong had the appearance of his hatchling days.

It’s been a long time since I’ve seen you.

It was the first time Yong-yong learned polymorph.

Obviously, when looking through space, Yongyong was in the form of an adult dragon.

Did he get smaller again because of me?

“Our Yongyong has turned into a lizard again.”

“You can’t use polymorph here.”

No way.

This place suppressed divinity but did not prevent magic.

“Dad told you to wait at home, so why did you chase after me? That’s dangerous.”

Yongyong smiled and said that he had been chasing him because he wanted to see dad.

He was a pretty kid.

He was a pretty kid no matter where I looked, but he was the prettiest and I am most grateful for him being honest about his feelings.

“Old Man.”

Holding Yongyong in my arms, I called for Old Man.

Old Man was distorted.

“You’re so leaky. Are you okay?”

“It’s okay.”

The body of the giant was leaking lava.

He was holding his shape, but it was unlikely he would ever be able to bring it back together.

“Why did you come here? You’re not even in good shape.”

“I’m going to die soon.”

“What?”

The Old Man said as he touched the flowing lava skin.

“I may die soon. I don’t know when. I lost my divinity and became a mortal, so it is natural to die someday. I don’t know whether it will be tomorrow or a little further away. That’s why I came. I wanted to see you.”

Everything is good, but the last comment was a bit like that.

It was burdensome.

“Grandmother would be jealous.”

The Old Man chuckled and laughed.

I said thank you for coming.

“You.”

And I asked Hochi.

“I followed Yong-yong.”

it would have been.

When Yong-yong came, it was only natural that Hochi followed.

Our Yong-yong was not a child who would sneak from Hochi, and there was no way Hochi would let Yongyong go alone.

“Yong-yong.”

“Huh?”

Yong-yong, who was on the palm of my hand, answered.

Yong-yong, who was in my arms, was small enough to fit on my hand.

Previously, I thought he was returning to the hatchling form from the adult, but I was wrong.

Yong-yong was getting smaller in real-time.

Even now.

Maybe he will get smaller to a cell size.

“Yong-yong, are you going to be this small? Dad can’t see you.”

Yongyong muttered a little.

Perhaps his body became smaller and his voice became smaller, to the point of not being able to hear him properly unless I really listened.

“This look is not very cute.”

“No, you’re cute.”

Yong-yong was cute even when he was a lizard.

Even when Yongyong was an egg, he looked cute in my eyes.

Yong-yong, who still had to be fed each super mealworm by hand, had a good child-like image, but it couldn't be cuter.

“Really?”

When I nodded my head, Yongyong increased his size a little.

* * *

“Go back now.”

The three were very vehemently opposed.

If that was the case, they wouldn't have come in in the first place.

“Anyway, if you fail, we will all die.”

Yes all will die

The world will perish

“Even if I succeed, you can get hurt. You can die. That's why I'm sending you back.”

For the three of you.

It may not be a problem right now.

“You'll be safe. Until you meet the God of Order.”

I've already visited this place once.

Even if they lost their divinity permanently, there was no way they could be stopped in the middle.

Even Hochi, Yongyong, and Old Man joined together, and the group's power increased.

“The problem is only after meeting the God of Order.”

But the three of them did not give up until the very end.

When the Old Man came here, it seemed that he had already given up the thought of going back to life.

Yong-yong, this clever child, came in clearly aware of the dangers of this place.

If he was persuaded by my words to return, he would not have come in in the first place.

“Still... maybe we can help.”

Hochi didn't give up.

Of the three, Hochi was the most stubborn.

Hochi was a very unique creature.

Being someone other than me, he was me at the same time.

Hochi will be able to feel it too.

My condition now.

That's why he doesn't want to leave me behind.

I finally accepted the pressure of the three.

It was a wrong decision.

I came back to save the three, and I'm taking them back to a dangerous place.

Maybe I wanted to pretend I couldn't win and accept the coercion.

Because of the weakness within me that lost my divinity, I raised my head again.

"...Okay, let's go as far as we can."

I said so.

* * *

Old Man and Yong-yong took the lead.

Yong-yong, who looked a little depressed by making his body smaller, quickly regained his courage.

Hochi talked about Yongyong's troubles.

It seems that there was a problem with his appearance.

It was a problem for a teenage child to have.

It was also a concern that would come more seriously if the child had a different appearance from the parent.

"Still, I feel relieved right away when you said it to him. When I comforted him, he kept feeling anxious."

said Hochi.

"Since you and I tell the same story, then he must be relieved."

Hochi laughed at my words.

"You bastard, you're talking nice things. Why are you talking about things that don't suit you?"

We giggled together.

That was then.

Like a fruit hanging from a branch ripens and falls to the ground.

So naturally and unexpectedly, my left arm fell to the ground.

My left arm was cut off from the shoulder.

“.....”

“Let’s go.”

I looked at my arm that fell to the floor and said to Hochi, who was dumbfounded.

Hochi started walking again without saying a word.

Yong-yong and Old Man, who was walking earlier, were the same.

The two didn’t even look back.

It seems everyone knew.

What state am I in now.

Yes, it was before becoming a god.

I didn’t have one arm.

The divinity went beyond being suppressed and completely lost.

The difference appeared here.

My arm, which I had restored after gaining divinity, was cut off again.

Pain raged in my stomach.

It was nothing.

In order to raise the skills that had been stagnant at the time, I abused my body in all sorts of ways.

To increase my pain tolerance, I modified my body to feel pain at every moment.

An extremely sensitive nerve that always felt pain.

It was a pain that was enough to ignore the resistance skill.

Magical power was churning through my body uncontrollably.

If I didn't want my body to explode and die because of my magic, I had to control my magic at every moment.

Occasionally, when emotional agitation became uncontrollable, I would force my magical energy out of my body, but every time, the 61st floor was swept away.

There was a time when I was studying curses and blessing magic for a long time.

All that magic was accumulated in my body.

The magic sometimes collided with each other, and sometimes caused a chain reaction.

Diseases with incubation periods and extreme poisons were also present in my body.

At that time, I deliberately left the poison undetoxified into my body.

It was an amazing body.

It wasn't strange if I had died.

Yes, it was like this back then.

Unexpectedly, I looked back to the past.

It wasn't a very pleasant past.

"Are you okay?"

Hochi asked.

I couldn't open my mouth to answer because I was holding back the pain that just came over me.

I just nodded my head quietly, hoping that I would look calm.

"...It's because of us. It's because of us because you came back from fighting."

It was a word that could not be answered only with a nod of my head.

I opened my mouth and answered.

"No."

Hoch didn't ask anymore.

He just said sorry

After walking like that for a while, Hochi suddenly spoke.

"I have something to say."

Hochi's face was serious.

"When this is over when we all get back to Earth safely, I have something I want to say to you."

He was putting a death flag on his serious face.

Side Story 51

101st Floor (3)

“No! It’s not a death flag!”

What do you mean, no?

It would be a death flag that anyone could see.

It would be complete if only he added the words of who he was going to confess to, and that he prepared a ring.

“It’s really not.”

Hochi looked greatly embarrassed.

He was obsessed with novels and manga, so he seems to have taken the joke of a death flag seriously.

“What were you talking about?”

“No, I won’t talk.”

What are you going to do if I don’t say that?

There are two ways to make a person angry, one is to not finish what they are saying, and the other is not talking at all.

“Just tell me. The flags are all raised anyway. It’s less embarrassing if you say something and die.”

“Because it’s not a flag! And don’t die!”

Yes, yes, I’m not going to die.

I had to soothe Hochi.

“Yeah. So who are you dating? It’s probably not one of our followers.”

The temple in Seoul was supposed to house a number of church members, including clerks.

It must have been completed by now, so there must have been some devotees who met frequently in the temple where Hochi mainly lived.

Hochi said no, and turned his head.

I thought he was going to be arrogant and angry, but his reaction was a little subtle.

It seemed that there was one believer who he was really interested in.

It was a surprise.

“It’s not like that.”

“Then.”

“Why don’t you... look for your family together?”

An unexpected story emerged.

“My family?”

He said it was my family, not my *family*.

I’m not talking about Hochi and Yong-yong and the giants on the 61st floor.

“Yeah. You haven’t looked for them since you came out of the Tutorial.”

Before going into the tutorial, there were only three people in my

family.

My father, my sister and me.

There was no communication with relatives.

In my later documentary, we were portrayed as very close and close relatives, but in reality, we did not see each other even on holidays.

I didn't really want to find them.

Father had long since passed away.

So had my sister.

It was during the time I was in the tutorial, but it was certain that my sister died of an illness.

There was a missing nephew.

When I first heard the news about my nephew, I was a little puzzled.

At some point, I thought he would be able to survive.

He was a brilliant kid.

However, it was not unusual to have an accident at a time when the world had turned upside down and monsters were popping up in the middle of Seoul.

Of course, he is classified as missing, but a disappearance at that time was virtually the same as death.

I had no family to visit.

“Still.....”

Even so, Hochi seems to want me to visit my family.

I knew what the reason was.

What Hochi is worried about me.

“Then, shall we visit the ossuary?”

The government kept the ashes of my father and sister.

The National Ossuary has been in operation since the National Cemetery, including the National Memorial Hall, was completely wiped out.

“Yeah, let’s go together.”

Hochi’s face brightened.

He’s a good guy

Even if I were in that guy’s position, would I be able to care as much as he did?

I must have always been thinking about getting the back of my head and neck hit.

Okay, let’s go to the ossuary.

I will apologize to my father and sister for the long delay.

I will greet them too.

I struggle with guilt and shame.

I will regret it and stuff like that

It was a decision I would never have made if I had not lost my divinity.

It was also an impossible decision.

I thought that losing my divinity was good in this respect.

* * *

“That’s right! Close the front properly!”

As I said, Hochi marked the enemies properly.

It was the responsibility of Yong-Yong and Old Man to inflict critical blows on the enemies.

Enemies here had a law of destruction.

The monsters here are exceptionally powerful.

But that ability was not enough to overwhelm our party.

It was just a matter of the gold containing the power of the God of Order.

The monster’s gold teeth and nails, swords, and spear blades could not be stopped without losing their divinities.

The reason the party was struggling is that they fought desperately while avoiding that gold, which would be very dangerous even if they were hit only once.

However, if Hochi, who is not divine but does not take any damage from gold, tanked properly, and Yong-yong and Old Man were able to safely focus on the attack, they could overcome it.

As the number of monsters decreased, it gradually became smoother.

“Great job.”

Hochi nodded his head.

This guy changed into a bizarre form every time he fought.

Rather than transforming, he seemed to change his appearance like metamorphosing.

Most of the forms that Hochi took were those of other monsters clad in gold.

Probably because he has to think of it right away, he can't think of a more powerful form than that.

"Shall we continue?"

The party started walking again without rest.

"Yes, but."

Hochi spoke again.

He had a lot of questions today.

"What do you mean there is no causality?"

That's what he was curious about.

It was something to be curious about.

In fact, Hochi had been curious about this issue for a long time.

Each time I didn't answer.

"Where do I begin to explain?"

"Is it complicated?"

"It is complicated."

If I tried to talk about it in a complicated way, it was so complicated that there was no limit to it.

We have to talk about the basics of divinity.

I tried to explain it as simply as possible.

“It doesn’t matter if you touch the gold of the God of Order, right?”

“Huh.”

Beyond just touching, being stabbed, or being beaten by a weapon made of gold, you will not be affected in any way.

Normally, that’s not possible.

That gold contains the power of the God of Order.

The God of Order is special among the gods.

Although he is a created machine god and is approaching transcendence, the concept of order itself is special.

God is basically a being who can distort the laws of the world at his own will.

Maybe that’s God’s justice.

However, the divinity of the God of Order lies in maintaining and defending, not distorting, the laws of the world.

Therefore, the God of Order is very powerful against other gods.

Because it inevitably prevents the distortion of the law through divinity.

That doesn’t mean he’s weak against non-god beings.

Weapons that contain the power of the God of Order strongly adhere to the rule of attacking and inflicting damage to the opponent.

Usually, when you get hit by a knife, you get cut, stabbed, injured, and hurt.

That law is expressed stronger than anything else.

There is no way to stop it, and there is no way to mitigate the impact.

It just hurts if you get hit with it.

It was not the power to use the causal variable, but the power to eliminate the causal variable.

“It’s already complicated.”

“Yes. Anyway, you don’t have causality, so it doesn’t harm your ability.”

Because he was standing outside of causality.

Perhaps the final destination that the God of Order so longed for would be like Hochi.

“...you skipped too much. Why do I not have causality in the first place? Because I was born as an alter ego?”

“That can’t be true, wouldn’t it? If it were that easy, everyone would have thrown off causality.”

The God of Order wouldn’t have made that riot to gain freedom.

“Then why?”

That’s what I thought.

This was also a question that I could answer because I lost my divinity.

“It’s not your problem. It was mine.”

“Your problem?”

“What is my divinity? No, what was it?”

Hochi replied that it was a victory.

“Yes. To have the title of victory, at least I have to be bound by victory. I have won countless times before, and I will only continue to win in the future. I need that kind of belief. Whether it is the belief of others or my own.”

“Huh, I know that. That’s how you became the God of Victory.”

It should have been.

Actually, it wasn’t really like that.

“There was only one opponent that I couldn’t win in the end. I don’t think I can win in the future.”

“Is there such a thing?”

There was.

The guy with a blank expression right in front of me right now.

“I’m talking about you, idiot Hochi.”

“Huh?”

“In the end, you didn’t become as strong as I wanted, you didn’t become my accessory, and you ended up maintaining your ego and surviving. That was enough to be recognized as a defeat.”

Hochi was a symbol of defeat.

I didn’t even know it meant my complacency.

Thanks to that, I couldn't have the divinity of victory.

As long as Hochi exists.

The moment I created Hochi, I became a being who could not be a god.

Another self-denying existence was too fatal to the divinity.

I had a choice.

Do I kill and absorb Hochi, who has become a family member, or give up becoming a god?

Yes, if he watched that time.

I could understand what the God of Order had expected from me.

I have transcended causation.

So I became a god.

The proof of that transcendence was Hochi.

Lee Hochi was completely out of the causal relationship of victory.

[Could you do that again?]

Seregia asked.

“No.”

I could say for sure.

It has only been successful once so far.

It was never going to happen in the future.

Artificially transcending causality.

As the God of Order says, it is impossible unless you become a transcendent God that devours the universe and exists outside of the law.

I also can't escape causality.

I don't know how, and I don't understand how Hochi's case came to be.

It will continue to be like that in the future.

* * *

“Ta-da!”

Yong-yong has transformed.

He became a little kid again.

He was wearing a military look I had never seen before.

He seems to have prepared himself to enter a dangerous place.

In fact, it was useless because he couldn't get out of the dragon form after entering.

“Isn't Yong-yong's clothes pretty?”

Yong-yong smiled broadly.

As soon as the divine restraints disappeared, Yong-yong returned to human form.

I said that the hatchling looks cute too, but Yong-yong seems to like the look of a young human child the most.

He looks happy.

By the way, the fact that polymorphing became possible as soon as he regained his divinity means that Yong-yong's divinity is closely related to the child's appearance.

"Now what?"

Hochi asked.

The party had already reached the point where the divinity suppression had disappeared.

I already had my experience of finishing one attack.

As Hochi's abilities grew more and more deceptive, he was able to arrive without serious injuries.

The problem started here.

To be precise, the problem was the God of Order that we would meet soon.

"What are the odds?"

"Low."

Very low

Only the God of Order could know how far the power of the God of Order would go.

I watched the scene where he was subduing the God of Sky, but I wasn't sure if that was all or if there was another power.

Hochi's complexion darkened.

If Hochi had always asked the odds in the past, I would have told him that he would win unconditionally.

Perhaps Hochi wanted such an answer.

“Still, there’s a chance of winning.”

There was definitely a possibility.

“I can give an effective hit.”

It was certain that it would be an effective hit.

However, it was a problem because it was not possible to guarantee how effective the effective hit would be.

“Let’s get ready.”

“Already?”

This is the realm of the God of Order.

There was nothing good to waste time.

There was no need to show the God of Order more information about us and give him time to think about what to do.

If we’re ready, it’s best to jump right in.

“Yong-yong.”

“Okay, I’ll get ready.”

Yong-yong answered boldly.

I stroked Yong-yong’s head.

“I’m sorry for bringing you to such a dangerous place.”

“No, that’s fine.”

As expected, a bold answer came back.

I had no intention of raising this child to become a warrior.

Although I taught him magic, combat, and a battle attitude for dangerous situations.

I never intended to mobilize Yong-yong in battle.

Back then, that was the way of parenting.

I taught the magic of burning the sky and dividing the earth and played with the child.

I was too clumsy

We should've rather played with clay instead.

It was only regrettable.

Yong-yong prepared magic.

I took out Ahboobooand handed it to the Old man.

“You know what to do?”

“Of course.”

Old Man is in better condition than when he first looked.

I don't know how his body is, but his complexion and mood have noticeably improved.

In a voice as loud as thunder, the Old Man said.

“In the end, it turned around and became like this.”

I asked what that meant.

“Even when we promised to destroy the fake world and kill the gods, we weren’t gods. We became gods and came out. Now, with only one step left to our goal, it’s no different than when we first promised.”

When I was on the 61st floor, I was in a physical condition where I couldn’t become a god.

That was correct.

“If we could have come here then, wouldn’t we have challenged it ourselves?”

“I would have done it!”

The air rumbled at that resolute reply.

His voice was still as great as before.

“Aaaah! I don’t want to be held by a giant man with such a loud voice! I don’t want to!”, I handed over the screaming Ahbooboo to the Old Man.

“Come on, let’s get ready.”

“...Me? What, what are you preparing for?”

Hochi was just confused.

Because I didn’t really explain the operation.

In the realm of the God of Order, I could not explain how to fight the God of Order.

“What am I supposed to do?!”

“You’re supposed to take care of everything when the situation arises. Don’t worry too much.”

“Huh?”

That was then.

Complex diagrams and runes were drawn on the floor.

Texts climbed through the air and enveloped us.

It is a space movement developed by Yong-yong.

When Yong-yong regained his divinity, we could immediately attack the God of Order.

I also knew that there was no reason to go there on foot because I had already been there once.

Is it necessary to knock on the door of the enemy's house and enter politely?

Just break the window and go in.

Kukukugung!

The vibration was intense.

Because of my poor physical condition, this vibration alone made my body suffer greatly.

We are breaking into the room of the God of Order without permission.

It couldn't have been comfortable and easy to get in.

But Yong-yong is the child I raised myself.

Even compared to me with magic, he wasn't pushed back.

He was a genius among geniuses who had even attained divine status at such a young age.

The surrounding environment has changed.

It was not a narrow passage.

The giant eyes of the God of Order floating in the black air.

Yong-yong finally managed to break through all obstacles and put us in front of the God of Order.

[Challenger, I must tell you.....]

The voice of the God of Order was buried.

—Whoa, whoa, whoa!

A huge voice filled the surroundings.

It was a voice that sounded like an explosion from afar.

It wasn't a strange expression.

Actually, the voice was heard from far away.

As soon as Old Man confirmed the movement move, his body grew bigger.

From the size of a giant who had a body the size of a house to the size of a building, it was large enough to overlook even a huge mountain range.

Perhaps even more than that, his body was getting bigger and bigger.

Old Man, who had grown his body to the limit, slammed his hand as it was.

Rather than swinging fists, it was a sight that looked like a planet was falling.

The God of Order blocked the appearance with a huge golden shield without any response or appreciation.

The Old Man's fist shattered as soon as it touched the gold.

The lava that made up Old Man's body flowed down one after another on the shield.

The God of Order seemed to have taken no damage.

But that wasn't all the attack he had prepared.

Old Man swung his other arm.

The God of Order calmly raised his shield, but the Old Man's fist split the air.

Ahbooboo was hiding in a fist the size of a mountain.

Ahbooboo, who was thrown by the Old Man, flew towards the God of Order.

It was Abubu who flew at a transcendent speed, but the golden tentacles sent out by the God of Order caught Abubu.

In the end, Abubu could not reach the God of Order.

But his purpose has already been achieved.

Abubu's purpose is to get even a little closer to the God of Order.

That was all.

A sword prepared by the God of Sky who tried to challenge the ordeal created by Kirikiri and neutralize the God of Order.

Just like the entrance to the 101st floor, Abubu had the ability to suppress divinity.

The world, where only the black abyss existed, was brightened with color.

The blue sky spread out.

The floor was littered with a wasteland.

The sun was shining through the sky.

The darkness was lifted.

The appearance of the God of Order was revealed.

The God of Order had the face of a huge beast.

On the face of the beast, a dense mane stretched indefinitely and moved like a tentacle or a finger.

And gold was attached to the tip of the mane.

The gold moved individually, but combined with each other to become a huge shield or a spear.

“Come on, let’s go. It’s our turn.”

“Huh?!”

Everyone did so well.

More than expected, enough.

I grabbed Hochi’s neck and flew forward.

[Thalaria’s Wings]

A rare fraudulent power that increases the challenger’s ability to take on the danger in proportion to the danger of the enemy in front of him.

It's been a while since I've used it, but it was still good.

When I used it against the mighty God of Order, I was able to taste the omnipotence of being a god.

In fact, there will be no place behind God in terms of simple abilities.

The manes of the God of Order recognized us.

In the end, he set up a golden weapon and flew in.

Finally, it was Hochi's turn.

“Are you ready?!”

“What! What preparation! What preparation!!!”

It was Hochi who still hadn't realized.

I pulled my hand holding Hochi back as far as I could and swung him straight forward.

Hochi, who flew forward like an arrow, made eye contact for a moment.

“Hey, this... you bastard!”

Hochi's body began to change along with the swear words.

It was a more rapid change than usual.

Hochi became huge chains and nets.

He attacked the body of the god of order that seemed to cover even the world.

Manes tangled and bumped.

I flew towards the God of Order in the chaos.

Avoiding every mane.

Yes, in the past, we fought while avoiding thousands of magics raining down like this.

It has now become a completely different scale.

But it was no different from back then.

Calmly, sometimes daringly, I walked between the manes.

So I was able to get close to the God of Order.

In the face of an ugly beast.

I put my feet up

There were manes flying at me desperately.

I didn't care.

It's already too late.

I had already pulled out Seregia.

At that time, the sword that I forged with all my tenacity and meticulousness.

It was a weapon prepared solely for the purpose of killing a god.

[Transcendence.....]

Transcendence.

In this world, there is a way for anyone to achieve transcendence.

To stand outside the laws of the world.

In fact, this method can be achieved without having to swallow the universe.

All beings can be freed from the constraints of the world through death.

It was a truth that applied equally to everyone.

“Just die!”

Without hesitation, I thrust the sword deep into the face of the God of Order.

* * *

Kirikiri was just lying on the dirt floor.

Her dress and limbs had become dirty with dirt, but she didn't care.

There was no one to blame in her own space where there was no one in it.

It was a mess.

Kirikiri eventually gave up on restoring the dug land and laid down.

It was only a vague thought that someday time will solve it.

Maybe she's exhausted from all the things she's been through lately.

It may not be a recent issue.

Maybe it's because of all the hardships she faced in the long, long time she's been through since she became a god.

Anyway, Kirikiri was tired now.

So she did nothing and quietly lay down on the dirt floor and stared at the sky.

Unlike the ruined earth, the sky was calm and clear.

There was a crack in the sky

The clouds were pushed away with the sound of something breaking, and black and dark light began to pour out of the blue color.

Kirikiri jumped up from her seat.

The boundary between the God of Order and her own space was broken.

It meant either one of the two.

Whether the God of Order has completely escaped her own constraints.

Or, the God of Order that existed in that space completely collapsed.

Kirikiri clasped her hand.

She couldn't predict anything.

At the end of her long adventure, she had to wait for the result.

Unknowingly, she glanced at the remnants of the pearls that had been scattered on the floor.

The sky was pouring down

The being she had been waiting for walked out of the fully opened space.

In front of the result she finally came across, Kirikiri smiled quietly.

After kicking with her feet the pearl remnants of the floor, Kirikiri ran to welcome those who returned to her garden.

Side Story 52

After (1)

“What’s going on these days?”

Jirji shook his head.

Worried eyes were looking at him.

“No, nothing special.”

Jirji replied that way.

It was actually the same.

Nothing happened.

His work was arduous and demanding both physically and mentally.

It was dangerous at times.

However, it was just an accident that occurred due to his professional nature, so his daily life did not change.

“Take this. Take it and boil it.”

The butcher put some meat in a bag.

Jirji took it without hesitation.

His daily routine has not changed.

But people around him kept asking if there was something wrong with him.

This was mainly the case with the locals where Jirji lived.

Jirji was contributing to the security of the neighborhood,

The impact was not small.

Jirji, a polite and kind superhuman, has always been a good person to those around him.

People were sensitive to such changes in Jirji.

“You look a little gloomy right now.”

“No.”

Jirji himself thought that nothing had changed.

He was originally a quiet person.

Back home, Jirji could feel it all over again.

For him, home was a place of silence.

He didn't open his mouth except to eat or make occasional business calls.

It was a natural fact, and it didn't feel strange and awkward.

It was about 15 days.

One day he had a friend who suddenly came to his house and behaved like a gangster.

During the half month he spent with his friend, his mouth was restless.

Even when he was at home, he had to chat all day.

It was a noisy, hectic full moon.

It was only that full moon.

Ever since becoming independent from his family, maybe even before that.

Jirji's house was quiet.

And it will be so for the rest of his life.

It was such familiar loneliness, but the quiet house felt lonely in contrast to when it had been noisy for only a month.

Jirji looked into the telescope.

There have been recent changes in the asteroid.

It was a very big change.

The asteroid was moving on its own.

It was being disassembled.

The spherical asteroid was not a huge rock mass.

Surprisingly, it was close to a prefabricated spherical structure.

Like a child disassembling a Lego model, the asteroids that were falling apart one by one began to form themselves.

When the asteroid first started moving, people were astonished.

At first, it was thought that the seal of the great superhuman had been broken and the monsters had been resurrected.

The operation to rescue Akaiden was canceled and preparations were made for an airstrike.

But the asteroid didn't crash, and it didn't spawn monsters.

People were now trembling with anxiety, watching how the asteroid changed.

It was strange.

Not long ago, while watching an asteroid through a telescope, Jirji spotted a woman.

He thought the woman had something to do with a mysterious phenomenon taking place on the asteroid.

And with his friend who disappeared at the same time as the announcement of the rescue operation of Akaiden a week ago.

* * *

It's been two weeks since the asteroid started moving.

There have been many changes during that time.

The asteroid was now in the shape of a giant man.

It was like seeing a statue of a saint looking down on the world from the sky with his arms wide open.

A statue honoring Akaiden was usually like that.

It was truly magical.

People believed that Akaiden was resurrected.

They said that their prayers were heard, and Akaiden was awakened, and the asteroid was transformed into a statue to honor him.

It was a ridiculous story.

But people believed.

People would seriously believe in absurd stories.

These are people who have been deceived by the excuse of an invisible frog.

He didn't even know it was normal.

The ritual of a few people who had been silent to pray for Akaiden every afternoon has now become a national event.

After lunch and every afternoon, people prayed and bowed to the asteroid, or even the Akaiden aerial statue.

A religion that believes in Akaiden was born.

Surprisingly, it was a religion led by superhumans.

When the superhumans first returned, they were the ones who took the lead in denying and abolishing existing religions, but now they were claiming to be devoutly religious people.

Afternoon prayer time has become compulsory rather than voluntary.

Doctrines were also created.

Akaiden sacrificed himself to protect the world, and became a god through the reverence of all people.

Akaiden, who became a god, looks down on the world from the sky, and when the believers' faith is sufficient, he will come down to the world again.

It was such a doctrine.

The public and the government cannot even stop it.

The public supported the Akaiden faith.

Although the gap and conflict between superhumans and non-superhumans had deepened, respect and love for the great superhuman Akaiden transcended the class.

The government also failed to stop the religion.

They could not turn both the Association of Superhumans and the people into enemies.

Soon the federal government made the Akaiden faith the state religion.

Jirji was concerned.

The Akaiden faith temporarily closed the conflict between the superhuman and the non-superhumans.

The non-superhumans were no longer able to swear at the superhumans.

As long as the great superhuman is watching the world from the sky.

However, the source of the conflict did not disappear.

The doctrine of the Akaiden faith did not address the gap between the superhuman and the non-superhuman.

As time passed, he thought that a new class system might be established beyond the hierarchies.

* * *

Another strange thing happened.

These days, mysterious things happen once a week.

This incident was also shocking enough not to be missed.

High-ranking superhumans have disappeared in large numbers.

When the superhumans who wielded powerful influence in the government, the Association of Superhumans, and the Church disappeared all at once, a vacuum in the social leadership was created.

The confusion spread even to Jirji, who was at the end.

Perhaps his command system was broken, and no approval came from his superiors.

Payday was approaching right now, and he was wondering if he would get any money.

As usual, when Jirji returned home from work, he felt nervous.

Although he felt lonely and empty, he had never felt the tension and fear at home.

The house looked peaceful.

The furniture was the same.

There were no signs of intrusion.

But his body hardened like a hard stone.

Would this be the case with a frog facing a snake right in front of it?

Jirji's body, terrified of fear, had stiffened enough to fear that he might die of muscle stiffness.

Soon he learned that his fears were no illusions.

"I've heard you're gentle and kind, but you're a wild bear."

It was a small, quiet voice.

It is reminiscent of a quiet, introverted woman that is usually seen walking down the street.

He would have thought she was a really ordinary woman if it wasn't for her bloody glowing eyes.

Her long hair down to her waist looked bushy from poor maintenance.

Her long hair and fluffy outfit made her look smaller.

"I don't know what he's looking at to entrust you with work. I don't think I've ever met such a person on the 57th floor."

She was a woman he had seen at the asteroid through the telescope.

He couldn't forget that unusual attire and ferocious eyes.

"1400, right?"

* * *

He brought his ID to the scanner.

The door to the temple opened.

It was still an awkward sight.

The entrance to the temple was opened by cutting-edge technology.

It was only a few months ago that religion was treated as a product of the old times before supernatural powers were discovered.

Jirji was still not mentally accepting it as a religion.

This was still the case when he became the bishop of the Akaiden faith and took care of the church's affairs.

Akaiden faith was firmly established.

The statues of Akaiden floating in the sky and the apostles of Akaiden faith erased any room for distrust.

Except for probably Jirji, everyone in the world believes in and follows Akaiden as a god.

But except for him.

Although he was able to meet face-to-face and communicate with the god people worshiped, he did not worship this god.

He was walking down the hallway when a kid approached him.

In principle, entry into the temple is prohibited.

Even Jirji, the only exception, is not allowed to enter except on the day of the audience.

Then the identity of the child was obvious.

This is the child that came out from the inside of the temple.

“Can I give you this?”

What the child brought out were a few wild flowers.

The flowers were neatly tied with weeds.

“Is that okay?”

The child nodded.

Jirji took the flower.

When he said thank you, the child was embarrassed and ran somewhere.

It is not strange what happens within this temple, which is said to be connected to several dimensions.

For example, a child running around in the temple, which is an off-

limits area.

So was the pair of fox ears on the little child's head.

Jirji had to adapt to all these absurd and mysterious phenomena.

As he walked, the door came out again.

After a light knock, the answer to come in came back.

Jirji opened the door and went inside.

“Oh, are you here, 1400?”

It was, as always, an insincere greeting.

“Croak.”

Beside him, a lizardman over two meters tall waved her hand to greet him.

Seeing the scene, Jirji felt that he had not yet adapted to it.

* * *

1400, whom I had not seen in a long time, was holding a bunch of flowers in his hand.

What is that?

Did you bring it to me?

If that's the case, I think it would be a little creepy.

“What is that, that withered grass?”

“The little kid I met in front gave me a present. The kid with fox ears.”

“It’s a pretty flower.”

It was a pretty flower.

Park Jung-ah, who was next to me, looked at me with strange eyes, but she ignored me.

As soon as 1400 came in, he started talking about work.

It had to do with superhumans.

We controlled the superhumans themselves to close the gap between the superhuman and the non-superhumans.

By studying superpower particles, it became possible to transform them, inject them into humans, or remove them.

Through that, it was possible to remove dangerous superhumans, change the powers to the superpowers they want, or purchase superpowers by paying money.

Of course, the power was weakened.

It can be applied to the daily life of a modern society where there is no need for battle.

It was not an easy task, and Jirji, who was in charge of the task, was busy every day.

Thanks to that, Jirji was only talking about his errands today.

He was a hard-working guy.

He was like that when we first met.

When I said that it had been a long time, he said bluntly, ‘Yes, it’s been three months.’

That guy must have completely forgotten me.

Aside from my disappointment, Jirji was a trustworthy guy.

He was a man who thought deeply about problems between social classes, and knew how to look at the situation objectively.

He didn't have a bad personality, so he could be trusted with the managerial position.

"Later."

Having finished talking about work, Jirji stood up and said.

"Huh?"

"Come over to my house sometime. Let's have a drink after a long time. Then... let's play games."

I said with a smirk.

"Yeah, I'll be there soon."

Jirji walked out shyly.

He's always been a fun friend.

"Croak, the person who works for the captain is cool. He's intelligent and even kind."

Iddy, who was next to me, said.

It was an endless compliment.

Kuang!

Park Jung-ah, who was sitting a little further away, struck the desk.

I am a little worried because she seems to be becoming more and more violent.

Park Jung-ah stared at Iddy with all kinds of expressions, but Iddy laughed and said that it was interesting again.

I was stuck in the middle and it was a strangely uncomfortable situation.

“...Are you going to name your religion as Akaiden?”

Park Jung-ah asked.

Recently, Park Jung-ah was also helping with office work.

Because I have so much work.

“I think so.”

“You know it’s not very effective, right?”

Of course I know.

Because people worship the superhuman Akaiden.

I am actually running the religion and taking care of their lives, but the faith gathered by me is not that great.

This is why the gods run their religion under their own names.

If the object of worship is not clear, the divine power will be dispersed.

“Why don’t you change your religious name even now?”

“Never mind, it didn’t have any effect.”

It was just like the Earth right now.

My religion was still called Lee Ho Jae faith.

People roamed around, saying homen, homen.

Even though I went up to the 9 o'clock news and told them not to do this homen, they continued to say homen, homen, and gossip until the end.

I think it's best to just let people believe what they want to believe.

"After all, the captain is cool and cool. Croak."

This time, a grinding sound was heard.

She's going to lose all her teeth."

"Croak, the human woman become ferocious. She used to be shy when I saw her. Croak, croak."

Iddy had met Park Jung-ah before.

In the past, when we attacked the 12th floor, there was a day for a dialogue agreement, so we went together.

Then she saw Park Jung-ah.

That was ten years ago.

Since it has been over ten years, it's not surprising that things change.

I thought to myself only because I thought Park Jung-ah would get angry again if I said it out loud.

"We should be friendly. Croak. Aren't we in the same situation?"

Iddy said.

Park Jung-ah did not agree with that statement.

"Why are you and I in the same situation? You and I are on different

levels. We're in different positions. We did everything we could. You're just a flirty lizard."

Park Jung-ah explained very passionately.

She did everything she had to do, the hand gestures in the part were very rough.

"Croak, the human woman is lying. We all know that because she is weak, she cannot even reproduce with the captain."

Iddy's counterattack was strong.

Park Jung-ah didn't say anything.

At this point, I started to get embarrassed too.

Park Jung-ah, who had been struggling for a while, kicked her desk and got up.

"Where."

"Back to the tutorial!"

Why are you back there again?

How much work is there to do here?

"Inevitably, I must become stronger. To reproduce..."

Oops, I can't hear it.

I can't hear it.

Park Jung-ah, who revealed her bold ambition to gain the upper hand in the relationship with a lizard mate through sexual intercourse, headed out.

“Hey, how is the work?”

“Do it yourself!”

It was Park Jung-ah who screamed and left.

There was a person following Park Jung-ah.

“Why are you following me again!”

“Croak, I’m going to be strong too. So I...”

I quietly covered my ears.

Iddy’s and Park Jung-ah’s abusive language followed.

I didn’t hear it.

I didn’t hear it.

“Haa.”

The two seemed to be on bad terms, but they were friendly.

The reason I don’t stop the fighting despite that is that the two of them just did it that way.

Because they were two people with no friends and no one to lean on, they continued to stick together even though they annoyed and teased each other.

I was the only one in the middle, and I was in an ambiguous situation.

Suddenly, Park Jung-ah and Iddy both left.

If this is the case, who else is doing all the work?

Hochi doesn’t come home without a word.

Lee Yeon-hee... Come to think of it, she must have finished all her assignments, but there is no contact.

Kim Min-hyuk and people of the Earth were already suffering from overwork, so I was sorry to have them do other work.

It was really too much work.

It was good until I brought it into my affiliation after destroying the God of Order and freeing the tutorial world.

The problem was that the world the tutorial stage contained was too vast.

This was the case even when looking at the 57th floor here.

A planet with superhumans.

This was not the end.

In the universe to which this planet belongs, there are other planets that appear in other tutorials.

There was even Earth.

Contrary to what I thought, each stage contained the entire universe, not limited to the background area.

So, about 400 stages of easy, normal, hard, and hell difficulty.

It contained 400 universes.

You could even find the same person if you looked at the universes in the same time zone.

At this point, it was something close to a parallel universe.

In such a universe, all kinds of problems were scattered.

The dangers of the level of the world's destruction were hidden in the place where the stage immediately became the background, and other social problems and disasters did not cease.

At this point, I wondered if I could solve everything.

I'm sighing out of frustration.

The space opened quietly.

It was inside the temple that was forbidden to enter, but I wasn't too surprised.

It was a scheduled visit.

"Hewwo!"

It was Kirikiri who appeared beyond the space.

Kirikiri, who appeared with a characteristic cheerful attitude, asked me.

"Now, are you ready to visit the Hundred God's Temple?"

"Sure."

I stood up with an answer.

Side Story 53

After (2)

[END]

“It’s a fun place.”

Kirikiri said.

A fun place.

This temple is connected to all dimensions.

Although it is a single building, you can go to Earth through the gates of this temple, or to the planet where Jirji is.

The more worlds I manage, and the more temples I own, the more this temple will be connected to various worlds.

Kirikiri asked if I would leave immediately.

I shook my head.

Instead of following Kirikiri right away, I called Myongmyong who was playing in the hallway.

Fortunately, he was doing well.

He also took care of the garden inside the temple and presented flowers to the visitors of the temple.

He occasionally visited his native village.

Since they are a tribe that goes out of the village and engages in

housework, they quickly adapted to living in a foreign country.

They're a race that likes to help others, so naturally, they like decorating and cleaning.

No matter how I think about it, they were too perfect a race.

"Is he a fox? How are you?"

Kirikiri, who was next to me, spoke to Myongmyong.

Although she was unfamiliar to Myongmyong, she raised his hand and greeted him.

"That's the kid on the 19th floor. The God of Sacrifice would like him."

"The God of Sacrifice?"

It wasn't a very pleasant story.

The fact that that psychopathic god was interested in Myongmyong was uncomfortable in itself.

"Because that stage contains the past that the God of Sacrifice regretted."

It was a story I didn't really want to know.

Even more so now that everyone is listening.

"Myongmyong, can you tell Grandpa Lava where I'm going? Just tell him that I'm going to the Hundred Gods Temple."

Myongmyong couldn't answer right away.

It wasn't like him to not like to listen to other people's requests.

“Why? don’t you like him?”

“...I hate that guy because he keeps trying to touch me.”

That’s a misleading statement.

To touch here means to stroke his hair.

Old Man likes small and cute things which is a trait that doesn’t fit well with his appearance.

When I first brought Myongmyong, he was just as happy as I was.

He wanted to treat him as his young grandson and play with him as if the Old Man was a grandfather.

Unfortunately, that was impossible.

Although he recovered his divinity and escaped from the dead, the lava Old Man took on a new form.

Not that of a giant with red skin.

He has become a giant with flowing lava skin.

Instead of sweat, his body secreted lava.

With such a body, Old Man’s body was always maintained at a high temperature.

Of course, Old Man could regulate his body temperature.

However, even if he adjusted it, it wouldn’t burn, but it didn’t change that it was too hot to touch.

Of course, I would hate it if he tries to stroke my hair with such hot palms.

“I’ll tell him not to.”

Chances are he won’t listen to me.

Then I have to tell the grandmother.

Myongmyong replied that he understood.

He likes to do favors, and he has a strong sense of responsibility for his work.

He immediately went out of the temple.

He will go straight to the 61st floor.

He’s gone through the portal several times, so he won’t get lost.

“You really adore him.”

“He’s cute.”

Kirikiri stared at me and opened the space.

It was a space for the Gundred Gods Temple.

“You can’t take your weapon. You have to leave it here.”

“I don’t have a weapon.”

Kirikiri widened her eyes as if in surprise.

“You always carried it with you.”

I shrugged.

Ahbooboo went to the God of Sky.

Seregia was in the midst of renovation on the 61st floor.

When the God of Order was defeated, the whole party fought desperately, but Seregia was the one who did the best.

Perhaps she had gained something in the process, as Seregia was remodeling herself.

Even if she was an ego sword, she wouldn't like being remodeled.

I did far too much remodeling.

Now, I was worried that she might enjoy being remodeled itself.

“Let's go.”

I moved my feet across the space with Kirikiri.

Not holding anything, alone.

It was light clothing.

It reminded me of the first time I entered the tutorial.

There was nothing back then.

Not even a coin was in my pocket.

I regretted it so much back then.

If I had brought any tools.

A lighter, a flashlight, or at least a doorknob that has been ripped open.

My chances of survival would be much higher.

But I fell into the tutorial naked without any preparation.

I ended up surviving all the way here.

So far, it's been really long and long.

* * *

“Ta-da!”

Kirikiri shouted, raised her arms.

“This is the Hundred God’s Temple!”

Yes, I saw it.

Even if I was brought here without knowing anything, I would have wondered whether this was the Hundred Gods Temple.

This place looked like a Hundred Gods Temple.

At best, it had the appearance of a typical temple, and at worst, it was cliché.

“Hehe, recognition is important. Even to the gods. How precious is the recognition that you are living in a temple.”

Instead of the perception of being in prison.

It made sense.

I turned around and saw a small door.

It was the door we had just entered through the space.

Is that the entrance and exit of the hundred gods temple?

“There are a few rules about the temple.”

Kirikiri explained, spreading her fingers.

“I’ll explain only a few of them. First of all, you can’t fight here. All

disputes are resolved through dialogue and voting!”

This is a demilitarized zone.

It is a place where the gods of the Hundred Gods’ Temple, growling at each other, gather.

If battles were allowed, something might have happened earlier.

“And the gods belonging to the Hundred Gods Temple must always leave their own alter ego here.”

A hostage.

An alter ego of a god has a different meaning from the alter ego created by a wizard.

The alter ego is another self, and if the clone is destroyed or suppressed, it will have an immediate effect on the main body.

In some cases, their divinity may disappear.

“Finally, the use of divine power is limited.”

Kirikiri said while pointing to the gold on the ceiling.

Golden ornaments hung from the ceiling at regular intervals.

It looked similar to the gold used by the God of Order.

Is that what inhibits the use of divine power?

It was a similar ability to the virtual world of the God of Sky and Ahbooboo, who had erased the divinity itself, and the 101st floor.

The difference was that the divinity was not temporarily erased, but only to the extent of making it difficult to use.

In a place like this, no matter how powerful a god with divine power, they have no choice but to spare their body.

Because they don't know what kind of variable their alter ego will be affected by.

It's a dangerous place, but maybe that's why order and law are better maintained.

Human society was like that.

Humans can easily be killed by armed humans.

The person walking next to me can pick up a knife and stab me to death whenever he wants.

Such dangers imposed morality, laws, and sociality on humans.

It seems that the strange sociality that the gods of the hundred gods temple showed came from such a situation.

Rather, they acted more self-righteously and straightforwardly.

"It's an interesting place."

"Yeah, right?"

Of course, there is no way that there will be no problem in this temple.

The gods did not like the regulation, and the gods were beings who had to get rid of the bridle they are on.

Even the God of Order was like that.

There must have been numerous attempts.

To break the constraints.

At that time, Kirikiri must have stopped such attempts.

“The Hundred Gods Temple is made up of a hundred rooms and a common room.”

She explained that the hundred rooms are private spaces where the alter egos of the gods of the hundred gods temple reside.

A commonplace is a place where anyone can come and go.

“Usually, when voting, we tend to gather together. If you don’t leave the room, you abstain. Oh, my room is the same garden that was used in the tutorial.”

It was in the midst of what Kirikiri was explaining.

“Bang!”

Someone screamed and hit me on the back.

I looked back for something, but there was nothing there.

I was bewildered, and something flew in from the other side.

“Baamm!”

It hit me on the back again.

At this point, I was able to guess the identity.

“God of Light. Ignore it.”

Yes, it must be the God of Light.

The God who runs away by hitting others on the back without end.

Anyway, it was incredibly fast.

Even in a space where divinity is suppressed, is it that much?

“Ta-da!”

...This time, it hit Kirikiri’s ear and passed.

“Aaaaah! Really!”

Kirikiri screamed.

It wasn’t of pain, it was a scream that came out of unbearable anger.

“...it’s going to do that about ten more times.”

Kirikiri, who had stopped shouting, said as if resigning.

The God of Light struck us 14 times and ran away after disappearing.

“Is it supposed to be like that?”

“Huh.”

It was a firm answer.

“Probably, Hoojjaaee came and he was a little more excited than usual, but his behavior itself is as usual.”

Yes, in fact, it is normal.

Because God is always the same.

Changing even the smallest things was not easy.

“Would you like to go into the room?”

“Is that okay? It’s a private space.”

Kirikiri said with a smile after a while.

“No. But this room is fine.”

The name tag was marked on the room.

‘The Room of the God of Regret’.

It was like a name tag written in crooked letters by an elementary school kid who had his own room for the first time.

Kirikiri boldly opened the door without knocking.

The room was humid.

To some extent, it was doubtful that it was underwater, not in the atmosphere.

The room was a swampy, forested area.

Like Kirikiri, who used a wide garden as a room, the room of the God of Regret was also quite spacious.

Kirikiri led me into the middle of the swamp.

There was nothing in the swamp.

Of course, there was a buzzing fly and a crackling toad.

Kirikiri approached the toad and talked to him.

“Long time no see. How have you been?”

Naturally, the toad only blinked, but did not move.

It was a very brownish toad.

It didn’t look very pretty.

It was the same in my opinion even with a deep knowledge of

amphibians and reptiles.

It's too ugly to be called a toad.

"Come on, say hello. God of Regret."

I had to question for a moment if Kirikiri was talking nonsense.

"The real thing. He is the God of Regret."

Kirikiri said as she pricked the toad's side with her finger.

The toad jumped sideways as if he didn't like the touch.

Yes, it was only about a distance away from the palm of the hand.

Kirikiri grabbed the toad's back and lifted it up.

Long drooping hind legs and relatively short forelimbs fluttered unpretentiously.

However, the toad caught on the back could not get out of Kirikiri's hand.

"In order to maintain the alter ego in the Hundred Gods Temple, you always have to consume your power."

Is it like a seat tax?

"But this god of Regret lacks divine power, so he looks like this. Really, he is the real God of Regret. Now, answer the question. Are you, the God of Regret?"

"Right."

The toad replied.

Surprisingly.

“How much energy does it take for a god to be like that?”

“I don’t listen to it very much. It’s because the God of Regret is a fool. He loses his power every day, so now he doesn’t have much power left.”

If that was true, he was a very humble god.

The image of the God of Regret I had been thinking about inside was shattered.

“The God of Regret is an idiot. He has no friends, so he doesn’t have a god to borrow powers from.”

It was a harsh evaluation.

“No, I have friends.”

Against the evaluation, the toad protested.

Kirikiri opened her eyes and looked at the toad, then said with a big smile.

“Hahaha, he can’t even lie.”

“No, really!”

“Hahahaha.”

Kirikiri laughed out loud enough.

Perhaps the toad was upset, he struggled violently to get out of Kirikiri’s hand.

Then he jumped somewhere.

“He may have at least one real friend.”

“No, no.”

Kirikiri was adamant.

We came out of the room of the God of Regret, who was stupid, had no friends, and was not good at lying.

I saw the room of another god.

There was a sign prohibiting entry to the God of Sky's Room.

I knocked on the god of duel's room, but there was no response.

Kirikiri explained that the personal spaces of the gods could not be entered without permission.

It was a contradictory explanation to the one I had just entered the room of the God of Regret earlier.

“How about the room of the God of Slowness?”

I asked the room of the god that I was most curious about.

Kirikiri made a meaningful expression and then, fufu, she laughed.

“You've already seen the god of slowness.”

“Did I see it?”

“Yes, you saw it first.”

I saw the room of the God of Slowness first.

I have never seen it.

Several possibilities flashed through my mind.

Memory manipulation, cognitive dissonance, and causal distortion

over time.

The last one seemed the most probable.

Kirikiri didn't tell me the answer.

“Hehe, guess it. It doesn't mean anything.”

I just shrugged.

She has no intention of telling me, so there was no use in digging around.

That's something I'll have to figure out later.

After walking a little further, a small cavity appeared.

Unlike the large rooms of the gods, the cavity was about the size of a small theater.

There were several gods gathered in the cavity.

God of Sacrifice.

The God of Sacrifice waved her many tails to greet me, I had seen it many times now.

The God of Nature and the God of Harvest.

There were also some gods, such as the God of Will, the God of Despair, and the God of Warriors, who didn't care because they had little weight.

And the God of Balance.

I met him once on Earth.

He even took one of the earth's challengers as an apostle.

I thought she wanted to introduce me to the gods.

But Kirikiri didn't talk to me.

She said to the gathered gods.

"Let's begin."

[Voting begins.]

[Agree: 21]

[Disagree : 7]

[Abstain : 72]

[The agenda has been passed.]

[As of this time, the battle limit between the Gods in the Hundred Gods Temple will be conditionally modified.]

That's an interesting thing.

"May I ask for an explanation?"

"Simple votes. It's not that combat in vaccine warfare is unconditionally banned, but that combat is made possible under certain conditions. It's impossible originally, but it's possible now that the God of Order is weakened."

"Under certain conditions."

Kirikiri responded by taking a step back and moving away from me.

"When dealing with a god who is not affiliated with the Hundred Gods Temple."

Oh my god

I'm a god who doesn't belong to the Hundred Gods Temple.

It's only me in this place.

It was truly an amazing topic.

"Can you tell me why?"

Again I asked Kirikiri.

She nodded her head and answered.

"You are too dangerous."

Kirikiri said so.

The God of Sacrifice who was beside her helped.

"You are an arrow. If the arrow has nowhere to fly, it will only rot in the warehouse. But instead of going back to the warehouse, you will create a new target. Once you pierce that target, you will create another target. You will never be satisfied."

Kirikiri said again.

"I'm worried when you no longer have fights for you. You won't be able to endure a world without a fight. You'll either eat the world or cast off them through transcendence."

This was also a valid argument.

"More than anything else, you have the potential to achieve transcendence. A new god of transcendence may appear, so I couldn't just let it go."

Is it because of the possibility of becoming dangerous in the future?

I understood.

“I’m sorry. We don’t want to do this either.”

Kirikiri said so.

Maybe those words are sincere.

I don’t know.

“I’m not going to kill you. It’ll be over at the point of destroying the divinity.”

It’s fun.

It was a betrayal at an unexpected time.

No, if I think about it, it might not come as a surprise.

Maybe now is the only chance.

I defeated the God of Order and took over the tutorial world.

There was no room for the Gods of the Hundred Gods Temple to intervene in the process.

As the God of Order said, the tutorial world belonged to the God of Order, and I took it away.

My powers will grow bigger and bigger.

Definitively.

Before my power grows.

Now that I have defeated the God of Order and my mind is freed.

In some ways, it seems like a reasonable decision to bring me into the Hundred Gods Temple’s stronghold, and deal with me.

“Don’t be too mad.”

“I’m not mad.”

Mad?

I wasn’t mad.

Betrayal is being betrayed by someone you trust.

If you didn’t trust them in the first place, you wouldn’t be betrayed.

“I’m sorry. It’ll be over as soon as possible...”

Kirikiri stopped what she was saying and bit her mouth.

A space was opening behind me.

Kirikiri is the one who creates and manages this Hundred Gods Temple.

However, the management authority had already passed to the machine god, the God of Order.

Now that the God of Order has disappeared, the only way to ignore the rules of the Hundred Gods Temple is the vote by the gods.

But in fact, there was one more way to bypass the rules of the Hundred Gods Temple.

Only one.

There is a god who was ignoring the rules of the Hundred Gods Temple and was doing business with his own power.

The God of Hope was able to avoid the restrictions of the Hundred Gods Temple by calling himself an apostle of the God of Order.

“...I thought it was gone.”

Kirikiri immediately erased her surprise and asked me.

“Since when?”

Kirikiri asked.

I was happy to answer that question.

“From the beginning.”

I was always prepared for this situation.

“I told you so. It’s been like that over and over again.”

When I just dropped into the tutorial.

At the time when my colleagues I couldn’t even remember died and I tortured myself by cutting off blood vessels and nerves.

I repeated it over and over again.

“If I get out of here, I’m sure you all won’t be left alone.”

It was just human nervousness.

They must have thought that it was a curse that was spat out without knowing the facts.

Maybe they thought it was the talk of a man who had gone mad in fear.

So even after I became a god, I must have been stretching out my feet without any worries.

What appeared beyond the open space were the giants who had finished preparing for battle.

Hundreds of giants, led by Old Man and Grandmother, stepped into the Hundred Gods Temple.

A sword flew through space.

It was Seregia who was waiting on the 61st floor.

Whatever the modification, the blade of the sword was shining golden.

“Finally, the long-awaited moment has come.”

The Giants responded by shouting at my words.

Each one of them was a soldier who was trained for this moment to face the gods.

“...this wasn’t what I expected.”

Kirikiri mumbled so and stepped back.

She wasn’t the only one.

The other gods seemed to sneak out of the cavity and return to their rooms.

At first glance, it seems that the unity between the gods of the Hundred Gods Temple was not very strong.

“Ho-jae, aren’t you my friend? Can we solve the problem with conversation? Are you mad?”

I shook my head.

I’m not mad.

I have a very calm, cool mental state.

“Come on, let’s get started.”

At the end of a long, long adventure.

Finally, I was left with only one last step towards the goal I had been longing for.

There was nothing to be afraid of, nothing to be anxious about.

I rushed towards Kirikiri, summoning the golden blade.

“I Su, surrender!”

“Noisy! Surrender is surrendering to death! Raise your sword!”

She’s talking nonsense.

If she surrenders here, where do I go to release my anger?

Surrender should be done later when all my anger is over.

“As expected, you’re mad!”

[Tutorial is Too Hard END]



PDF by: traitor/1ZEN